

September 19, 2022

## **Wrapping up the Summer Gardening Season**

"September tries its best to have us forget summer."

Bernard Williams

As summer starts wrapping up, there are some tasks you'll want to take care of before the first frost and the ground freezes. One thing you can do is sow or pre-seed some annual and perennial seeds. Some annuals that are good prospects are alyssum, bachelor buttons, calendula, cosmos, nasturtium, and snapdragons. Perennials that are good pre-seeders are bee balm, black eyed Susan, blanket flower, columbine, coneflower, coreopsis, delphinium, foxglove, larkspur, love-in-a-mist, lady's mantle, poppy, and sweet William. Some of these plants need stratification – a cold winter chilling period – to help with germination in the spring. Other things to be planting at this time are spring blooming ephemerals such as celandine poppy (yellow wood poppies), snowdrop, dutchman's breeches, marsh marigolds, pasque flower, rue anemone, trillium, trout lily, Virginia bluebell, and fritillary. It's also time to plant tulips, daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths, and grape hyacinth before the ground freezes. Rule of thumb is to plant bulbs two to three times deeper than the height of the bulb. I like to plant daffodils in the same hole as I plant my chrysanthemums. I dig a wider hole, put the mum in the middle and then place daffodil bulbs around the mum's root ball. Make sure the mum stays watered, and after the ground freezes, don't cut back the mum; instead mulch it heavily. Next spring, trim back the mum. The daffodils will come up, bloom and then as they die back, the mum's new growth will hide the dying leaves.

In the vegetable garden, pot up any herbs you'd like to bring indoors for the winter. I usually have pots of basil, parsley, thyme, and rosemary. I'll also bring in my container of lavender as the variety I planted is not hardy in Wisconsin. Find homes for these potted herbs in a sunny window to keep them at their best. Carrots, beets, and turnips can be harvested now. They can also be left in the ground after a hard frost, but they do need to be removed before the ground freezes. If you decide to leave carrots in the ground after they get frosted, thickly cover the carrot tops with shredded leaves to help preserve them for a later harvest. All need to be stored in a cool, dry place and should be checked regularly if you do not can or freeze them.

Start checking your winter squash for harvesting as you see the vines starting to dry and die back. Winter squash is ready to pick when the skin hardens. If it's hard to push your fingernail into the squash, it's ripe. If it's easy to pierce the flesh, it's not ready. I had one particularly large, beautiful butternut squash that was coming along quite nicely. Unfortunately, an animal found it before I could harvest it. My other butternut squashes are not quite as large – hopefully I will get to harvest them before the animals. One of my favorite winter squashes is Delicata as its skin is edible. On pumpkins, keep a 2-inch stem for better storage. Once you've finished with a vegetable garden bed, clean it up immediately. If you have diseased plants, dispose of them by burning, hot composting, or sealing it in containers for disposal. Tomatoes is a good example of one that should not be put on your compost pile.

We're soon approaching the cut off for planting deciduous shrubs and perennials. They should be planted before the soil get below 50 degrees. If you do plant a shrub or tree, mulch it well after planting and make it has enough water.

Harvest pears when they are still light green and can be easily separated from the tree with slight twist. Also harvest grapes and apples. Clean up any fallen fruit to control disease and insect problems for next

year. Finally, cut out any spent raspberry and blackberry canes after they are done fruiting. Enjoy the last days of summer as the days cool and summer tasks come to an end.

This week's article is written by Jeannie Manis, a Wisconsin Certified Sauk County Master Gardener Volunteer. If you have any gardening questions, please contact the Extension Sauk County by emailing to [tripp@wisc.edu](mailto:tripp@wisc.edu) or calling the University of Wisconsin Madison Division of Extension Sauk County office at 608-355-3250.