

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October

"Autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together, a time of sowing." Edwin Way Teale

October is not only about ghosts, ghouls, goblins, and gremlins. We harvest our dreams with fall clean-up and spring preparation. Birds pecking at your lawn are not eating it. They are dining on insects that could be harmful to your lawn. The birds, even the crows featured Hitchcock classic, *The Birds*, are your friends indicating that your lawn has an invader. Clover is a positive plant in the garden and lawn because it grabs oxygen from the air and stores it in the soil. Vegetables to plant now for winter harvest include turnips, spinach, lettuces, arugula, cress, mustard, leeks, radishes, kale, Swiss chard, beets, cauliflower, and broccoli.

DIG and divide iris rhizomes in October. Make sure to keep a few inches of the leaves on the stems and bury the roots two inches deep, eighteen to twenty inches apart.

PULL weeds before they go to seed. Do not put weeds with seedpods on the compost pile unless you want a yard filled with unwanted visitors next spring.

EXPERIMENT by planting a variety of lettuces to keep your salads fresh all season. You can even plant in a pot on a sunny windowsill and snip often.

Clip the micro greens as they sprout for delicate, delicious delights.

CONTROL black spot and powdery mildew on roses with non-toxic Serenade with the active ingredient, *Bacillus subtilis*, a soil bacterium that discourages plant fungi.

TUNE up your garden by pruning back overgrown shrubs, adding a new pathway, or enlarging a cutting area.

ENROLL in a course on edible gardening, native plants, or composting.

AMEND your hard clay soil with large amounts of compost.

INSTALL a hedge to add structure, privacy, and definition to your landscape. Decide whether you want deciduous specimens such as lilac, forsythia, or cranberry bush, or evergreens like privet, boxwood, or holly.

PRUNE your berry bushes, including summer raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries by removing dead canes, thinning new canes, weeding around the plant, then mulching with wood chips to keep the weeds out, nutrients in.

PROPOGATE perennials for free by taking root cuttings now through December as the plants go dormant. Dig up a clump, cut several firm, healthy roots.

Trim into two or three inch sections making sure to remember which end is up. Plant either in pots or directly in the ground. Good choices include asters, Oriental poppies, acanthus, primulas, phlox, and rudbeckias.

REPAIR birdhouses so that overwintering birds such as bluebirds, chickadees, and nuthatches will have a warm, safe, cozy place to rest during the upcoming cold nights.

INCREASE bird feeders in your yard as birds consume more food in fall and winter.

SUPPORT local viticulture by joining the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association. The monthly meetings include libations.

For information visit <http://www.lamorindawinegrowers.com/>

WALK in nature when you feel stressed to kick up your cognitive performance. A stroll through a park, a jog around the Lafayette Reservoir, or a simple skip through your back yard will do wonders for your mental fatigue.

SAVE seeds from your favorite annuals, herbs, and vegetables by gathering, drying, labeling, and storing. I love to pick the seed pods from fennel stalks, dry them on a cookie sheet, place in an airtight jar and use for seasoning fish, fruit, salads, soups, and savorys all winter.

IMPROVE your health by adding apples and squash to your diet this month.

RESCUE honeybees from water sources when they have fallen in. These workers have pollination duties to complete before the winter storms.

EXPLORE the nursery aisles to plan your purchases of your spring flowering bulbs including tulips, daffodils, muscari, narcissi, hyacinths, frittilaria, Dutch iris, alliums, and lilies. Tulip bulbs need to be refrigerated (not frozen) for at least six weeks before planting.

ROAST seeds from squash and pumpkins by first cleaning, drying, soaking in salted water, then baking at 375 degrees until golden brown.

ENSURE adequate root growth before frost by planting your favorite garlic varieties. Mulch but don't allow cloves to be soggy wet or they will rot.

TIE dried corn stalks together to add to your front door fall décor.

HARVEST the remainder of ripe produce before the end of the month-apples, Asian Pears, peppers, Swiss chard. Eat the last of your fresh-from-the-vine tomatoes then freeze or can the rest.

Stop watering your summer crops to force last minute produce to ripen.

TOAST the full moon with a glass of Lamorinda produced wine! Wishing you grape adventures.

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