

October in the Garden



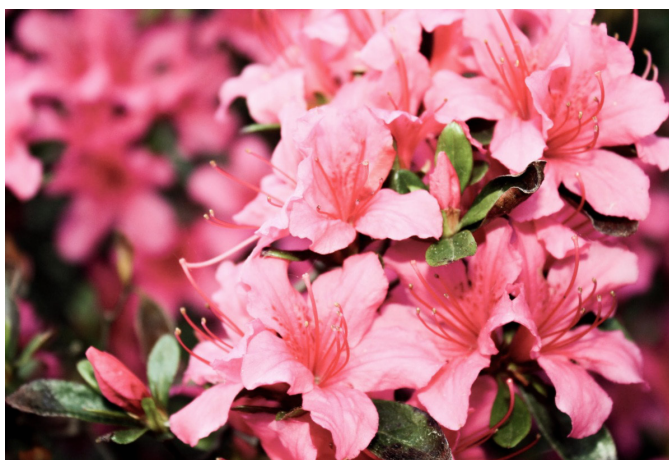
In late September, I only had enough home-made compost to cover the front yard, mostly due to lack of grass and other green parts needed for compost. I believe that the time to build up the soil is in Fall, so I ordered enough compost for the back yard from Ciardella's, my favorite compost provider. I also put down a thin layer of mulch. This method will help keep the soil moist until the rains show up. I am beginning to ready my garden for Winter. The tomatoes were enormous and delicious, but most of them are done. As the tomatoes run out

of fruit, those barrels are sweetened up by removing 1/3 of the soil and replacing it with new compost that is blended with the older soil. Waiting in the wings in 4 inch pots are my favorite winter vegetable, snow peas. I use the tomato structure for snow peas all winter. The last tomatoes are slow to turn red, so they will wind up as green tomato chutney. The basil around the tomatoes did just fine, so I made ten jars of pesto and froze it in Mason jars.

I also will plant Swiss chard, kale, Bok choy, broccoli, spinach, and Chinese cabbage in the summer veggie raised beds that are almost done with zucchini, eggplant and cucumbers. I try to keep insects away from the baby veggies, especially leaf miners that attack Swiss chard, rendering it unsightly. In the past, I created my version of floating row covers - I bought bridal veil tulle at Joanne's Fabric Shop 4 years ago, and sewed Velcro dots along the edge. Then I hammered the Velcro partner into the wood of the raised bed, and I draped the tulle over bent plastic pipe attached to the same wood. Now I have a new tool, that solar powered, waterproof Animal Repeller, with the motion detector that sets off flashing LED lights and ultrasonics, frightening squirrels and rats away. So I am depending on that Animal Repeller to enable me to have a stronger crop of veggies, but I don't think leaf miners have ears so I will still cover the Swiss chard.

Either September or October is a good time to feed azaleas, camellias, and rhodies with 0-10-10 fertilizer for bigger and better blooms. They

are almost the only show in my garden during Winter so I improve their blossom size with food. Remember that COSTCO has available my favorite bulbs, anemone and ranunculus. I add fertilizer when I plant them. However, most other plants do not take up nutrients efficiently in cold weather, so I don't waste money feeding the whole garden. Fall is also a very good time to remove summer annuals, clean up



rotten fruit, and do some dead heading to prevent pests from settling in for the Winter. I also trim diseased leaves on roses and cut back woody perennials. Even the newest petunias can have their finished stems pruned to encourage more flowering. If you had an apple or pear crop, after picking

the fruit is the best time to fertilize and then water the trees well.

October is a really good time to go through the garden with a critical eye, evicting non-producers, or over the hill shrubs, like old lavender. In October, I dig up overgrown or under producing day lilies, salvia, agapanthus, and Shasta daisies, divide each clump into 4 plants, replant one clump and put the other three plants in gallon pots to brighten up another area or save them for the plant exchange at a Garden Club meeting.

This is the fifth year for the milkweed that I planted along the parking strip, and it looks happy and perky – finally. To entice butterflies and hummingbirds and bees, I have also planted nectar plants: echinacea, lantana, coreopsis, salvia. They are my favorite nectar plants because they are easiest to groom and they are long-lasting. Did I tell you that butterflies have poor vision, so they are always looking for loud-colored flowers, in red, purple, orange.

I added two Dahlia bulbs to the parking strip, even though they are not considered nectar plants but they were extras from my Dahlia Order from Swan Island Dahlias. Last year's Dahlias that were 12 years old and had been divided four times rotted from the rains because I did not dig them up last Winter. Dahlias are tubers, which means that they have thin skins, and they will rot if they get too wet. According to Sharleen Fiddaman, my favorite Dahlia Expert and a Garden Club member, "They do not like wet feet." So I will dig up these Dahlias



, but not until we have had a hard frost – that is, two or three days of repeated frosty nights. For now, they are on their second round of blooming, so I will enjoy their cheerful colors.

Lastly, are any of your citrus plagued by black sooty mold? First spray the shrub with Neem Oil, to get rid of the insects that are creating the sap secretions. Next, spray both sides of the leaves with a watered-down mild dish detergent, coating all blackened parts of the plant. After spraying both sides of the leaves, spray them with clear water. Going forward, I have really tried to stay on top of insect control, and gently remove any of the soot that remains. In the past, when I have finally rinsed them clean, I also wipe off the leaves to remove any lingering spots of mold. Finally, green leaves! And if you feed your citrus, you will be rewarded! Otherwise they go on strike and do not deliver fruit!

Happy Gardening,

Vicki Sullivan
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