

Fall Maintenance Tips For Homeowners

With the extreme drought and heat we had during the summer, watering is a very important issue. Unless watering in your area has been banned entirely, concentrate your watering on “high ticket” items when considering what needs water the most — trees and shrubs. Under drought conditions, grasses generally brown out and go dormant. When rain or watering resumes, they typically flush back. However, shrubs will be lost for good unless some water is received. Most trees and shrubs need 1" to 2" of water per week. Here are some tips for using water wisely:

- *Water early in the morning or early to late evening.* This will prevent evaporation during high temperature hours. This is also better for your plants because watering during peak times may cause scorching.
- *Calibrate your sprinkler* by setting a can in the target area to test how much water is being discharged by a sprinkler over a given amount of time. This will help you reach the 1-2" requirement.

Regrettably, we won't see the full effect of this summer's drought for six months or so. Although plants look healthy now, the damage may show later. In the spring, as bushes and trees attempt to put out a new flush of growth, they may weaken and die.

See *Tips* page 2

Rick's Picks

To some gardeners, landscapes can be like theatrical sets. By late September, most summer plants have taken their final bows, and it's time for a different show. Here is a list of glamorous autumn “stars”:

Large Fall Favorites

October Glory Maple — A member of the *Acer rubrum* or Red Maple family, this tree gives a stunning display of orange-red foliage in the fall. Growing well in sun or shade, the October Glory has an oval shape, with a narrow head and ascending branches. While this Maple grows rather quickly, it is long-lived. One of my favorites for fall, this is an excellent shade tree.

Sugar Maple, Acer saccharum and Southern Sugar Maple, Acer barbatum — These are two beautiful fall foliage trees, pleasing us with their yellow-orange color. They too make excellent shade trees and have a growth rate that's moderate to fast. Both trees prefer sun or part shade. The Southern Sugar Maple is more heat tolerant and grows better in the southern part of our region.

Shumard's Red Oak — The *Quercus shumardii* is a large tree, growing to 100 feet or more at maturity. Its fall color is orange-red. This is a majestic tree which holds up well under urban conditions.

Scarlet Oak, Quercus Coccinea — In autumn, this tree's scarlet foliage is quite gorgeous to behold. Growing to a height of 75 feet or more, the Scarlet Oak's spread can be as wide as 40 to 50 feet. This tree loves the sun, has no known pest problems and grows quite rapidly.



— *Sugar Maple Leaf*

See *Picks* page 4

Behind the Scenes — Help Us Welcome Dale...



On August 10, we added a new Route Manager to Nature Scapes. His name is Dale Stephens and we feel fortunate, having him with us.

Born in Arizona, Dale has lived in Atlanta now for 12 years. He presently lives in Loganville with his wife, Marci and their two daughters, Brittany (age 3) and Kara (8 months). Golf, softball and being outdoors are among his favorite pastimes.

Dale has been in the landscape business for 15 years and holds a pesticide applicator's license (ornamental and turf). His experience in management, site inspection and client contact will certainly be beneficial to our company. In the short time he's been with us, we have already found Dale a real pleasure to work with. We know you will, too.

Welcome to Nature Scapes, Dale!



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Grass

Fescue — Now is the perfect time to aerate and overseed Fescue lawns. Use a core-type aerator and run it over your lawn two times — once up and down and once side-to-side, so that you get the maximum coverage. Apply approximately 4-7 lbs. of Fescue seed per 1,000 square feet. Be sure to mulch bare areas with straw after seeding to help retain moisture. Also keep fallen leaves off tender, young, grass shoots.

Bermuda — During the month of October, apply pre and post-emergents on Bermuda lawns to take care of cool-season weeds before the grass goes dormant.

September

If your annual color has been ravaged by the heat and drought and you just can't wait for Pansies, a great intermediate flower is the Chrysanthemum (Mums!). They give a long-lasting display of bright, fall-colored

blooms. Look for plants that are loaded with buds to prolong blooming time.

This is also a great time to start a fall garden. Vegetables such as kale, lettuce, spinach, collards and mustard like cooler temperatures. Herbs to plant now include cilantro and chervil.

October

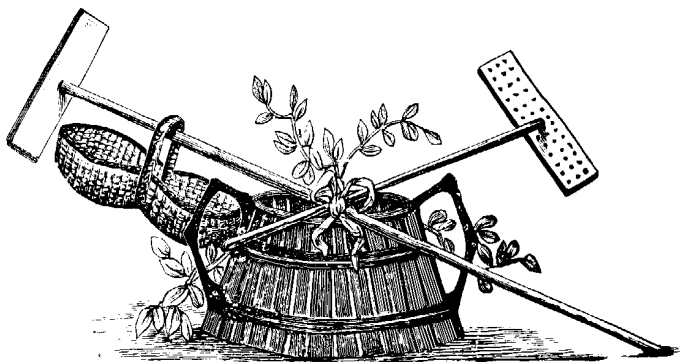
General Planting — Typically, this is the best time of the year to plant in our area. The rains return, the weather cools and roots have a chance to get established before putting out growth in the spring. Nursery stock is generally fresh and more varied as well.

Annuals — At last it is time for Pansies. Those bright-faced, cheerful and colorful flowers will get us through even the bleakest winter months. There are many colors and varieties to choose from. For additional fall and winter color, plant ornamental cabbages and kale.

