September begins the best gardening season

Fall is our best gardening season and it begins later this month.

David Marshall, UF/IFAS Extension Agent in Leon County, shares some gardening ideas for fall in today's article.

Container-grown trees and shrubs can be planted during fall. Some natives with good fall foliage include American beech, hickory, sassafras, red maple, oakleaf hydrangea and blueberry. We often have to wait until December for the peak of fall color. For colorful berries, plant American beautyberry, yaupon holly or American holly.

Plant paperwhite narcissus, snowflakes (Leucojum vernum), Easter lilies, Madonna lilies, amaryllis bulbs and Louisiana irises. Divide and replant overgrown clumps of perennials that have finished blooming. Lift and divide daylilies. To separate irises, dig, cut the foliage back to three inches and allow the rhizomes to air dry for a few days before replanting. Plant petunias and dianthus.

Try something new when choosing perennials for planting this fall. Some fall-blooming perennials to try include lion's ear (Leonotis leonurus), which has bright orange flowers; cigar flower, (Cuphea micropetala), which has orange flowers shaped like tiny cigars, tipped with yellow; Phillipine violet (Barleria cristata), which blooms with a profusion of dark lavender flowers and firespike (Odontonema strictum), a four to five foot plant topped with tubular red flowers. Ornamental grasses are also good additions to the fall garden. Muhly grass, Muhlenbergia capillaris, is a native with pinkish-purple flower heads.

Pull up and throw away summer vegetable plants that have finished producing. Don't till them into the soil. You could end up spreading diseases. Add organic soil amendments such as compost or well-chopped leaves. Anything you add should be well composted and thoroughly mixed into the soil.

Plant fall vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, endive, escarole, leeks, turnips, radishes, mustard, beets, kale and green onions.

If your lawn develops areas that yellow and then turn brown, and you cannot find any sign of insect pests, then the problem may be a fungus disease. Closely examine the grass blades to see if they appear to be rotting off where they’re attached to the stem. If so, a fungus disease is a good possibility.

Plant Clinic

If you’re stumped on a plant problem, bring a fresh sample that represents what is seen in the lawn, landscape or garden. This may include a plant stem with
several leaves, a 4-inch square of grass with roots, a weed or insect to be identified, etc. Our September plant clinic will be held Tuesday, September 19 from 9:00 a.m. to noon in Fort Walton Beach at the Okaloosa County Extension building, 127 W. Hollywood Blvd.

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