

Garden Thyme



Monthly Newsletter of the East Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association

September, 2014

From Our President, Ann Hammond...

Hope everyone is reaping as good a harvest as I am. Rain has been good this year: to much, not enough and just right. I have such an abundance of veggies. Gardening is great. Looking forward to eating with everyone at Golden Corral then visiting Hayes Jackson's masterpiece. I have heard it's a good garden to visit. Remember, it's an outdoor outing. Sure hope it cools off some!

*You will eat the fruit of your labor, blessings and prosperity will be yours.
Psalms 28:2*

Ann



September ECAMGA Meeting

Our meeting this month is a trip to Hayes Jackson's home in Anniston. It is purported to be a botanical wonderland. We will be meeting at Ava UMC at **10:00 a.m.** and going to Golden Corral in Oxford for lunch before going to Hayes at 1:00. ECAMGA will be buying lunch for those members present using our raffle funds. Guests are welcome however, they will be responsible for their meal. Looking forward to a fun-filled, educational meeting and taking some great pictures and notes.

ECAMGA Meeting Schedule

September 15 – trip to Hayes Jackson's in Anniston after lunch at Golden Corral
October 20 – Regular meeting, 1:30 at Ava UMC
November 17 – Final meeting of the year and our potluck Thanksgiving Dinner



Why do you Garden?

There is something deep in my soul that drives me to get out and play in the dirt. After a long, hot day in the dirt and sun I rest so much better at night. It thrills my very being to get out and walk around my garden, such as it is, and inspect my flowerbeds, fruit trees and shrubs, all planted by our dirty little hands, talk to them, compliment them, encourage them. Yes, I talk to my plants, not when others are around, they'll think I'm goofier than I really am! But I believe plants have feelings, too! (Goofy – right?) My vegetables struggle somewhat, we're still learning about our "dirt" and how to help the plants out as best we can. It is truly a major undertaking for us when our only exposure to gardening was when we were young and at our parents directives to water and weed. So why now, after we've retired and don't have to garden, why do we put all the blood, sweat and tears into our place. We all have our reasons and some of us would probably be surprised by some of those reasons. Sure it's pretty, it tastes good, it feels good. But why? I've been thinking a lot about this lately (I obviously have to much time on my hands). I found an article written in May, 1918, by Richardson Wright, Editor of House and Garden Magazine from 1914-1949. See if you can find it and read it. It's a bit lengthy but talks of gardening at a time when the world is at war. Read it, let me know what you think and tell me why you garden.



September Celebrations
 Birthdays
 Martha – 9/4
 Ann B. – 9/5
 Margaret – 9/16
 Jack – 9/21
 Janet – 9/23
 Anniversaries
 Judy & Ken Conaway – 9/18
 Crystal & Rodney Walker – 9/3

SEPTEMBER IS
 National Honey Month
 National All American Breakfast Month
 National Biscuit Month
 National Potato Month
 National Apple Month
 National Chicken Month
 National Rice Month
 National Ice Cream Sandwich Month
 National Papaya Month
 National Mushroom Month
 4th – Eat an Extra Dessert Day
 5th – National Cheese Pizza Day
 11th – National Patriot Day
 13th – National Peanut Day
 14th – National Cream Filled donut Day
 21st – National Pecan Cookie Day
 23rd – National Chocolate Day
 27th – National Chocolate Milk Day
 29th – National Coffee Day
 14th – Francis Scott key wrote the Star Spangled Banner on this day
 19th – International Talk Like A Pirate Day
 Arrrrghhhhh!

Just a reminder.....
 Remember to go to our Facebook Page and like us. Check back often for notifications of meetings, CEU opportunities, work days and special events.



The Smart Yard in Ashland is looking good. Jack and I have added 14 bales of pine straw in the last week and plan to add more next week. The Weeping Yaupons have been ordered, the roses have been planted and the Dwarf Nandina are in the works. All-in-all it's looking good and the rain barrel is working out wonderfully.

