

Whether Mother Nature surprises us with warm or cold weather, this is an optimal time to fertilize and augment the soil. Because temperatures will be getting cooler as days get shorter, the nutrients in fertilizers can do their job to balance growth in roots and shoots.

Tomatoes took a long time to ripen this the summer, and now gardeners are reaping bushels of ripe, juicy produce. Be vigilant in harvesting your zucchini, cucumbers, melons, eggplants, carrots, kale, and beans before a cold spell hits. If you are ready to prepare your potager or vegetable garden for the following year, stop watering which will encourage your plants to push for that final crop before withering. Cut back your tomato bushes, toss them in the compost bin, and fry those green tomatoes which will not continue ripening once frost hits.

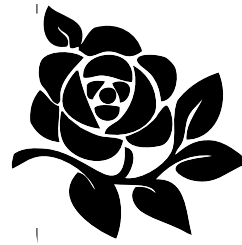
Leaves are starting to turn colors and flutter to the ground. Rake them and put them in the compost pile to amend your soil in a few months. With the dazzling, captivating, changing colors of the foliage, take photos of a tree or bush in your garden from the same angle every day to chronicle the evolution of nature.

If you are installing or repairing a lawn, October is a prime month to get the job done. Are you seeking the perfect pristine lawn seed? Many of you emailed me if such a discovery existed after last month's Lawn Ranger column. Since Halloween is this month, I saved this announcement as it may be so scary that you'll be calling your mummy! The USDA approved a new genetically modified Kentucky Bluegrass from Monsanto this past July that is engineered to resist weed sprays like Roundup. Targeted for golf courses, opponents argue that this new GMO weed-free lawn may cause birth defects. Since perfection is not my plight and I am neither a golfer nor pregnant, I'll let you decide if this development is a dream come true or a hellish nightmare!

Enjoy the rustling of the autumn leaves, the wine from the vine, the changing of the color guard, and the final bounty from your garden efforts. Howl at the harvest moon as Halloween is around the corner. Start gathering willow twigs for your magic wands and bewitching herbs to brew dervish drinks. The holidays will be upon us soon, but for now, we can chant merrily, "fall la la la la."



Orange and yellow spider dahlias burst with autumn hues.



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