

Central Missouri Master Gardener Newsletter



The Latest Dirt

OCT 2025

Newsletter of the Central Missouri Master Gardeners

Vol. 182 No. 01

Note from the Chair OCT Newsletter

Hello fellow Master Gardeners, fall has arrived. Although it still feels like summer the nights are nice and cool. Time to start your planting for spring. Starting with bulbs for spring flowers, Tulips, Hyacinths and Crocuses and a few alliums. They will all look beautiful come spring. Next is the vegetable garden. Mostly starting your garlic in the fall for a great harvest in June.

The JC Parks Department is holding a Farm Fest on Saturday, October the 12th from 1:00 to 3:00 in the afternoon, at the Hwy 63 ball fields. Please reach out to Karen Bond to sign up to help work the booth there. Karen Bond email is kbond3133@yahoo.com.

The November members meeting will be held on November 18 at the MU Extension Office in Jefferson City. We will have the Bitter Sweet Garden member Shirley Gassen provide education on "Winter Seed Sowing". Just in time for the March Plant sale.

Have you gotten your CMMG T-shirt design completed yet? The dead line is October the 31st. We will announce the winner at the November meeting. You may send your entry to Donna Downing, and her team will pick a winner of the contest. Donna's email is donnadowningjc@yahoo.com.

Please join us at the MRRL when our October guest speaker will be Dawn Sebion from the MU Extension office. Her topic will be using herbs in a low sodium diet.

Enjoy the cooler weather and the fall colors to come after the drought we had in August.

CMMG Chair, Edward Vitela
2024-2026

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***NEW**

History Corner

***NEW**



Susan Stork and Jim Wilson 2001 Convention



Barb Crader 2001 Convention

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10 Perennials You Should Cut Back Every Fall (And 5 to Let Be)



By [Lisa Meyers McClintick](#) [Birds & Blooms Editorial Policies](#)

Updated on Aug. 31, 2023

Winterizing your garden includes trimming back some perennials and leaving others until spring. Our experts tell you what to do to ensure success.



EYECRAVE/GETTY IMAGES

When To Cut Back Perennials

In the crunch of the annual [fall cleanup](#), remember to make time for perennial care too.

Cutting back foliage protects flowering plants from disease and provides a clean start for regrowth. But many [perennial plants](#) are worth leaving up if they're healthy, since letting them stand for winter can increase their hardiness and [benefit wildlife](#).

Dick Zondag, former president of Wisconsin-based J.W. Jung Seed Co., offers tips for getting perennials ready, if you choose to trim them. So, grab a pruner and start cropping these 10 plants.



PAULINE LEWIS/GETTY IMAGES

Cut Back: Iris

This showy summer favorite is vulnerable to infestations of iris borers, which tunnel into the base of the rhizome to lay eggs. Trim the fan of sword-shaped [iris](#) leaves at an angle so they slope upward into a center peak no higher than 6 to 8 inches. Then remove any dead or dried leaf debris.

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ALISHA NEWTON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cut Back: Bee Balm

Cutting back this plant keeps it healthy for the [hummingbirds and butterflies](#) that flock to it in midsummer. Bring it right down to the soil to discourage problems such as mildew. If plants show signs of [mildew](#), dispose of the cuttings instead of composting them.



SERHII BROVKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cut Back: Peonies

Gorgeous [peonies](#), too, are vulnerable to mildew. Grab the leaves and prune stems to a few inches after the first frost.



COULANGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cut Back: Daylilies

Clip back the profusion of [daylily](#) leaves that burst from rhizomes like fireworks. If desired, reach down near the base of each plant to secure a tight handful of leaves and cut.

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NEENAWAT KHENYOTHAA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cut Back: Lilies

Dick suggests paying attention to lily leaves, pruning them after they discolor. He says, “When they turn to yellow or red, that signals leaves are no longer feeding the bulbs.”

It only takes one quick snip of the stalk near the soil line, and you’re done. Sometimes the stalk comes off with a gentle twist.