Pictures by Sheila Bolen



Growing Herbs

By Janet & Gary Smith

We are sincerely honored Sheila Bolen asked if we would like to contribute a piece on herbs in forthcoming issues of "Garden Thyme." Herbs are a vital part of our "alternative farming," as the USDA refers to it, at The Lovely Janet Heirloom Herbs and Vegetables.

When most people hear the word "herb" they automatically think of the culinary herbs they cook with such as oregano, parsley, rosemary and basil. We will be starting with these familiar herbs. However, herbs, even many of the culinary ones, also have medicinal applications. Those we will also discuss (with a bit of caution). Just understand nothing we say should be construed to be medical advice, or prescriptions for ailments.

Seldom do most consider berries or trees among their list of herbs, yet cinnamon is the inner bark of one of two trees (more about that later), and elderberry was selected as "Herb of the Year" in 2013 by the prestigious International Herb Association.

One of the hardiest, easiest to grow and use, and most popular culinary herbs is Rosemary. Everything from stews, to omelets, to pizza are enriched by this fragrant herb. Even flower arrangements often feature a few spikes. Rosemary is well known for its medicinal properties as well. From ancient times, rosemary has been associated with remembrance - both for as a kind of memory aid, and to reinforce ceremonial remembrances. Modern medical research confirms that using rosemary does seem to preserve and restore memory functions. In addition, rosemary is a strong antiseptic/antiviral/antifungal agent and thus a good cleanser.

Rosemary was originally grown in the European Mediterranean region and thrives in similar climates. However, it has been successfully grown all over the world. The east central region of Alabama is a good place to grow rosemary outdoors year round, with the only real drawback being our easily compacted soil - so you will need to amend the soil where you intend to grow rosemary so that it is lighter, more alkaline and drains well. First select a variety you like - some varieties are runners or creepers and do well trailing off ledges or window boxes. Others are bushes that vary greatly in size. Some can, under proper conditions, grow quite large.

Your rosemary will grow best in a location that gets at least a half day of sun. You can plant from seeds, but germination can be slow. Stem cuttings are best. Just cut 3 to 6 inch stem tips, pull off lower leaves,



Rosemary
photo provided by Janet Smith

dip the cut stem in rooting powder, then place in a four inch pot with perlite and peat moss or a loose compost mix. Place a punctured plastic bag over the plant and top of the pot. As it grows too big for the pot, you can set the plant outdoors (but be careful with the roots)

Most varieties overwinter just fine in our area. If it gets down below 10 degrees, you might want to cover it to be sure it's safe. The plant likes being a bit dry, but the roots should never completely dry out. If the leaves start looking dull - the plant wants water. Don't crowd it with other plants. You shouldn't need to fertilize at all, but if it doesn't appear to be thriving, try applying liquid fish emulsion and kelp solution.

You can harvest rosemary just about any time - just snip off a few inches of branches from time to time. If you have one of the larger species, you might want to prune it back in the fall so air can circulate within the plant and to keep it from growing too large.

Next month, we'll talk about another easy and versatile herb - basil and its many varieties.

Gary and Janet Smith are co-owners of The Lovely Janet Heirloom Vegetables and Herbs. They are members of the Alabama Medicinal Plant Growers Association and Janet is the current president.



Photo from <http://bonnieplants.com>

Monarchs depend on gardeners

Though the southward butterfly migration is just beginning, we are already having a banner monarch season in Savannah, Ga., and elsewhere in the South compared to recent years. For this we are most happy and hoping everyone starts to see this trend. Our spring and summer growing season was superb.

There was no missing the bright orange native butterfly weeds as you drove across the South. They stood like blazing lanterns in patches along the roadside. This species known as *Asclepias tuberosa* is native from zones 3 to 10, and hopefully you saw some in your area. This is just one of several milkweed species that are the lifeblood of the Monarch butterfly.

Why are they the lifeblood? This is the only species on which the monarch lays her eggs and which the colorful caterpillars then feed. Don't let the weed name deter you. The orange flowers will certainly enhance the landscape, but watching the life cycle of the monarch that follows is something that the whole family will remember.

