



Fall is for Planting!

Don't put away your gardening gear just yet. There are many ways to keep your hands dirty well into fall.

Spring-flowering bulbs

It's not too late for tulips, daffodils, alliums, and all the smaller bulbs to fill your garden with color next spring. Most spring-flowering bulbs can be planted through November, as long as the ground has not frozen and the soil can be worked.

Plant your favorites at their specific planting depths. This information is often found on the bulb's package or you can ask the garden center's staff. Apply a thick layer of mulch after the ground freezes to keep late-planted bulbs from frost heaving.

Perennials

Fall is a great time to take stock of the perennials in your garden. Were some plants getting too big for their allotted space? Was there a good mix of color and texture throughout the season? Were there perennials in bloom from spring through fall?

Most container-grown perennials can be planted well into fall. Consistent rainfall, paired with cooler days and night, make the transition from container to garden less stressful to plants (and the gardener).



If fall color was lacking, popular perennials to include in your landscape include asters, late-season daylilies, black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, sedum and goldenrod.

Lesser-known but just as beautiful plants include Boltonia with white or pink daisy-like flowers; turtlehead with flowers resembling snapdragons on steroids in white or pink; bugbane with cream or pink bottlebrush flowers; and toad lilies with small, orchid-like spotted flowers in shades of purple, maroon, and white held on arching stems.



Prior to planting, be sure to dig a generous hole and add lots of organic matter like mushroom compost. Tease the roots from the root ball to encourage quick root penetration.

Plant the perennial at the same level as it was in the pot. Use a starter fertilizer to get the roots off to a good start. Make sure the soil stays slightly moist for the next few weeks, and after the ground has frozen, apply a generous layer of mulch.

Fall is also a great time to divide perennials that have bloomed early in the season. Simply dig up the entire plant and with a knife or spade, separate the root ball into pieces. Replant the sections according to the directions above.

Peonies love to be planted or divided in the fall. Dig up the root ball carefully. The new growth buds, or eyes, are bright red and easy to locate. Divide the root ball into 3 to 5 eye sections and plant the new divisions shallow – no more than 2 inches below the soil surface. (If you plant them too deeply, they will not bloom.)

Trees and shrubs

Most trees and shrubs do just fine when planted in the fall. Make sure the planting hole is twice or three times as large as the diameter of the container, but no deeper. Amend the soil with plenty of organic matter; mulch the root zone after planting; and keep it well watered until the ground freezes.



Many trees and shrubs can be successfully transplanted in the fall, too. The best candidates for a fall move include serviceberry, barberry, Clethra, dogwood, cotoneaster, hydrangea, holly, Kerria, boxwood, Spirea, Viburnum, and Weigela.

Dig as much as the root ball as possible and keep it intact while moving it to its new home. Plant it using the same procedures above.

Fall need not signal the end of planting. Plant in the fall and next season you will be surprised by the new additions in bloom for the first time.



Diana Stoll is the garden center manager and a horticulturist at The Planter's Palette, 28W571 Roosevelt Rd., Winfield, IL 60190. Call 630-293-1040 or visit their website at www.planterpalette.com.