

# What to Do in September 2023

September 2 – 8

**Perennials:** If all the color in the garden fades at the end of summer, you can add late-blooming perennials to extend the season. Try asters, purple coneflowers, goldenrod, New York ironweed, perennial sunflowers, rudbeckia and other late bloomers (try plants like American burnet in moist areas). These will also provide food for beneficial insects. In addition, you can plant perennials with variegated and colored leaves to brighten up the garden. Many of these plants can also provide shelter for overwintering pollinators.

**Flowers:** Many flowers that are annuals in our climate are perennials in more temperate areas, including coleus, geraniums and impatiens. You can take cuttings of healthy insect and disease-free plants now and grow them indoors, you can have color all winter and good-sized plants ready to go outside in the spring.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Now is a good time to plant commonly grown fall crops: arugula, beets, cabbage, carrots, fennel, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, peas, parsley, radicchio, radishes, spinach, turnip and more. You can tuck a few plants of smaller vegetables into available gaps in the main season crops if these are still going strong. September is a big month for ripening fruit. Check tree fruit and other fruiting plants regularly to harvest at peak condition.

**Trees and Shrubs:** As the weather cools through the end of the month you may plant needle-leaved evergreens, such as cedars, pines, spruces and yews and extra-hardy *containerized* broad-leaved evergreens (American holly, andromeda and mountain laurel). It's better to wait until early spring to plant most broadleaved evergreens (including those mentioned above if they are balled and burlapped), Japanese maples and marginally hardy trees and shrubs. Water any new plantings as needed until soil evaporation slows. Unless you are removing dead, damaged, or diseased parts, avoid pruning as this may encourage new growth. Pruning can disrupt the hardening off process, leaving plants vulnerable to winter injury. This new growth may be injured or die when freezing temperatures arrive.

**Lawns:** Early fall as the weather begins to cool is the perfect time to attend to the lawn. If you are no longer experiencing heat stress in your area, you can start reseeding and other tasks now. Prepare the soil well for a new lawn by incorporating amendments indicated by a soil test. Soil labs can test the soil for organic matter, usually an add-on at an additional cost. (You'll save money and work if there is no need to purchase and add compost). Seed must be planted, or sod lain in loose soil with good soil contact. Use high quality disease-resistant grass varieties. Shade mixes require **at least** four hours of direct sunlight, sun mixes **at least** six hours of direct sun. Overseed established lawns as needed to increase turf density.

**Houseplants:** Here's a way to create houseplants that work for you: Pot up healthy insect and disease-free herbs including basil, chives, parsley and oregano to extend the season. Gradually acclimate the plants to indoor conditions and place potted herbs in the brightest, sunniest space available. Consider starting annual herbs such as cilantro and dill from seed indoors. Rosemary, thyme and other evergreen herbs may best be kept in a semi-dormant state, under bright but cool conditions.

**General:** Invasive spotted lanternfly (SLF) adults are actively feeding on many plants as they mate and begin to lay eggs. The insects are especially attracted to tree of heaven and grape vines, but their eggs can be deposited on many surfaces in addition to trees. If you live in, plan to travel, or have recently returned from a place where SLF is established, be sure to check your vehicle and any items kept outdoors for hitchhiking lanternflies or their eggs, and remove all before traveling (a flashlight and mirror may be helpful in hard to see spaces). See below for information on how to deal with this invasive pest. For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly>

## **Spotted Lanternfly: It's here, what now? September 12, 2023, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm**

Speaker: Brian Eshenaur, NYS IPM Program

The Spotted Lanternfly arrived first in New York City in 2020 and is now established in the lower Hudson Valley including Westchester County. This invasive planthopper can become a real nuisance in landscapes and is a threat to vineyards. In this session we'll review images of this insect so it can be recognized in its different life stages which range from tan egg masses to tiny crawling black nymphs to the adult with polka dotted outer wings and bright-orange underwings. We'll describe its life cycle and the favorite plants it feeds on. From there you'll learn of the regulatory work to slow the spread of this invasive insect. By the end of the program, we'll discuss spotted lanternfly traps and all of the management options. Bring your questions as we'll set aside plenty of time to answer those!

