Timing is Everything

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I recently picked up a booklet of Forage & Livestock quotes and concepts and have found that several of them apply to managing our lawn and garden, too. One of my favorites: “It matters greatly what you do; When you do it matters too”

September is a tremendous time to implement some strategies which will set your lawn and garden up for success in the next season.

LAWN

September is the best time to perform nearly all lawn care activities and achieve optimal results. Seeding, sodding, aerating, dethatching, fertilizing, and broadleaf weed control are all very successful as summer temperatures cool while the growing season continues. Mowing and watering (as needed) can still be performed through September.

Mow lawn to maintain a 2 to 2 1/2-inch height, removing no more than 1/3 of the height of the grass at any one time. Leave clippings on the lawn or add them to the compost pile. Vertical thinning or power raking of the lawn will help control thatch build-up, if needed. Reseed bare spots or new lawns with a good quality seed mixture.

Check the UMN Extension website for more details: http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/maint/calendar.htm

GARDEN

Dig potatoes with a fork or shovel and allow to air dry for a week or two and then store in a cool (40-45°F), dark location. Harvest crops such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, and sweet potatoes before frost, or cover plants with blankets, newspaper, etc. (but not plastic) to protect them from light frost.

Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost and ripen indoors. Individually wrap fruits in newspaper, or leave them on the vine, pulling the entire plant out of the garden. Store in a cool location, about 55 to 60°F.

Harvest winter squash before hard frost. Skin of the squash should be tough with deep, solid color. Some cultivars will show an orange blush when mature.

Plant, transplant, or divide peonies, daylilies, iris, and phlox. Save plants such as coleus, begonias, or impatiens for indoor growing over winter. Dig plants, and cut them back about halfway, or take cuttings of shoot tips, and root them in moist vermiculite, soil mix, or perlite.

Plant spring-flowering bulbs beginning in late September. Planting too early can cause bulbs to sprout top growth before winter. However, allow at least four to six weeks before the ground freezes for good root formation. Further info at http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/spring-flowering-bulbs/

Dig and store tender garden flowers for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Dig canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location. Check out this information at http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/storing-tender-bulbs/

Harvest grapes and raspberries. For most fruits, flavor is the best indicator of ripeness, although color change can also be a good indicator. However, grapes change color long before they are fully flavored, so sample the fruit to be sure. Remove raspberry canes after they bear fruit.
THE BUZZ ABOUT WASPS

We've had several calls to the office lately about different flying insects--more recently, the problem of Bald-faced Hornets, Yellowjackets, and Paper Wasps. It seems to have been a terrific year for insects, and this late summer prevalence makes everyone wonder what next year will be.

Never fear! The yellow jacket family, which includes bald-faced hornets, paper wasps, and several varieties of yellow jacket wasps, will all perish when the temperatures turn cold. Their nests will be abandoned, and they do not, as a group, invade your home or hibernate through the winter.

This is the time in their life when a few new queens are mated and those individuals fly off to find a safe spot to overwinter; they settle in under loose tree bark, or in plant material cover. When spring comes, the queen begins constructing a new nest, lays eggs and feeds the larva. When that larva matures, they care for the nest, feed the young and continue construction.

At this time of year, the nest is huge and has 100s or 1000s of wasps flying in and out of it. They typically don't pose a threat, but if your living habit intersects with their high traffic pattern, people can get stung.

Take care to avoid areas where you see wasp activity. They won't be around much longer, and they are useful insects in the garden. They prey on vegetable pests, and they are considered effective pollinators.

If you have a bumper crop of wasps in your area this month, there's no guarantee that it will reoccur next season. One way to reduce the chances of high populations of wasps in 2016 is to scout carefully next spring. Look for a paper nest under construction in the area, and knock it down with a blast from the garden hose. Discouraging the creation of a nest will help eliminate the presence of unwanted aerial guests at your picnics.

Find further info from UMN Extension:
http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/insects/find/wasp-and-bee-control/

Save the Date for Land Rent Meeting!
We're in the initial stages of planning winter meetings, but one that has already been scheduled is the third annual Land Rent meeting. Mark your Calendars for Friday, November 20, 2015. The local meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m. in Lake Crystal and at 10:00 a.m. in Le Center. Further details are forthcoming.

2016 Master Gardener Calendars Here!
Back by popular demand, the Extension Master Gardener calendar!

The 2016 calendar is available at the UM Blue Earth County Extension office.

Calendars are available for $12 each and at a reduced rate for Extension Master Gardeners. ($8).

They are a terrific gift that continues to delight throughout the year.

Get yours soon!