When the monarchs come to feast on the nectar, you may not even notice them laying egg. The resulting caterpillars seem to be starving creatures literally stripping the leaves and flowers, making the plants look like a pencil cactus.

The caterpillars will grow from tiny to huge in what seems like days. Then about the time you think the plant is dead, new growth will appear and soon you'll notice even more butterflies. Congratulations: You're a proud parent. While these milkweed species are so important as a larval food sources you will also notice other butterflies and even hummingbirds feasting on the nectar.

If your garden center doesn't have butterfly weed plants for sale or other milkweed species, they may have seed packets. You can also collect seeds from plants this time of year. Watch closely because the seedpods will split open as they mature, and the seeds will become airborne. Ours are flying about as we speak. Transplanting from the wild is not recommended because they have long taproots and because our wild areas need to keep them. Collect seeds from your friends or gardens that will allow this kind of access.

Growing from seed is simple: The small seeds should be lightly covered with soil that is kept moist until germination. Once planted in the garden, they are considered drought tolerant and should be watered sparingly but deeply when needed. Fertilizer needs are



photos from www.flickr.com

low – just give them a light application in the spring with the emergence of new growth.

When you see caterpillars feeding, remember not to spray an insecticide. Instead think of this as a backyard wildlife habitat. Better yet create a butterfly garden, and get certified with the North American Butterfly Association. You'll be the coolest garden around with an official Certified Butterfly Garden sign.

Wherever you live there are native milkweed species you can grow. Start your search now to be ready for spring. In the South, where our growing season is long, we can still plant to create a fall butterfly garden. You'll be doubly happy with plants that not only are beautiful, but serve as a larval food source for monarch butterflies while providing nectar as well.

*by Norman Winter McClatchey-Tribune News Service,
taken from Anniston Star, September, 7, 2014*

*I do have some milkweed seeds that I collected
from my garden. If anyone is interested I can
provide some for your garden. Sheila*





MONARCH BUTTERFLY

by Brenda Dziedzic - www.ButterfliesInTheGarden.com

Y	X	F	F	O	S	A	C	H	R	Y	S	A	L	I	S
B	Q	T	E	G	G	R	M	J	C	O	R	T	U	Z	P
U	E	M	N	E	A	M	I	C	B	N	W	Y	O	A	L
T	W	I	A	H	T	E	M	G	R	N	Y	Z	L	C	B
T	W	L	S	Y	U	T	S	A	N	T	E	N	N	A	E
E	B	K	Q	M	O	N	A	R	C	H	Y	A	B	T	I
R	O	W	Y	A	E	R	T	D	B	B	Q	Z	S	E	M
F	L	E	G	S	Q	X	G	E	I	H	A	I	M	R	G
L	H	E	T	H	E	V	I	N	W	O	C	M	I	P	A
Y	Z	D	D	S	L	A	B	C	A	S	E	V	G	I	U
P	L	A	Z	E	V	B	L	U	O	T	E	X	R	L	Y
R	E	C	A	R	N	W	Q	B	Z	R	E	P	A	L	S
E	S	T	A	N	I	T	O	N	C	N	E	C	T	A	R
N	F	L	O	W	E	R	S	O	I	D	Y	B	E	R	Q
X	H	Z	I	T	P	M	Y	I	A	A	E	C	D	P	W
R	I	A	H	E	Y	P	L	A	N	T	S	S	K	L	J

ANTENNAE

BUTTERFLY

CATERPILLAR

CHRYSLIS

EGG

EYES

FEET

FLOWERS

GARDEN

HOST

LARVA

LEGS

MEXICO

MIGRATE

MILKWEED

MONARCH

NECTAR

PLANTS

PROBOSCIS

WINGS

FALL HAPPENINGS

Just when we think we're getting a breather from summer gardening there seems to be a plethora of events beckoning us to "come on out, check out what else you need to see, do and/or learn". Here's a list:

SEPTEMBER

13 – Ag Discovery Adventure *A Window to the Future* 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at E.V. Smith Research Center, Shorter, AL

15 – Regular Monthly meeting ECAMGA, **10:00** at Ava UMC

20 – Fall Fest, Cane Creek Community Gardens at McClellan, a throwback to the old fashioned county fair. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will also be a Fall Farmers and Crafts Market.