Perennials — Divide and transplant overcrowded perennials. Be sure to water well after they have been replanted. This is also a good time to plant new perennials.

October/November

Leaf removal is one of fall's most challenging maintenance items. Many times there is so much drop between weekly visits, even *we* are surprised. For home gardens, try composting leaves as a winter mulch around trees and shrubs.



Composting — The Low Down Dirt!

About one third of the space in landfills is taken up by organic waste from yards and kitchens — just the type of material that can be turned into fertile garden compost. In a landfill, that waste may take decades to break down, because it's bulldozed under, compressed, and often subjected to contaminants. In a compost pile, the same waste may break down in months or even weeks.

How It Works

Compost results when billions of tiny organisms employ the two main chemical components of organic matter — carbon and nitrogen — in their life processes. They consume the carbon for energy and the nitrogen for growth and reproduction. The portion they can't digest remains as humus, or partially decomposed organic matter.

These microbes' interrelated feeding patterns fuel the composting process. By-products resulting from the digestion of one type of organism become the food source for another. Thus, the organic material undergoes progressive decomposition as it moves through the food chain. And eventually most digestible material is consumed or transformed, leaving the dark brown or black humusy substance known as compost.

What To Use

Compost can be made from almost any kind of organic material, although most backyard composting systems use yard debris and kitchen scraps. Typical composting materials include leaves, pine needles, grass clippings and kitchen leftovers.

Leaves are excellent compost material, because they are rich in carbon. Pine needles take longer than most leaves to decompose, but shredding helps speed the process. Before adding them, grass clippings should be dried first or mixed with carbon-rich materials like dried leaves, straw, hay, sawdust or shredded paper. If grass alone is dumped into a compost bin, the pile quickly becomes devoid of air and starts to smell.

Most annual and perennial weeds also compost easily. Treat them like grass clippings: either dry them before composting or mix them with plenty of carbon-rich material. Vegetable and fruit peelings, as well as other non-meat leftovers — including eggshells, coffee

grounds, tea bags, and used paper napkins — can be added to any compost pile.

Things not to add: coal or charcoal ashes, diseased garden plants, glossy paper with colored ink, invasive weeds, pesticide-treated plant material, pet litter and human waste. Also avoid adding meat and meat products, dairy products, and high-fat foods.

Passive and Managed Composting

There are two main ways to set up the process: Passive composting involves the least amount of time and energy on your part. Just throw organic materials into a pile and let them rot! There's no need to worry about the technical aspects, such as the carbon-nitrogen ratio. However, this process does take longer than managed composting.

The managed process involves active participation, which can run the gamut from slightly more effort to a daily, major commitment involving large amounts of time and energy. Many people choose the middle ground, creating a passive heap of compost inside a three-sided bin, turning it weekly or monthly to redistribute the organisms and leaving the rest up to mother nature.

Though Nature Scapes does not compost on sight, we send our refuse to a recycling center. Whichever method *you* use, you can take pleasure in knowing your efforts are helping to solve a major ecological problem. At the same time, you are creating a product that will enrich the soil and improve the health of the plants on your property!

For more information, see Easy Composting by Jeff Ball and Robert Kourik. Published by Ortho Books, this paperback is available in most retail bookstores.



Smaller Autumn Beauties

Japanese Maple, Acer palmatum — This is a beautiful tree for small gardens and terraces. In the fall, it's leaves turn a deep burgundy color. A slow growing tree, the Japanese Maple reaches a maximum height of 20 feet at maturity and stays healthiest when planted in partial shade.

Winged Euonymus, Euonymus alata — In my opinion this is *the* most spectacular fall shrub, hands down. Reaching 15 feet at maturity, the plant has a fine-textured foliage. In the fall its intense red color lasts about a month, making it an attractive feature for any landscape that doesn't clash with its fall show. The Winged Euonymus works especially well against an evergreen backdrop. There is also a dwarf variety, *Euonymus alata Compacta* that grows to only 6-8 feet.

Autumn Joy, Sedum spectabile — One of my favorite fall-blooming perennials, this plant has vivid pink blossoms that resemble broccoli when in full flower! The foliage is evergreen, which is most welcome in the perennial garden. It grows to about 1 1/2 feet in height.



Japanese Maple Leaf —

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— Odds & Ends —

Safety Update — We recently completed our first year of "Safety Bingo". **Gerso Rios** won our largest jackpot to date, taking home \$139.00.

Employee News — Congratulations **Sam and Sharris Garr!** They were married this past July. **Terry Johnson** recently returned from Mexico where he helped his church build the foundation for a new mission building.

Who We Are

Cultivated News is published four times a year by Nature Scapes, Inc., for over ten years a provider of landscaping, maintenance, irrigation and floriculture services to the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Nature Scapes, Inc. is a charter member of GGIA – Georgia Green Industry Association, MALTA – Metro Atlanta Landscape & Turf Association and GTAI – Georgia Turfgrass Association, Inc. We also belong to the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

Natures Scapes, Inc. operates a drug-free workplace, as certified by the State Board of Workers' Compensation.

If you have any topics or questions you would like to see discussed or elaborated on in a future issue of this newsletter, please call and let us know.

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