September Tips

- Plant cool season vegetable crops now that will mature into the later fall months. These include Chinese cabbage, turnips, kale, mustard, spinach, arugula, and lettuce.
- Plant garlic now through the end of October for a July 4 harvest next year. Do not use garlic from grocery stores for planting because of the significant risk of introducing diseases such as white rot.

Get Your Lawn Back in Shape!

September is a perfect time to rejuvenate tall fescue lawns. Aerating and overseeding now in the fall will make your lawn stronger and better able to resist pests and weed encroachment for next season.

Take a look at the HGIC's lawn renovation information.

If you have substantial areas of dead grass or crabgrass weeds, it is probably more effective to remove the dead grass with a hard rake, a "power rake", or a de-thatcher. The turf seed will need to have good soil contact in order to germinate and grow to provide better coverage.

Select quality "turf-type tall fescue" seed. The University of Maryland publishes a list of Maryland-adapted turfgrass cultivars in publication TT-77.

During rejuvenation is a good time for fall fertilization as well. Remember, Maryland fertilizer laws don't allow you to add phosphorous (i.e. the middle number on a bag of fertilizer should be "zero") unless you are doing a complete lawn renovation or have done a soil test that indicates phosphorus is needed.
Tomato problems? You’re not alone!

We are at the end of tomato harvesting and enjoyment time in Maryland. But many gardeners are unhappy, to varying degrees, with the quantity and quality of the fruits of their labor. Those tomatoes we waited so patiently for may have disappointing spots, rots, cracks, and holes.

This is a good time to think about what we can do next spring to get more out of our tomato plants next year. Picking fruits when they begin to change color from green will increase the number of usable fruits. It allows you to get your fruits off the vine before problems strike. Ripen them indoors on a counter or in a box, basket, or bag. I think you’ll find they taste just as good as their “sun-ripened” sisters.

Read the full article on the Maryland Grows blog to read about common tomato problems and solutions such as cracking, spots from stinkbug feeding, sunken spots with rings, caterpillar holes, and upcoming frosts.

Featured Video

How to Stake and String Tomatoes in the Home Garden (For Next Growing Season!)

Luke Gustafson, Agent Associate for UME Charles County shows how to stake and string your tomatoes.

View on YouTube

Q&A
I have a cherry tree that has been in the ground for three years and has grown well. This year, the leaves have holes and they are falling to the ground already. The tree was sprayed twice with an insecticide and a fungicide. All sprays have been at the recommended dilutions. The leaves continue to fall. What is the problem?

The foliage of your tree looks like it was subject to cherry shot hole disease. Infected leaves will turn yellow and drop from the trees in mid-summer, if the infection is severe. This disease can be common when we have wet spring weather. The pathogen may continue to infect leaves throughout the growing season if rainy weather persists. In most cases, trees recover from this disease and no treatment is necessary. Rake and dispose of fallen leaves in the fall to reduce overwintering pathogens.

In addition, be sure to identify a pest or disease before you decide to spray. Some insecticides are "broad-spectrum" products which will also harm many beneficial insects. Also, an insecticide will not do anything to treat a fungal or bacterial disease.

Learn more about cherry shot hole on flowering cherries and how to manage it.

Do bagworms kill trees?

If there is a large infestation of bagworms on a conifer tree, it is indeed possible for them to kill the tree if the defoliation they cause is severe. Bagworms can be a problem on deciduous trees as well, but they typically do not kill them.

Bagworms are a common pest in Maryland and we receive a lot of questions about how to deal with them. Fall and winter are the best time to remove and destroy the bags that contain the eggs.

Here are a few tips about the lifecycle of bagworms and how to control them.

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.