ALEROY4/GETTY IMAGES

Cut Back: Phlox

Like bee balm, this [fragrant flower](#) likes to spread and can be vulnerable to mildew. Take it down to the soil during fall to help prevent this disease.



ALPAMAYOPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Cut Back: Blazing Star

This plant’s bright purple flowering spikes [often appear in butterfly gardens](#). Trim flower spikes and leaves to the base so it’s ready for another year of bold color and texture.

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Catherine McQueen/Getty Images

Cut Back: Hostas

Prune hosta leaves near the crown to keep the shade-loving perennial healthy. Keeping [hostas](#) tidy reduces the risk of slugs taking over and harming the plants once spring returns.



EWA AHLIN/GETTY IMAGES

Cut Back: Hollyhocks

A cottage-garden staple, hollyhocks can get gangly in the fall. Bring them down to about 6 inches high to reduce the risk of leaf rust. If you have seedpods, scatter them in fall for more plants come spring.



REVENAIF/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cut Back: Chrysanthemum

This fall star's flowers can be cut back after they've bloomed or been hit by a hard frost. Pair with leaves or other mulch, which can insulate the plant from harmful freeze-and-thaw cycles.

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Let It Be!!!



SCHNUDEL/GETTY IMAGES

Let Be: Sedum

While groundcover sedum will be buried in the snow, taller varieties might poke out from the drifts and offer some interesting visuals with their tightly clustered seed heads.



[UniversalImagesGroup/Getty Images](#)

Let Be: Ornamental Grasses

Dried [ornamental grasses](#) such as little bluestem, fountain grass or sea oats can rustle beautifully in the winter, or trap snow, which can insulate plants and shelter wildlife.

When to Cut Back and Divide Ornamental Grasses

Once established, ornamental grasses have few needs. “The big thing with grasses is cutting them back once a year and [dividing them](#) once every four or five years,” Dori says.

Most gardeners leave their [native grasses](#) in place for winter interest and to provide [food for birds](#). The time when you should cut back ornamental grasses is in late winter or early spring. Cut them back to within a few inches of the ground. “Cut back before the new shoots grow up through the old,” Dori adds, “or you’ll wind up cutting off the new growth, too.” In areas where wildfires are a seasonal concern, cut back grasses in fall to lessen the threat of fire.

You’ll know it’s time to divide grasses when a ring of living grass surrounds a dead center. “It’s easier to divide most grasses when they are still short from their post-winter haircut so there’s no foliage to get in the way,” Dori says. This is also the best time to divide grasses that [flower in late summer and fall](#). Use a sharp [spade](#) or [root saw](#) and separate the living portion of the grass into smaller sections. Aim for sections that are a little bit bigger than a softball. Replant the sections, water well and enjoy through the seasons.



JOOLSBERLIN/GETTY IMAGES

Let Be: Russian Sage

Almost as tall and wispy as ornamental grasses, fragrant purple-flowered [Russian sage](#) can likewise add texture and shelter to the [winter garden](#).

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CHRISTOPHER AQUINO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let Be: Coneflowers

Seed heads on [coneflowers](#) (*echinacea*) can look pretty covered with frost or snow, but they also offer important sustenance for [winter birds](#).



WETER 777/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let Be: Perennial Hibiscus

Leave stalks on late-emerging plants such as perennial hibiscus so you have a reminder of where they are. Otherwise, they can take so long to show fresh growth in the spring that you might think they didn't make it through winter. Trim old growth as needed when new leaves emerge.

Author

Lisa Meyers McClintick is an award-winning travel writer/photographer based in Minnesota, the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

5 Things To Do in the Fall



(Image credit: David Madison/Getty Images)

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By [Kayleigh Dray](#) published 7 days ago in [Features](#)

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Fall isn't the end of the gardening calendar. Far from it, actually, as it's one of the most important times for green-fingered types and critters alike – which means there are a number of things gardeners forget to do in September, particularly when it comes to looking out for pollinators.

