Summer may be coming to an end but here in North Texas the fall growing season is just beginning! The average first frost occurs around the second to third week of November so don’t store your gardening tools just yet.

**Fall maintenance tips:**

- Fall is a great time to plant! Roots have time to establish themselves without the stress of summer heat. Balled and burlapped trees do best planted in the fall. Plant bare root trees in late winter.
- In early September apply pre-emergent herbicides to your lawn to control annual grassy and broadleaf weeds.
- In mid-October apply a complete fertilizer to lawns (high in nitrogen and potassium and low in phosphorous). This application will keep lawns healthy through winter and promote a strong recovery in spring.

**Watch out for:**

- **Brown patch** is a fungal disease in lawns, especially St. Augustine, that occurs as the weather starts to cool. Look for circular patterns of yellowing/brown grass. New green growth may appear towards the center of the patch. Water less, avoid over fertilizing and don’t mow when wet.
- **Armyworm** outbreaks can be difficult to predict but seem to occur after above average rainfall in August and September. Fall armyworms feed on a wide range of plants, including Bermudagrass. They often occur locally in large numbers and migrate together, like an army, feeding on foliage. They will chew the green layer from the leaves creating a clearing or “window pane” effect. Damaged areas of lawns appear off-color and eventually turn brown. Fall armyworm populations are thought to die out each winter. Low-impact insecticides are available, such as, Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt). Healthy and actively growing bermudagrass typically recovers after infestation and defoliation.

Fall **webworms** are a common caterpillar pest known for their large webs that contain many hairy caterpillars on trees and shrubs. Fall webworms can be managed by physically removing the webs, caterpillars, or egg masses using high-pressure sprayers or pruning. Beneficial insects attack the eggs and larvae and can keep populations under control. Webworm larvae stay inside their web so insecticide sprays must penetrate the web to be most effective. Bt is an effective control and will not harm beneficial insects.

**Something to try:**

- **Seed bombs**, also called seed balls, are a mixture of seed, compost, clay and water formed into balls and dried. The resulting seed bombs are easy to scatter among bare soil areas and can be used for starting native pollinator gardens. Why make a seed bomb instead of just scattering a handful of seed? It’s fun! Also, the clay and compost form a protective barrier around the seed, minimizing damage by insects, birds or soil-borne diseases. In addition, the compost adds nutrients and helps the ball retain water during the germination process. It is important to use regionally native seed that is adapted to our soil and sunlight conditions.

**Texas A&M Research and Extension ‘recipe’**

1 part native wildflower seed mix (also include perennial wildflowers and native grasses)  
4 parts powdered clay  
5 parts compost (mushroom compost)

Mix all three ingredients thoroughly. Gradually add water until the mix is the consistency of dough. Roll into ¼ to 1 inch balls. Toss immediately ahead of spring or fall rains or dry the balls in the sun for 24 hours and toss any time. Target bare soil areas that are not frequently mowed (about 1 seed bomb per square foot). For small-scale projects, irrigate to establish plants for best success. When practical, gently step on seed bombs to achieve good soil contact. Sow wildflowers in the fall to guarantee a beautiful show in the spring.
Here we are with our third and final article about your home garden. Having prepared and planted our garden, we can now really enjoy our garden, whether it be harvesting and eating right away, sharing with friends, or canning for later. Our cucumbers and beans are now “living” in some beautiful jars, on display until it is time to enjoy with family and friends.

In addition to our enjoying, fall is also a great time of the year to plant additional crops. Once your garden is harvested, you can remove dead plant material and plant new crops. If composting your plants from summer remember to trim the plants into smaller pieces to aide in the composting process. Also, diseased plant material must be either hot composted or discarded to keep from reintroducing disease.

Don’t forget flowers! The Rockwall County Master Gardeners were part of a four-year study of both hot and cold weather flowers in the area between the Library and the Courthouse. There are some excellent cold weather flowers to brighten up your garden during our winter weather. Traditional favorites include pansies, violas, and snapdragons. Plant your winter flowers in the fall once the summer heat has passed but before it gets too cold. This will give your plants a chance to build a stronger root system before the coldest weather begins. Keep looking around at your favorite nursery this fall to find some plants to feast on at your table, but also some to feast on with your eyes.