**Register here:** [https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_7w2LHso4RISrGNXsMtDXuw](https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7w2LHso4RISrGNXsMtDXuw)

## **September 9 – 15**

**Perennials and Flowers:** Living ground covers, such as dianthus and creeping phlox, are becoming increasingly popular. If you plan to use ground cover as a natural mulch in the garden, a thin layer of organic mulch (approximately one inch thick) such as shredded bark or leaves between plants can help suppress weeds as the plants become established. Keep mulch from collecting against the base of the plants where it can promote rot. Consider using free fallen leaves that don't mat down. These leaves can provide shelter for overwintering beneficials.

**Flowers:** Dig up cold-sensitive plants such as zonal geraniums well in advance of the first frost (before you turn on the heat indoors). Pot them up to grow as houseplants or store them in a cool place. Water stored plants occasionally to keep the plants from shriveling. Dig caladiums when the foliage begins to yellow or at the first frost. Wait until frost kills the tops of tuberous begonias, canna lilies, dahlias and gladiolas before lifting them from the soil. In the warmer parts of our region (USDA zone 7a), cannas, dahlias and gladiolas may overwinter in the ground with protection.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** To ensure that you have home grown greens throughout the fall, continue to sow lettuce, kale, spinach and other greens. You can use a cold frame to extend the harvest. Keep up with the harvest of maturing vegetables and tree fruit such as apples, pears (pick while slightly unripe), peaches, plums, and brambles such as blackberries and raspberries. Start (or add to) a compost pile. Use a ratio of one part healthy "greens" (such as disease-free spent vegetables and other garden plants, weeds without seeds or other propagules) and 2 parts "browns" (such as fallen leaves, woodchips, and/or shredded paper or cardboard).

**Trees and Shrubs:** Tree and shrub growth is beginning to slow in preparation for winter. Avoid the use of fertilizer, especially now (woody plants should not be fertilized at any time unless there is a demonstrated need as indicated by a soil test). Fertilization and pruning (which encourage new growth) at this time may disrupt the hardening off process and leave plants vulnerable to winter injury. Growth that appears in fall could be injured or die when freezing temperatures arrive.

**Lawns:** If you need to fertilize the lawn, early fall is the best time for high maintenance cool-season grasses. This can reduce the chance of nutrient-laden runoff that adds to water pollution. If you are managing a low maintenance lawn, you may choose to fertilize only at this time, if needed. Older, well established lawns may not require fertilization at all, especially if clover mixed into the lawn, clippings are returned, and leaves are mulched in whenever possible. If indicated by a soil test, apply fertilizer as recommended on the bag.

**Houseplants:** To acclimate plants to the great indoors, bring them in about a month before you would turn on the heat. This means that right about now, you should be readying them for the move by cutting off overgrowth, repotting them if needed and dealing with any pests. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

**Curious about the spotted lanternfly? Join us on Tuesday.**

**Spotted Lanternfly: It's here, what now? September 12, 2023, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm**

Speaker: Brian Eshenaur, NYS IPM Program

The Spotted Lanternfly arrived first in New York City in 2020 and is now established in the lower Hudson Valley including Westchester County. This invasive planthopper can become a real nuisance in landscapes and is a threat to vineyards. In this session we'll review images of this insect so it can be recognized in its different life stages which range from tan egg masses to tiny crawling black nymphs to the adult with polka dotted outer wings and bright-orange underwings. We'll describe its life cycle and the favorite plants it feeds on. From there you'll learn of the regulatory work to slow the spread of this invasive insect. By the end of the program, we'll discuss spotted lanternfly traps and all of the management options. Bring your questions as we'll set aside plenty of time to answer those!

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## **September 16 – 22**

**Perennials and Flowers:** Spring bulbs may be planted now. Consider planting them around ferns, late emerging perennials and other plants that can hide bulb foliage when it withers in late spring. Some annuals and perennials that have gone to seed will “seed around” and produce free plants for next spring if you leave them in place. If you already have enough in your garden, remove spent, seedy annuals and perennials before the seed scatters.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** For a spring spinach harvest, sow seeds of hardy varieties such as ‘Melody,’ ‘Tyee,’ and ‘Winter Bloomsdale’ or other winter hardy varieties under a row cover now and surrounded with a thick layer of mulch applied when the ground begins to freeze. You may also start them in a cold frame, insulated by mulch around our first hard freeze. They'll overwinter under the mulch layer for an early spring crop. Keep up with the fruit harvest. Remove overripe, damaged, or diseased fallen fruit which may contain pests. Garlic lovers may enjoy the Hudson Valley Garlic Festival at Cantine Field in Saugerties, NY next weekend: Saturday, September 30 and Sunday, October 1, 2023. For more information, see <https://www.hvgf.org/>