Now, we all know that creating a [pollinator garden](#) should be top of our list of priorities – especially considering all the recent news around our shifting climate. That being said, there's an extra reason to lend a hand to all the [native bees](#), [butterflies](#), [hummingbirds](#), and other beneficial bugs as they search for food and shelter over the colder months. And, somewhat selfishly, it's this: what helps them helps you, too.

That's right: a pollinator-friendly garden is, quite simply, a better garden all round, whether that's richer soil, stronger plants, and heaps more fabulous springtime color. It's not as simple as filling your backyard with [pollinator-friendly plants](#) and letting them buzz about in the summer; you have to put the work in over the fall, too.

From leaving a few stems standing to planting late-season nectar sources, there are several things to do in September to support pollinators and give your garden a much-needed boost at the same time.

With that in mind, then, here are five easy wins to tick off before fall really sets in.

1. Step Away From the Pruners



(Image credit: Danita Delimont / Shutterstock)

When you're [gardening with native plants](#), there's a lot of maintenance to keep on top of... or is there? Here's the thing; while pruning is great for a tidy garden, and deadheading is a must for long lasting blooms, it can often be just as helpful to leave things be.

“Don't cut back [perennial](#) stems in the fall, as a lot of insects overwinter in the chambers of these stems,” warns Andrew Bunting, VP of Horticulture for the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#) and author of [The Plant Lover's Guide To Magnolias \(available on Amazon\)](#).

“If they need to be cut back, you can stack the stems with the bases facing outwards to create ‘habitat piles,’” he adds. For those who are simply itching to get out their pruning snips, there is another option: install a [DIY insect “hotel”](#) or buy one ready-made. Something like [Walmart's Wildlife Friend Premium Weatherproof Insect Hotel](#) could be perfect!

2. Plant Fall-Blooming Perennials



(Image credit: KenWiedemann / Getty Images)

Don't hold back on the [fall-flowering plants](#) – particularly [perennials](#); it's one of the easiest things to do in September to support pollinators and keep your garden thriving.

“You want to make sure there is a good pollen and nectar source heading into the fall,” says Andrew, who recommends

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planting native [asters](#) and [goldenrods](#) for this very purpose.

You can choose from a large variety of [asters at Nature Hills](#). Or, you can pick up an [Organic Goldenrod \(Solidago canadensis\) from Walmart](#).

3. Leave the Leaves



(Image credit: Joe Kuis / Shutterstock)

We've all seen the memes doing the rounds on Instagram, right? The ones which confidently state that they 'don't know who needs to hear this, but you don't need to pick up every fallen leaf' from your garden? Yes, they're correct; [fall leaf management](#) could be so much easier for all of us if we decided to just... opt out.

"Choosing not to remove leaves from garden beds in the fall provides a cosy habitat for overwintering insects," says Andrew, who points out that the [leaves act as mulch](#), too.

Leaving the leaves, then, isn't just an easy thing to do for pollinators this September; it's a lazy hack for gardeners who want to condition their soil, too!

4. Set Up a Water Source



(Image credit: Mae2011 / Shutterstock)

Setting up a [pollinator water station](#) might feel like a summer job, but critters get just as thirsty over the colder months, too. Now, you could buy [Walmart's Outdoor Bee Water Feeder Tray with Foam](#), but "even just a low pan of water or a bird bath is a good source of water for late-season bees and butterflies," says Andrew.

Just be sure to add a few pebbles and stones for bugs to land on, and keep refilling with clean water, if you really want to nail this thing to do in September to support pollinators like a pro.

5. Steer Clear of Tropical Milkweed



(Image credit: Sue Zellers / Getty Images)

We know that many gardeners have been [planting milkweed](#) to try to [help the monarchs](#), and, while this is a good thing to do in September to support pollinators, it's important you avoid planting [tropical milkweed](#) (*Asclepias curassavica*).

Why? Because this plant is actually a big problem for butterflies, disrupting their migration patterns and tampering with their reproduction process. Neither of which is good news if you're trying to conserve a rapidly declining species...