Thanks for reading these articles. I hope they have been a source of encouragement and information.

Check out the Fall Vegetable Gardening Guide for Texas:
https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/browse/featured-solutions/gardening-landscaping/fall-vegetable-gardening-guide-for-texas/

The Kimberly Queen Fern is an attractive, fast growing fern with fronds that grow in an upright fashion to approximately 3’ tall and 3’ wide. The Kimberly Queen does well outdoors year-round in plant hardiness zones 9 through 11. However, it does not tolerate freezing weather. In our area (zone 8a) it should be treated as an annual or overwintered indoors making it ideal as an indoor or outdoor plant.

Bright sun in the morning with afternoon shade is ideal. Remember that moisture is very important, they don’t like wet feet but will be stressed if allowed to become too dry. Spraying the fronds with water to increase humidity is welcomed by this plant. Remove dead leaves to encourage healthy growth and a more attractive plant. If outdoors, cut back close to the ground in the fall as they become dormant or early spring every 2 to 3 years to encourage new growth. The Kimberly Queen is highly resistant to pests and diseases and is a natural air purifier when grown indoors. When overwintering indoors consider using a humidifier and misting fronds regularly with water. Exposure to bright light is also necessary. If the plant becomes unsightly cut it back in the fall or early spring. Once the danger of frost is past, move the plants outdoors. They should rebound quite quickly.

Consider planting in a larger pot or dividing if they become root bound. To divide, use a sharp pair of gardening scissors or knife to cut through the roots dividing into reasonably equal parts. Repot or plant new divisions right away. Soon you will have even more of these easily grown and very attractive plants to incorporate in your garden area and home.
Dallisgrass control requires multiple applications of post-emergence herbicides. Products such as Celsius WG, Tribute Total and Manuscript are effective for control and can be found on the internet. Note: these selective herbicides are expensive, professional grade products and should be handled with care. If you have a lawn professional treating your yard, they may be using one of these. Research shows an application of one of these products in September when the temperature drops below 72 degrees for 3 consecutive days is more effective than just treating in the spring.

The most organic and cheapest “Do It Yourself” control is to remove dallisgrass by hand. Be sure to remove the entire clump and the underground rhizomes, or it will regrow. Use a shovel to completely remove large plants and backfill the hole with topsoil. You can overseed or sod if it has left too large of a bare area.

The next most cost effective method for “DIY’ers” is using a glyphosate product such as RoundUp. Dallisgrass sometimes goes dormant later than bermudagrass here. This creates a window of opportunity for you to make a single application. Be sure that the bermudagrass is completely dormant before doing this by checking the turfgrass canopy. Follow the label for application rates to dormant bermudagrass. A follow-up application in the spring with the selective herbicides described above will improve control. Don’t forget, glyphosate will kill any desirable turfgrass that it contacts so proceed with caution.

Dallisgrass control starts now

Pokey’s Autumn Rally!
I got my cocoa... my blankie... Let the color changes BEGIN!

September and October

Plant the following vegetables by direct seeding: beets, lettuce, mustard, parsley, English peas, radishes, spinach, onion and turnips. Also, plant the following vegetable transplants: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, garlic and cauliflower.

November

Fall planting is complete. The first hard freeze should occur around third week of November. Harvest ripe vegetables, spread mulch around other plants, and apply all-nitrogen fertilizer monthly to prepare your garden for spring planting.

Remember to check out: www.rockmga.org for your gardening questions. Research based information on vegetable gardening, plant selections, water usage, lawn care, trees, pests and more are available on the RCMG website.

Additional resources:
aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu
agrilifebookstore.org
Come see us at the Rockwall Farmers Market.
Saturday, September 14th 8am until noon.

**Save the date!**
October—Fall Plant Sale
November 2—Plant Swap
Details will be emailed soon.

Check out our **Rockwall County Master Gardener** page on Facebook!

Wednesday Gardening Hot Line: “Ask a Master Gardener!” Volunteers will be answering calls and emails every Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Call (972) 204-7660 or email us at: rockwallmg@ag.tamu.edu.