

## Pinellas County Fall Gardening 101

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The weather is beginning to cool and the rains are slowing down. These conditions present several challenges for the home gardener, but there are some things you can do to prepare your garden (and yourself) for the cooler, drier weather.

If you use **annuals** in your landscape it may be time to replace some of the summer annuals. In early fall try plants like ageratum, coleus, celosia, zinnia, and wax begonia to give your landscape color into cooler weather. Then once temperatures start to cool you can plant petunia, pansy, snapdragon, dianthus, and alyssum. When shopping for annuals choose compact plants with healthy leaves, good color, and lots of flower buds (they don't have to be in bloom at the time of purchase). For more information about gardening with annuals in Florida:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/MG/MG31900.pdf>.



Sweet Alyssum, *Lobularia maritima*, photo UF/IFAS

Since annuals are seasonal they should make up focal areas in the garden, but not too much space, as they require a lot of energy and resources for such a short life-span. Lots of **bulbs** like to get their start in these cooler months. Plant agapanthus, amaryllis, and lilies now for blooms next spring and summer. Divide and replant **perennials** and **bulbs** that have grown too large- be sure to do this by November so they can become established before the weather turns colder. Add organic matter to new planting areas and monitor water needs during establishment. For more information about dividing and propagating plants:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg108>.

Plant **herbs** that tolerate the warm temperatures of early fall, such as Mexican tarragon, mint, rosemary, and basil. Later in the fall when the weather is cooler try parsley, cilantro, garlic, and thyme. Since some herbs are annuals and some are perennials remember to group them accordingly so you won't be disturbing the perennials when replanting the annuals. Many herbs are also suited to planting in containers- but you must remember that those plants in containers will dry out faster than those in the ground and will need more irrigation attention. For more information about growing herbs in your Florida garden: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02000.pdf>.



Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum*, photo Purdue



Garlic, *Allium sativum*, photo Purdue



Cilantro, *Coriandrum sativum*, photo Iowa State Ext.

In this cooler weather you can plant cool-season **vegetable** crops, such as celery, cabbage, lettuce, collards, and many others. For more information about vegetable gardening in Florida, including suggested crops and their planting dates:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/VH/VH02100.pdf>.

In September or October, fertilize your **citrus** with a balanced fertilizer. Many early season citrus varieties will be ready for harvest starting in October and November, such as 'Navel' and 'Hamlin' oranges, 'Marsh' grapefruit, 'Orlando' tangelos, 'Meyer' lemons, and more.



Cabbage,  
*Brassica oleracea*,  
Photo Purdue

**Fertilize** your St. Augustinegrass and bahiagrass lawns with a fertilizer containing at least 50% slow-release nitrogen and no phosphorous in early October. Do not use a "weed and feed" product. No lawn and landscape fertilizer containing nitrogen can be used in Pinellas County before October 1<sup>st</sup>. (For more info on the Pinellas County Fertilizer ordinance: <http://www.pinellascounty.org/PDF/Fertilizer-Ordinance-Brochure.pdf>.) As the weather gets cooler the turf will not need as many nutrients so this is best applied in early October.



Photo UF/IFAS

Check your **irrigation** systems to make sure they are working properly and providing good coverage as summer rains slow down. In November turn off automatic systems and water only when needed. During these cooler months plants need less supplemental watering. Let your lawn tell you when to water. Your turf grass needs irrigation if you see at least one of these symptoms: folding leaf blades, blue-gray color, or footprints remaining visible.