Of course, there is always more you can do for pollinators; for example, Andrew recommends removing a small part of your lawn and filling it with pollinator-friendly plants instead to increase biodiversity.

Little and often, though, is the easiest way to spark change. Try to keep on top of all the things gardeners forget in September (but pollinators need), then, and watch all of the local critters flock to your backyard over the coming months.

Birdsong over breakfast? Buzzing pollinators improving the health of your plot? Soil conditioned *for free*? We promise, you won't regret a single thing...

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Top 10 Butterfly Herbs to Spice up Your Garden



WEB2000RA/ISTOCK



By [Sally Roth](#); Reviewed by [Melinda Myers](#); Fact-checked by [Kirsten Schrader](#)

[Birds & Blooms Editorial Policies](#)

Published on Jul. 16, 2025

You know spices are useful for cooking, but some you can also grow herbs for the butterfly garden to attract pollinators.



Courtesy Niki Brown

Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare

A culinary old-timer that's been around since Spaniards brought seeds to California 200 years ago, fennel is a fast-growing herb that adds delicacy and height to flowerbeds. It reaches up to 3 feet tall and has abundant clusters of tiny, buttery yellow flowers.

The allure: Many butterfly species, including anise and [black swallowtails](#), flock to fennel both for its nectar and to use it as a [host plant](#) for their very hungry caterpillars. Songbirds love the seeds, too!

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LUCKY_SPARK/ISTOCK

Caraway

Carum carvi

Eat a rye bread sandwich and you'll see (and taste!) savory caraway seeds. The crescent-shaped seeds are produced by a plant that looks a lot like Queen Anne's lace, thanks to its clusters of tiny white and pinkish flowers. This biennial reaches 2 feet tall and may not flower until its second year.

The allure: As a host plant, caraway herbs are fantastic for black swallowtail butterfly eggs, while yellow-green sulphurs and metalmark butterflies stop by to snack on its nectar.

Backyard tip: Scatter the seeds in a sunny spot in early spring, cover lightly with soil and keep moist until they sprout. If you decide to try planting seeds from the kitchen, sow thickly to make up for any potential duds and increase the odds of success.



ROB BESANT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Nigella

Nigella sativa

Blue blossoms backed by a ruff of fine leaves make this flower look extraterrestrial, and butterflies can't get enough of it. Shake the oversize pods to harvest abundant black seeds for use in Indian or South Asian dishes.

The allure: Butterflies of all shapes and sizes, including [sulphurs](#), whites, fritillaries and coppers, are attracted to nigella.

Backyard tip: As an experiment, try growing herb plants straight from your spice rack! Use organic whole seed, rather than ground or powdered spices. Their ability to sprout will also depend on how they've been stored and processed.

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DINODIA PHOTOS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Cumin

Cuminum cyminum

With delicate white bloom bursts, cumin looks like a smaller, daintier cousin of Queen Anne's lace. The ridged seeds grow into branching annuals that stand 18 inches tall. Soak seeds overnight before planting for faster germination.

The allure: Blues, hairstreaks, sulphurs and many other [small to medium-size butterfly](#) species love to land on the herb flowers.



[weisschr/Getty Images](#)

Sesame

Sesamum indicum

Humans have been using sesame seeds for more than 4,000 years, making it the oldest known oil crop. This robust and drought-tolerant plant has tubular flowers that resemble foxglove blossoms and dangle from leafy stems that can reach up to 3 feet. It thrives best in areas with long, hot summers.

The allure: Sesame flowers can self-pollinate, but they still produce sweet nectar to tempt wandering pollinators such as butterflies and bees. [Monarchs](#) and fritillaries visit, as do [sphinx moths](#) and hummingbirds. Honeybees also love sesame's tempting blooms.

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[skymoon13/Getty Images](#)

Anise

Pimpinella anisum

Blanketed in snowy white clusters, anise is a tall annual that reaches 3 feet high. The feathery plants are an airy presence in the garden, and their star-shaped seeds have a licorice-like taste and aroma.

