



RESIDENTIAL
& COMMERCIAL

Established 1993



Servicing Fernandina Beach Florida Lawn and Landscape clients with excellence since 1993

newsletter

fall 2009

Fall Gardening Tips

By Harold Jones

Southern Horticultural Consultants

This has been a wetter than normal year, following a number of years with below normal rainfall. As a result some plants are under stress from too much water from periods of heavy rainfall. Continuing to apply irrigation to the landscape during periods of heavy rain only makes the matter worse and wastes water. Plants, like humans, must have oxygen in the soil to function. Heavy rainfall or over irrigation fills the soil with water and can damage plants by reducing oxygen available to the roots. The only answer is to wait for the rain to stop or cut back on irrigation to allow more oxygen into the soil. Too much water can actually kill plants, so watch it closely and don't over irrigate.

Here are some gardening suggestions for fall:

The St. Johns River Water Management District irrigation rules state that you can water twice a week during daylight savings time and once a week during eastern standard time. Be sure your timer is set properly.

Watch for brown patch fungus disease in your lawn. This disease attacks lawns when the weather is cool and wet. It is most commonly found in St. Augustine, centipede and bermuda lawns. The grass dies in roughly circular areas that may be 5 to 6 feet across. In St. Augustine grass the leaf blades rot where they attach to the runners.

Watch for chinch bug damage in St. Augustine lawns if the weather stays hot. The damage usually occurs in sunny locations near the street, a sidewalk, or driveway. The grass dies in patches and turns straw brown. The damaged areas do not recover and must be plugged or sodded.

Watch for sod webworm and armyworm damage in lawns. These are lawn caterpillars that feed on the leaves of grasses. They prefer tender grasses and are usually a problem on bermuda and St. Augustine lawns first. They will attack all types of lawns if the population is high enough. The grass will look as if it has been mowed very low.

Mole crickets can damage your lawn in the fall. Once mole crickets reach adult size, they are very difficult to control. They damage the grass by loosening the soil and allowing it to dry out quickly while breaking grass roots. Pest management companies are better equipped to control these pests right now.

If you are growing a Christmas cactus and want it to bloom for Christmas, be sure it is not getting light at night. Starting approximately October 1, put the plant in a dark area that receives no light from 5 p.m. until 8 a.m. This is how the plant knows when to set its flower buds. Keep putting it in the dark at night for one month. Between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. it can be moved back to its normal growing area.

Flowers you can plant this month:

September: Hardy mums and digitalis, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, and snapdragon.

October: Begin planting winter and spring annuals for best growth and flowering. Transplants and seed are available at neighborhood garden supply stores. Be sure to plant hardy annuals that will take cold winter weather in north Florida and south Georgia. Choices include: digitalis, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, and snapdragon.

November carnation, digitalis, pansy, petunia, shasta daisy, and snapdragon.

[\[click to visit website\]](#)