

Fall officially begins with the autumnal equinox, when the sun crosses the equator and the lengths of day and night are equal. In the northern hemisphere this occurs on or about September 22nd.

While the scientific definition of “fall” may be based on day length, for gardeners temperature is a greater defining factor. Fall is defined as those months that follow sweltering summers and precede heavy frosts and freezes of winter. In general gardening terms, “fall” is the six weeks prior to the first hard frost, or in Central Virginia, September and October.

It can be argued that fall is the most important season for gardeners, not only because the garden centers are having great sales, but because it is the best time of year for planting everything from turf grass to perennials to evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. In the fall the soils are still warm, there is usually more dependable rainfall, the weather is cooler, and few insect pests and diseases are problematic this time of year.

If you have been considering making some changes to your garden, take advantage of the benefits fall offers and do some planting. The warm soils of fall will encourage root growth which will continue up until the ground freezes, and in mild winters straight through to spring. That strong root growth then takes off even faster in the spring, as does new top growth. A plant that is not placed until the spring is planted in soils still cool from winter, where the roots grow more slowly. By the time the heat and drought of summer arrives a plant placed in the fall will have a far more substantial root system than those placed in the spring. This well established root system will make the plant less susceptible to drought and other potential stresses such as insects and diseases. Fall is a time when rainfall that may have been lacking throughout the summer finally returns. These welcome rains along with cooler temperatures mean there is less need for supplemental watering in the fall.

Irrigation cannot be ignored altogether as new plantings need water to establish a healthy root system. One easy way to provide necessary water is to utilize Tregators®. These products are bladders that are placed around the trunk of a tree or shrub and filled with water. At the base of the bladder are weep holes that can be exposed by removing plastic tags. Once filled, the bladders allow water to slowly seep through the holes and into the soil above the root system of the plant. This places the water exactly where it is needed and reduces water losses to evaporation.

Shop those garden center sales for deals so that you can enjoy this fall with a few new landscape plantings...just don't forget to water your new additions!