25 – Special Gardens Special Places – Blount County Master Gardener Assoc. Fall Conference at 1225 Palisades Park, Oneonta. Limited to 75 attendees. \$25/person registration fee. 4 CEUs for full day.

OCTOBER

10 – Fall Gardening Extravaganza hosted by Tallapoosa County Extension Office and Tallapoosa County Master Gardeners. Held at Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City. \$15/person registration (includes lunch) with deadline of October 3rd. 4 CEUs for full day.

14-16 – Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, GA. An agricultural-based trade show held at Spense Field in Moultrie.

17-18 – 2014 Fall Flower and Garden Fest held at the Truck Crop Experimental Station in Crystal Springs, MS. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. both days. If interested in attending contact Ann, Martha or Sheila for more information.

18 – Loachapoka Syrup Sop held in Loachapoka, AL (by Auburn). Volunteers are always needed and volunteer hours can be earned. If interested in volunteering contact Dani Carroll for more information. It's a great time to just go and walk around!

20 - Regular monthly meeting of ECAMGA , 1:30 at Ava UMC.

25 – ECAMGA Plant sale at Kiwanis Park in Wedowee. Flyers will be available at September meeting.

NOVEMBER

13 – Super Dooper Hypertufa – Learn to make a lightweight concrete garden pot. Take it home once it cures. Materials provided. Dress for the mess! \$10/person. Cane Creek Gardens at McClellan.

As you can see, the fall schedule is busy. If you see something you're interested in attending contact Sheila at 256-354-2188 or sheilabolen@hotmail.com for more information.

State Flowers

Match the flower to the state where it is the official flowers. Answers below.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Forget-me-not | a. Alaska |
| 2. Columbine | b. Georgia |
| 3. Cherokee rose | c. Colorado |
| 4. Hibiscus | d. Vermont |
| 5. Peony | e. Texas |
| 6. Black-eyed Susan | f. Minnesota |
| 7. Sunflower | g. Indiana |
| 8. Lady Slipper | h. Hawaii |
| 9. Bluebonnet | i. Maryland |
| 10. Red Clover | j. Kansas |

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Historian Syble Benefield



Answers:

1. a; 2. c; 3. b; 4. h; 5. g; 6. i; 7. j; 8. f; 9. e; 10. d

Fall – cool – cold – FREEZE! Check out this website for Freeze/Frost Occurrence Data for Alabama:

<http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/climatenormals/clim2/Osupp1/states/AL.pdf>

Muster up to battle fall armyworms

Fall armyworms are once again chomping across Alabama. Armyworms feed on a variety of grasses but prefer bermudagrass, where they are a major pest. Damage to lawns may start as early as July and can continue until frost.

Fall armyworms are caterpillars, the larvae of a small, light brown moth. The caterpillars are 1 ½ to 2-inches long at maturity. You have probably noticed them. They are, for the most part, a tan color, although younger ones are often darker, almost black. Their distinguishing characteristic is an inverted “Y” on the top of the head, with leads to a line down the middle of the caterpillar’s back.

Fall armyworms have multiple, overlapping generations in Alabama. From late summer through fall, the same patch of turfgrass may contain eggs, small caterpillars, large caterpillars, pupae and adult moths all at the same time.

Damage to turfgrass occurs as the army of caterpillars marches across, eating blades of grass and leaving behind bare stems. The turfgrass will dehydrate quickly in the heat after the caterpillars have chewed off the foliage.

Do I have armyworms?