The allure: [Swallowtails](#) of every sort, such as two-tailed and [pipevine](#), can't get enough of its light and delicate flower clusters. It's also a host plant for black swallowtail and anise swallowtail.



[sherjaca/Getty Images](#)

Chia

Salvia hispanica

If you loved your chia pet, grow one in the garden. Chia seeds come from salvia, a plant native to Mexico. Enjoy sky blue flowers as well as the nutritional benefits of these ancient seeds, which are great in smoothies. Plant seeds outside in fall in Zones 9 to 11. In colder regions, start them in pots indoors in late winter.

The appeal: Monarchs, painted ladies and [red admirals](#) adore this oh-so lovely butterfly herb.

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Courtesy Audrey Alligood

Dill

Anethum graveolens

This annual adds appealing contrasts of color and texture to flowerbeds thanks to feathery fronds and bright yellow flowers. And dill seeds give the popular pickles their tasty zing. The allure: Dill is an herb that belongs in every butterfly garden. Not only is dill irresistible to anglewings, tortoiseshells and sulphurs, but it's also a favorite host plant of black swallowtails.

Caterpillar care: The foliage of dill, anise, fennel and other members of the carrot family is a popular place for [swallowtails to lay eggs](#) because the leaves are nourishing for ravenous caterpillars.



VLADIMIR CUVALA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Mustard Seed

Sinapsis alba

Mustard seeds are quick to grow into vigorous, long-blooming butterfly herbs that stand 2 feet tall. Prolific stems topped with saffron-yellow flowers hold a passing butterfly's attention for many minutes—long enough for you to grab your camera and snap a photo. The allure: Every nectar-sipping butterfly in the area, from the tiniest of blues to big swallowtails and monarchs, enjoys this buttery yellow annual. It's also a host plant for [cabbage white](#) and checkered white species.

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FLORAPIX/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Coriander *Coriandrum sativum*

This beloved favorite has a split personality. Its round seeds are common in Indian cuisine, but its fresh leaves are what we know as cilantro. Clusters of delicate white, pinkish or pale lavender flowers top these 2-foot annuals. From New England to Montana, naturalized coriander grows across the United States.

The allure: Small to medium-sized butterflies flutter to these herbs, like hairstreaks, sulphurs, metalmarks and blues.

Author: Sally Roth; Writer, editor, naturalist, horticulturist, lifelong gardener



How many remember this at the Demo Gardens (now River City Gardens)

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RECIPE TIME

[Recipes by Rosie](#)

Anti-Inflammatory Creamy Chicken Soup



Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cooking Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 45 minutes
Servings: 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium carrots, sliced into rounds
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt (or to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 lbs (700 g) boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 6 cups (1.4 L) low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 can (400 ml) coconut milk
- 1 cup green peas (fresh or frozen)
- 2 cups fresh spinach or kale leaves
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped, for garnish

Directions:

Heat olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, carrots, and celery. Sauté for 5–6 minutes until softened. Stir in grated ginger, turmeric, cumin, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper. Cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Place chicken in the pot and pour in chicken broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20–25 minutes, until chicken is fully cooked. Remove chicken, shred with two forks, and return it to the pot. Stir in coconut milk and peas. Simmer for another 5 minutes. Add spinach or kale and cook just until wilted. Finish with lemon juice, adjust seasoning, and garnish generously with parsley or cilantro before serving.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY October



Meetings are held at the Missouri River Regional Library, 214 Adams St, Jefferson City, MO Unless informed otherwise! We hope to see you there!

Online Reporting Site: Hours must be entered at https://vms.momg.org/sec_Login/ please remember you need to enter hours on a computer, not a tablet or a phone. Again, all hours must be entered on line.

Enter your hours again starting in January.

Any emails that need to be distributed to ALL MG's should be sent to **CMMG Cole County Master Gardener** <cmmg@missouri.edu>— please don't call in messages

CMMG Official WEBSITE--<http://extension.missouri.edu/cole/cmmg.aspx>

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