Quick Tips for October

Houseplants

Moving houseplants back indoors:

- Lessen the shock from the reduction of light by placing newly moved plants to a bright spot before moving them to their new location.
- Be careful not to overwater them during the adjustment period which can take several weeks. After that, water only as needed.
- Thoroughly spray your plants before moving them back indoors to prevent introducing plant pests. Use a horticultural oil or insecticidal soap labeled for use on houseplants.

Trees and Shrubs

- Tree and shrub branches should be pruned at this time only if they are dead or damaged. Wait until after all the leaves have dropped for all other corrective and cosmetic pruning. (Watch our pruning video)
- Powdery mildew (pictured) is a common late summer and early fall leaf disease of dogwood, lilac and other landscape plants. Affected leaves turn white and droop. Pruning may help to increase air circulation to lessen the chance of disease. No fungicide sprays will be effective now. However, as a last resort, if the damage is severe, next year you can apply a labeled fungicide, or use a horticultural oil labeled for powdery mildew control. Follow the label for application intervals. Try to select resistant cultivars when planting new landscape plants.

Vegetables

- Reduced sunlight and lower temperatures contribute to a number of physiological tomato fruit disorders including uneven ripening, blotchiness, poor flavor and texture and small size. You may also notice seeds inside of tomato fruits beginning to germinate. This is a natural phenomenon and will not affect eating quality.
- Lettuce, spinach, arugula, and kale can be planted through the middle of the month. Cover these late plantings with a cold frame, temporary greenhouse or floating row cover. Be sure to fertilize seedbeds, keep the soil moist and protect seedlings from pests. The young plants will go dormant and re-grow in spring.

More tips from HGIC
Garlic is a cool-season crop. October is a great time to plant your cloves of garlic. Take a look and see how easy it is to start a crop of garlic.

Q&A

When is it too late to transplant my flowering perennials? How late into the fall can I divide and move my plants?

It's not too late! You can transplant perennials anytime until the ground freezes in the fall, or wait and transplant them in the spring. Fall is an excellent time to transplant herbaceous perennials because your plants will then have three seasons to establish a good root system before hot summer weather sets in next year. Herbaceous perennials are non-woody plants whose tops die down in the winter. They come back each year from the root system.

Transplanting can be done to move plants to a more suitable location, to reduce overcrowding, and to make more plants (divisions). Perennials grow at different rates. Some plants need dividing more often than others to remain healthy. On average, dividing every four years is recommended unless you want to reproduce more plants faster.

Be sure to prepare the soil at your new site before you transplant. Take time to improve the soil by adding compost. The time spent improving the soil will pay off in the long run by promoting good root growth. You will see the results in much healthier plants with vigorous flowering.

Additional Resources

- Introduction to Herbaceous Perennials | Includes a list of recommended plants for a succession of blooms
- Dividing Herbaceous Perennials | How to make divisions and care for newly divided plants

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension’s experts have answers! Send in your questions and photos to Ask an Expert.

Have a suggestion for a topic to cover in the HGIC newsletter? Send in your suggestions.

Don't miss it!

2017 College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Open House
Open House
Free admission, rain or shine!

Saturday, October 14, 10am - 3pm
Central MD Research & Education Center - Clarksville Facility
4240 Folly Quarter Road Ellicott City, MD 21042
Find out more!

Other events this month:
(MG) = Master Gardener Advanced Training (also open to the public)

- October 1-7 National 4-H Week
- Calvert County
  Designing with Bulbs Saturday, Oct 7, 10 AM
  Seed Saving How-to Workshop Saturday, Oct 14, 10 AM
- Frederick County
  Meadow Making: Wild Collecting Native Seed (MG) Oct 13
  Meadow Making: Sowing Native Seed (MG) Oct 30
- Garrett County
  Microgreens Oct 23, 2017
- Baltimore County
  Urban Homesteading Series - Oct 14, 8:30 pm
- Harford County
  Turf Grass and Lawn Care Oct 21
- Howard County
  Gardening in a Changing Climate (MG) Oct 19
- Talbot County
  Beginning Native Tree Identification (MG) Oct 26

Be sure to check the Master Gardener Plant Clinics schedule for your county!

Have You Seen This?!
Check out two great shots from HGIC on our Instagram account

Look closely at goldenrod flowers and you might find one of these. This is a locust borer, a type of longhorn beetle. The larvae of this native insect feed on black locust trees. Photo: C. Carignan

Can you guess what type of animal made this beautiful little pot? The pot is a half inch wide and made of mud. This is a nest from a potter wasp. Photo: C. Carignan

Follow us on Instagram for more great images.

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