If an infestation is really bad, you will know by 1) the damage and 2) the fact that the grass will seem to crawl in the late afternoon as the armyworms move out to feed. Other signs to look for include:

Moth infestation: Watch for moths flying over and around the turf, especially around dawn or dusk. The adult armyworm is an ash-gray moth with a wind-span of about 1 ½ inches. The front wings are mottled and have white or light gray spots near the tips. The back wings are white with narrow, smoky brown edges. Moths become active at twilight and feed on nectar. They have an average life span of 2 to 3 weeks.

Egg clusters: Armyworm eggs are usually laid in clusters of 50-100 on smooth light-colored surfaces above ground near turfgrasses. Some common places for egg laying include metal gutters and fences, the undersides of plant leaves and even metal poles.

Predators: You may see birds digging up your grass hunting for the caterpillars (a tasty treat).

Defoliated sod: Damaged areas are often thinned out and brown, resembling drought damage. If you do have damaged turf in the summer or fall, check for armyworms. One easy way to detect fall armyworms is the soap flush method (see box).

I DO have armyworms – now what?

Armyworm damage looks bad but is rarely fatal to lawns, since the caterpillars only defoliate the turf. If the grass has healthy roots, stolons and/or rhizomes, it will recover once the armyworms are killed.

There are many insecticides labeled for control of fall armyworms in turfgrass. For a current listing, see the Alabama Pest Management Handbook, ANR-0500-A and –B, found on the Alabama Cooperative Extension website, aces.edu.

It’s the method of application rather than the product that fails most often. Takes these steps to ensure success:

- Apply insecticides at dawn or dusk, when armyworms are most active. Applications in the middle of the day won’t work since caterpillars rest in the soil and thatch during the heat of the day, making them much harder to reach with an insecticide.

- Mow right before spraying to help insecticide penetrate through the turf and contact the armyworms.

- Keep in mind that insecticide sprays will not kill eggs or pupae; repeat applications may be needed to prevent recurring damage from overlapping generations.



Photos from
www.flickr.com



SOAP FLUSH METHOD

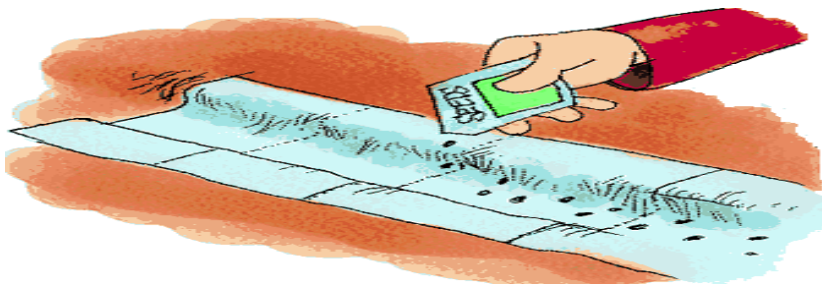
Try this method for detecting fall armyworms around dawn or dusk, when they are most active.

1. Mix a squirt or two of lemon-scented dishwashing liquid in a gallon of water.
2. Saturate a square-foot area of turf with the soapy mixture.
3. Within 5-15 minutes, armyworms will come to the surface and should be easy to spot.

*by Danielle Carroll, Regional Extension Agent,
Alabama Cooperative Extension System, taken
from Anniston Star,*

Seed Saving 101

September 9th we all gathered at Ava UMC for “Seed Saving 101”, a workshop presented by Dani Carroll and sponsored by ACES and ECAMGA. 28 folks attended plus Dani and a fellow Regional Extension Agent II, Mallory Kelley. Dani, with assistance from Gary Smith, reviewed with us the differences in perfect and imperfect flowers so we can figure out how pollination needs to occur. Thus, started our journey towards seed saving. Many, many laughs were shared and many seeds were saved from vegetables and flowers brought in by Dani, Gary and others present. It was a very fun-filled educational day and we’re all looking forward to next February when we plan to get together for our first, of hopefully many, seed swaps.



Can you contribute?

