

**Friday's Feature**

**By**

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### **Time for a "Labor Day" in the garden**

Are you longing to "labor" in your garden? September marks the beginning of the fall gardening season. There's a lot to do, so break out of the summer doldrums and head into the garden and landscape to begin those fall gardening chores.

September is the prime time to plant many of the cool season vegetables. You can sow seeds of beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, collards, endive, escarole, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley and radishes. If transplants of these are available they can also be set out.

If you plant early in the month, you can still plant some of the warm season vegetables including beans, cucumbers and summer squash.

Fall is a great time to divide clumping perennials such as daylilies, mondo grass and liriope. Division is the quickest and easiest method of multiplying most herbaceous perennials. Simply dig the plants and shake off the soil. It will be apparent where to separate the plants into smaller units having roots and leaves.

Labor Day is also a good time to groom your roses, except for climbers. The fall pruning is lighter than in the spring; remove only about one-third of the shrub. Be sure to remove twiggy and unproductive growth along with any crossing or dead canes. All foliage is left on the bush at this time.

September is also a good time to start your preparation for planting trees and shrubs. Planting during fall and early winter allows the plants to establish their root systems during our relatively mild winters. When hot weather arrives next summer, fall planted trees and shrubs are already well established and better able to cope with the heat stress. Choose your trees and shrubs carefully. Learn about the plant before you buy it. Know its mature height and its sun or shade requirements. Even a well-chosen tree or shrub can become a problem if planted in the wrong location.

September is also the last month to fertilize our Northwest Florida lawns. Do not fertilize too late, no later than September 15th. A late season application of high nitrogen fertilizer can cause a flush of new growth too late in the year. It "wakes" the plant up at a time when it should be getting ready to "go to sleep" or enter dormancy. A late season growth flush decreases the plant's winter hardiness and increases the

possibility of cold damage.

Carefully select your fertilizer. For your lawn, consider an application of low nitrogen, high potassium fertilizer such as a 5-0-15 or a 5-0-20. And don't be misled by the term "winterizer" fertilizer. Many fertilizers advertised as winterizers are very high in nitrogen and are not good choices for a late season application.

So enjoy a holiday weekend in the garden and you'll be rewarded with the fruits of your labor.

Theresa Friday is the Environmental Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

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