



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

September 2009

Herbaceous Ornamental Plant Tips

Culture

- Watch for white rust on mums. The symptoms initially are yellow spots before they turn to white pustules. All infected plants should be destroyed.
- Plant hardy mums now so they will become well established prior to cool weather. Pansies and ornamental cabbage and kale can also be planted. Most perennials left in the same place for more than three years are likely to be overcrowded, with dead unsightly centers. The center of the clump will grow poorly, if at all, and flowering will be sparse. September is a good time to transplant, divide and plant perennials. Be sure to keep them well watered during dry periods.
- Leave the flower heads of perennials, like tickseed, purple coneflower and black-eye susans to provide nutritious seeds for birds this winter. Perennials and ornamental grasses can also provide needed cover for over-wintering birds.
- Geraniums can be over-wintered in several ways. Entire plants can be brought inside and grown in a sunny window, cuttings can be taken from existing plants. You can also take cuttings from other annuals like begonias, salvias, and coleus.
- Don't begin mulching your perennials until after the first hard freeze- around mid-November. Keep all mulches pulled away from plants.
- Irises with leaves that are flopping over may be infested with iris borer. The borer is the larva of a clear wing moth. The eggs are laid on the foliage in the spring and the larvae move down to the crown and bore into the rhizome. Dig up infected plants and cut out the larvae and damaged tissue. Re-plant the healthy rhizomes. Do this now so that the iris plants will have time to become established before winter.
- Consider planting a groundcover in areas of your yard where the turf is consistently weak. Groundcovers are especially useful on slopes, in shaded areas and as a border around buildings and garden beds. Keep new groundcovers watered daily through dry periods.
- Now is the time to plant daffodil bulbs in a sunny spot in well-drained soil. Tulip bulbs should be planted from mid-October through November. Mix a balanced fertilizer into beds before planting bulbs this fall. Follow package instructions for planting depth and spacing.
- Most perennials left in the same place for more than three years are likely to be overcrowded, with dead unsightly centers. The center of the clump will grow poorly, if at all, and flowering will be sparse. September is a good time to transplant, divide and plant perennials. Be sure to keep them well watered during dry periods.
- A number of well-adapted vines like cardinal climber, trumpet creeper, Virginia creeper and fall-blooming clematis are blooming strongly now. These can all be planted at this time. Consult local nurseries and garden catalogs for appropriate varieties. Another attractive vine is hops; the cones can be harvested and used in beer making or herbal sachets. It is best not to plant clinging-type vines on or near wooden structures.
- You may have noticed mile-a-minute vine, also known as tear-a-thumb, (*Polygonum perfoliatum*) creeping around your landscape this summer. This is a very invasive, imported weed that is spreading throughout Central Maryland. The leaves are triangular and the stems and leaves are covered with recurved thorns. It's a poorly rooted annual that can grow 20-25 ft. in one season. It will cover and smother shrubs, flowers and other landscape plants. It produces attractive blue berries that can be seen now. It's important to control this weed before the seeds develop. If the vine is growing over desirable plants, hand pulling is your only option.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

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Insects

- Slugs HG92 are active in wet weather. The three types of slugs found in this area are the spotted garden slug (3-5inches), the tawny garden slug (2-3 inches) and the gray garden slug (2-3 inches). They cause damage (large holes in leaves) to a wide variety of annuals and perennials. Favorite plants include hosta, salvia and marigold. Set out shallow saucers of beer or yeast mixed in water to attract and drown the slugs. Commercial baits can be used, but follow safety precautions on label to protect children and pets. Many of the new products contain safer chemicals such as iron phosphate or soap.

Disease

- Diseases - Powdery mildew may be observed on many flowers in the fall as a white, powdery coating on upper leaf surfaces. No chemical controls are necessary. However, you may want to consider spraying horticultural oil at the summer rate in July-August next year on plants that have had a problem with powdery mildew this year.

Water Gardens

- Tropical lilies will continue to bloom until frost. Periodically remove the older yellow leaves and spent flower heads of tropical lilies. The water lily leafminer is a common pest that produces serpentine mines in leaves. Simply remove and discard affected leaves. The china mark moth larva is another pest of lilies. The larvae live in small pockets of leaf tissue and float on the pond eating holes in the edge of lily pads. Pick off and dispose of the affected foliage. Avoid spraying pesticides around your pond. Aquatic plants and animals are very sensitive to chemical sprays.
- Consider laying a wire screen over your pond during the fall months to keep leaves out. Cut down and remove all plant parts that succumb to frost and freezing weather. Tropical lilies should be allowed to die outside; they are very difficult to overwinter inside. As the weather gets colder, stop feeding your fish. They cannot metabolize food easily during cold weather. Stop fertilizing plants at this time. Continue to remove dead plant parts.

Have a pest or gardening question?
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