The current article by Gary and Janet is awesome! I’m really looking forward to seeing what they come up with in the coming months. Do you have a topic that is interesting to you that you would like to share with us? Do you have a topic you want more information on but don’t know where to look? Send me an email, give me a call, snail mail me – I can Google anything! Jack loves to research stuff so he is a great finder of facts. Put your thinking cap on and let’s come up with a list of topics you would like to see covered in upcoming newsletters.

CEU OPPORTUNITIES

For those of us that need CEUs to maintain certification here are two great opportunities. Interns, even though you don't need CEUs your first year, these can count as volunteer hours. And, if you don't get to view them as they occur, they get archived so you can watch them later. Don't forget the "Fall Happenings" that are offering CEUs!



All Bugs Good and Bad 2014 Webinar Series



Photo Credit: Jeremy Greene, Clemson University, bugwood.org

Kudzu Bug Takes Over the Southeastern U.S. and Brown Marmorated Stink Bug -- All Bad

September 5, 2014
2:00 PM EST

Michael Toews and Tracy Leskey

Please join us for this webinar series for information you can use about good and bad insects. Webinars will be on the first Friday of each month at 2:00 PM EST.

Learn about two new invasive insects, the kudzu bug and the brown marmorated stinkbug, in this webinar presented by Dr. Michael Toews and Dr. Tracy Leskey.

For connection information, visit: <https://learn.extension.org/events/1379>.
For more information on the series visit:
<http://www.extension.org/pages/70120>.



Brought to you by these eXtension
Communities of Practice: Imported Fire Ants,
Urban IPM, Bee Health, Invasive Species, Gardens and Landscapes &
Disasters.



Citation for pictures: Jim Oost, BugPics, bugwood.org; Jerry A. Payne, USDA-ARS, bugwood.org;
Shaker Staines, IN State Labs, USDA-ARS, Bugwood.org; USDA-ARS, bugwood.org; David Cappari,
Michigan State University, bugwood.org; Susan McCreary, Georgia Southern University, bugwood.org.

LUNCH & LEARN



A series of free gardening programs sponsored by Calhoun County Master Gardeners & Calhoun County Commission

Held the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Cane Creek Community Garden at McClellan
Noon-1pm ~ bring your own lunch!

September 24th

Hayes Jackson, Urban Regional Extension Agent, ACES
"Easy Plants for Difficult Places"



This is the final Lunch and Learn presented by Calhoun County MG and Calhoun County Commission in 2014. I'm looking forward to see what exciting speakers/topics they'll have in 2015. Thanks for a job well done!

2014 Fall Flower & Garden Fest Healthy Living – Healthy Gardening

The 2014 Fall flower & Gardening Fest will be held Friday and Saturday, October 17 and 18, at the Truck Crops Experiment Station in Crystal Station, Mississippi, which is about 25 miles south of Jackson. Hours are from 9a.m. to 2 p.m. both days and vendors will have food and drinks available.

This is the largest home gardening show in the southeast. Average attendance is 6,000 people over the two day event. Admission and parking are free. The garden, grounds, seminars and one of the tour wagons are handicap accessible.

There will be seminar sessions – each occurring at the same times at different locations and on really interesting topics. There will also be walking tours and workshops, again on very interesting topics.

Let's see if we can get a group together to check this event out. Folks who have attended in the past said it is THE EVENT that you must attend. I'm in – are you??

Are your volunteer hours and/or CEUs up to date on the MG website? If you need help posting them please do not hesitate to ask Ann, Martha, Sheila or another member for assistance in posting them. It makes it much easier at the end of the year to have them up-to-date instead of having to rush to get them all in at the last minute.



Gardening in the Month of September

As summer winds down to fall, it is time to clean up the garden and plan for next spring. Water trees and shrubs less, allowing them to harden off before winter sets in. Remove spent annuals and compost them. Keep after the weeds and the slugs!

Here are a few gardening tasks and projects that you can do this month to help keep your garden looking it's best for the rest of this season, and prepare for the long cold winter and upcoming spring.

