

## September

September's milder climate (cooler weather is coming!) makes just about any gardening task pleasant. The soil and air are warm but not overly hot. Fresh summer produce is still delicious, but production is slowing down. Garden tasks should center on cleaning up the old garden and getting the new one started! Now is the time to start pulling out all your vegetables that aren't producing. They can be cut up and added to the compost pile.

Soil amendments can be dug in towards the end of the month when the temperature is a little cooler. Be careful when adding manure on overly hot days. Let the soil "rest" for at least a week to break down so you don't burn the tender roots of your new plants.

By turning your attention to 'what lies beneath', the structure, drainage and organic matter in the soil, your garden will live up to your expectations and you will spend more time harvesting than weeding or dealing with plant pests and diseases.

If you're not going to have a winter garden, cover crops are an excellent alternative; choices include alfalfa, soybeans, fava beans, winter rye and winter wheat. Dig them in next spring two or three weeks before planting as "green manure" to give it time to decompose and not "burn" seeds or delicate seedling roots.

You will likely get a year or two out of your basic soil, but soon you will need to add a source of phosphorus. Crops with adequate phosphorus show steady, vigorous growth and earlier maturity. This means larger fruits and vegetables in the spring. Earlier maturing crops are less susceptible to summer drought, disease infection and frost. In addition, rock phosphate is rich in minor elements such as boron, zinc, nickel and iodine which plants need in small amounts for optimum growth. Long term and slow-release feeding, rock phosphate becomes naturally available as the plant needs it.

Phosphate is essential for growth, and is commonly overlooked by gardeners. Buy a sack of rock phosphate and sprinkle some into your bed. The bag will last years, and it stores well. Try adding a little rock phosphate to your beds every two years.

### Maintenance:

- Adjust your water usage. You shouldn't be watering more than 5 minutes twice a day, at this point. This will be lowered as the weather and time changes.
- Sunflowers - put them in the standing racks so they can be put through the chipper as they won't decompose fast enough in the compost.

- Tomatoes - pull off all tomatoes, cut up, and put in compost bin.
- Zucchini, cucumbers, peppers, melons - pull off any veggies, cut up, and put in compost bin.
- Corn Stalks - tie around shade structure poles as preparation for Harvest Festival
- Weeds, nutgrass – Pull the roots of the weed and put in weed bin ONLY. Not in compost bins!
- Sow cool-weather vegetable seeds indoors
- Groom and fertilize hanging baskets and container plants to keep them thriving through the fall

This is the last month to prune roses and feed them for their last bloom cycle before going dormant. Hold off on severe pruning until plants are fully dormant in January. Feed plants lightly, and water. Continue to water them only in the mornings to lessen mildew and other wet-foilage-at-sunset-with-warm-evenings disease problems!

Keep Calm  
And  
Garden on!

As always, if you have any gardening questions please contact us via:

[Communitygardensofsc@gmail.com](mailto:Communitygardensofsc@gmail.com)