

# Orange County Master Gardeners

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## October Garden Tips and Tasks

By Diane Gipson

**Season: Autumn (overall)** is the best time to plant (ground cover, shrubs, perennials, trees, spring blooming perennials, bulbs and cool-season annuals)

### October overall is the best planting month & busiest time in garden

- Fertilize
- Prune, trim, mow
- Divide plants (that grow in clumps)
- Purchase & Plant
- Water
- Control pests, diseases, weeds
- Start compost pile

### Fertilize:

- Winter annuals (snapdragons, stock & pansy)
- Winter vegetables (broccoli, kale, lettuce, peas)
- Winter active plants: azaleas & camellias, fuchsias, hardy water lilies, poinsettias, roses (for last time this year)
- Don't fertilize deciduous fruit trees, chrysanthemums (as soon as buds begin to open)

### Water:

- Lawns, ornamentals, vegetables according to their needs, soil and weather
- Potted plants twice a week
- Be on lookout for rain shadows (areas that may be protected from rain)
- Mid Oct cut back on water to deciduous fruit trees to encourage dormancy

### Trim, prune, mow, divide:

- Divide, trim and mulch rhizome plants that grow in clumps: clivia, iris, daylily, ginger, moraea (fortnight lilies), bird of paradise
- Prune zonal & ivy geraniums, lily turf, gazanias, Shasta daisies & all garden perennials (Cut back by 1/2, leaving one or two healthy leaves on most branches, bare stubs won't recover)
- Clean out and shape dead interiors of native plants; cut back coyote bush hard - it will grow from bare stubs)
- Divide hardy water lilies (lift tropical lilies and store in sand in garage for winter)
- Divide gladioli. Dry the corms for a few days in sun then throw away old corms and pre-chill cormels for 2 months before planting
- Divide naked ladies early Oct, after bloom but still dormant and before new roots & leaves grow
- Thin sweet peas, pinch back to force branching
- Cut off strawberry runners and pre-chill them for Nov planting
- Trim flowers off stevia, let leaves grow a little longer to get sweeter before harvest

**Plant:** roots grow furiously, rains water, plants aren't stressed. Check shadows before planting

## October Garden Tips and Tasks

- **Switch flower beds/containers from summer to winter annuals & perennials.** Plant/transplant alyssum, calendula, cyclamen, cineraria, delphinium, dianthus, foxglove, flowering cabbage, Iceland poppy, Johnny-jump-up, nemesia, pansy, perennial candytuft, primroses, sweet, William, sweet violet & violas. Feed well for fast growth & bloom.
- **Plant from seed:** African daisy, calendula, California poppy, clarkia, annual candytuft, godetia, snapdragon, sweet alyssum, Shirley poppy, Johnny-jump-up, lavatera, nasturtium, phacelia, forget me not, hollyhock, linaria & many wildflowers
- Pull up summer veggies – results in fewer bugs & diseases later
- **Plant winter veggies (from seed):** beets, carrots, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, kale, mustard greens, parsnips, peas, fava beans, lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, rutabagas & **(from transplants):** cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, collards & celery
- Carrots, potatoes, raspberries, artichokes, horseradish, rhubarb, scallion onions, asparagus
- **Herbs:** parsley, curly cress, cilantro, arugula (from seeds)
- All types of permanent landscape plants (not bareroot, tropicals or natives)
- Trees, shrubs and vines (conifers, Chinese elm, cork oak, fern pine, mayten tree, tipu tree, tea trees, India hawthorn, lavender star flower, liquid amber, maidenhair tree, Chinese flame tree, flame vine, oleander & Easter lily vine)
- Wildflowers –California/Western wildflowers, linaria, CA poppies, larkspur, scarlet flax, nemophila, Chinese houses, clarkia, godetia &, tall calendulas
- Deciduous fruit trees
- Geraniums, water lilies, lilies
- Spring blooming bulbs: South African bulbs, oxalis, Tazetta types of narcissus
- Purchase other bulbs & pre-chill
- Force paperwhite narcissus (for Thanksgiving bloom) and poinsettias

### Lawn care

- Aerate lawns if needed & if lawn has fungus, take care of it before the rains
- Check Dichondra lawns for flea beetles

**Cool-season lawns** (ryegrass, bluegrass & fescue) are picking up now

- Reset mower blades to cut cool-season grasses shorter now (to 1½ inch)
- Wake up cool-season lawns by fertilizing with complete fertilizer
- Dethatch cool-season lawns & pull up crabgrass
- Best time of year to plant a cool season lawn from seed

**Warm-season lawns** (Bermuda, zoysia & St. Augustine) are beginning to slow down

- Continue to keep mower blades short for warm-season lawns
- Continue fertilizing program through October
- Over-seed Bermuda lawns with annual winter ryegrass (Cut short before overseeding and mulch with manure or fine-grained soil amendment to aid germination)
- Dethatch kikuyu grass, collect & bag stolons

### Harvest

- Horseradish, macadamia nuts

### Bibliography

52 Weeks in the California Garden by Robert Smaus

Pat Welsh's Southern California Gardening, A Month by Month Guide by Pat Welsh

OCRegister.com, Home and Garden Guides