Fall Care Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs

It is time to plant perennial seeds and bulbs! After soil temperature drops below 60° in the fall months, the spring flowering bulbs of Tulips, Daffodils, Hyacinths, Siberian Squill, Dwarf Irises, Anemone, and Crocus should be planted. Select healthy, disease free bulbs. Add Bone meal or Bulb fertilizer into the planting hole as you prepare the soil.

Winter Pansies, Ornamental Kale and Cabbage and fall blooming Chrysanthemums can be planted now to give a little color to the garden when the summers flowers have faded away.

Scatter the seeds of wildflowers in rows or in open beds this month so that the young seedlings will be ready to be transplanted into their permanent spot next spring.

As the weather cools, perennials that have overgrown their space or become crowded should be dug and divided or moved to a new area of the garden. New and replacement perennials should also be planted this month. Tender bulbs like Dahlias should be dug up and stored in a cool, dark area after first frost.

Shrubs and Trees

Fall is an excellent time to shop for plants, trees and shrubs. Fall planting encourages good root development, allowing the plants to get established before spring. If weather is dry, provide water up until the ground freezes.

Stop fertilizing your trees and flowering shrubs to allow this years growth to harden off before winter.

Fruits and Vegetable Gardens

Harvesting fruits and vegetables is the best

part of growing them. As is often the case, you may have produced much more of certain type than your family consume. Share the abundance of squash and tomatoes with friends and neighbors, and don't forget about your local food bank or second harvest organization!

Although most fruits and vegetables are best when eaten fresh on the day they're picked, you can extend the season by freezing, drying, storing, or canning. Fruits and vegetables should be checked regularly for ripeness. A little practice and experience will tell you when your produce is at it's peak of flavor, and that is when it should be harvested.

Plum trees should be pruned right after harvest, to insure a bountiful crop next year.

Once the tops of onions have withered, the bulbs should be lifted and dried in a warm, dry, sunny location for about 10 days. Then they should be stored in a cool, dark, dry place.

Lawn Care

When the fall rains arrive, fertilize your lawn with a slow-release 3-1-2 fertilizer. September is one of the best months of the entire year for seeding or sodding new lawns. If the lawn needs thatching, it can be done during the early fall. Over-seed old lawns with fresh seed to help fill in the bare spots and crowd out weeds and mosses.

Caring for your House Plants

Pot up some spring flowering bulbs for indoor color during the winter. Store the pots in a cool, dark place, until new growth emerges from the soil, and then move them to a bright window. If you want them to bloom on schedule, begin conditioning your Poinsettias, Christmas Cactus and Christmas Kalanchoe to get them ready for the upcoming holiday season. These are all short day plants and will eventually bloom at their own place, but if you want them in bloom in time

for the holidays for at least 6 weeks beginning in mid to late September.

This can be accomplished by placing the potted plant in a closet or unlighted room, or by covering the plant with black cloth, black plastic over a frame or a cardboard box. The plant must then be returned to the light each day, and given a *minimum* of 4 hours of direct sun, or 10 hours of bright light.

Poinsettias should be given an application of a 0-10-10 fertilizer this month and again next month to help encourage the development of flower buds. Feed your Poinsettia every 2 weeks with a high nitrogen fertilizer once color has begun to show.

Christmas cactus needs the same general care, with the exception that they require cooler temperatures of about 50°-60°. Continue to watch for insect or disease damage and take the necessary steps to control the problem.

Odds and ends

Mark your perennials with permanent tags or stakes, or create a map showing their locations so you'll know where and what they are when they die back at the end of the season. This will help you to avoid accidentally digging up something you intended to keep when you work in the garden this fall and next spring.

One last effort at weeding will help to improve the appearance of your garden throughout the winter.

The birds will soon begin their winter migrations. Give them a helping hand by providing them with some food and water for their long journey. No one likes to travel on an empty stomach, and you may even persuade a few of them to stick around for the winter if they know they have a *reliable* food source!

Continue to watch for insect, slug and snail, or disease damage throughout the garden, and take the necessary steps to control the problem.

From The Garden Helper