**Trees and Shrubs:** Fall is the best time to plant deciduous spring-flowering trees and shrubs such as beautyberry, redbud, serviceberry, summersweet, and more. You may also plant needled evergreens, such as cedar, pine, spruce, and yew through the end of the month. Wait until spring to plant broadleaved evergreens, Japanese maples and marginally hardy trees and shrubs. Water any new plantings as needed until there is a light freeze. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

**Lawns:** To encourage “deep” rooting of a newly seeded lawn, gradually reduce watering over a few weeks. Allow the soil surface to dry once the grass has filled in enough to obscure most of the ground. Water the newly established turf as needed up until a light freeze. Begin cutting the grass when it is about 4 to 4½ inches in height. Remove no more than one-third of the grass blades so at least 3 to 3½ inches will remain after mowing.

**Houseplants:** If your plants have practically doubled their size during their outdoors vacation this summer and are not going to fit in their usual space, try to make accommodations for a new place indoors with good sun and airflow. Alternatively, divide or prune them back before you bring them in.

**General:** The invasive Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) is spreading in the Hudson Valley. SLF is a serious threat to New York agriculture, causing harm to crops like grape vines. SLF can also feed on landscape plants and is a big nuisance in outdoor spaces when it occurs in high numbers. If you plan to travel or have recently returned from a state where SLF is established, be sure to check your vehicle and any items kept outdoors for hitchhiking lanternflies (a flashlight and mirror may be helpful in hard to see spaces). For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly> See a map of known SLF populations and learn more about this invasive pest and what you can do to help stop its spread <https://cals.cornell.edu/new->

## September 23 – 30

**Perennials:** Consider leaving some plants standing this fall to help feed the birds and provide winter interest in the garden. These include purple coneflowers, rudbeckia, sedum, and switchgrass. Document the garden now with photos, so you can assess how it is performing. What worked? What didn't? Early fall is also the perfect time to divide and plant many spring flowering perennials to fill in areas and remedy problems.

**Flowers:** Mums and fall annuals can add "pop" and interest to the flower garden now. Planning ahead, there's still time to sow seeds of hardy annuals such as pansies, sweet alyssum, and viola in gaps in the flower borders. With protection in a sheltered spot, these may give you extra early color next year.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Did insects, mites or diseases get the best of some crops this year? Bag infested plants and send them to a municipal composting site where the process will heat up enough to kill insect eggs and disease spores. Alternatively, leave them in the sun to heat up and dry out before discarding (avoid composting diseased plants at home). If it makes more sense to call it quits for a main-season crop, there's still time to put in some fast maturing fall greens. You might consider growing a cover crop instead, or getting a jump on fall cleanup. Look for resistant varieties to plant next year. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

**Trees and Shrubs:** Don't worry if pines and other conifers are dropping some inner needles. It's normal this time of year. Take a walk around the property, looking for dead or diseased trees and shrubs. Remove dead stems and diseased branches. If the job requires a ladder, consider hiring the services of a professional. Wait until November through March to prune oak trees to reduce the risk of oak wilt.

**Lawns:** You'll likely be mowing for another month or two. Don't bother bagging grass clippings and some leaves that can be mowed to disappear into the turf. These will return some nitrogen so the grass will need less fertilizer, and also add organic matter that facilitates nutrient cycling to the soil.

**Houseplants:** Water until some drains out of the bottom of the pot. Giving plants just enough water for the soil to get wet but never drain can lead to salt buildup and reduced root growth. A telltale sign of potential salt buildup problems is a white crust on the sides of the pot or in the soil. Shorter days and weaker daylight slow down most houseplants' growth, so they don't need as much water or fertilizer. Start to cut back on these now.

**General:** If you have an ornamental pond or other water element, cover it with netting so falling leaves don't make a mess or clog the pump.

The invasive Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) has been detected in areas of the Hudson Valley. SLF is a serious threat to New York agriculture, causing harm to crops like grape vines. If you plan to travel or have recently returned from a state where SLF is established, be sure to check your vehicle and any items kept outdoors for hitchhiking lanternflies (a flashlight and mirror may be helpful in hard to see spaces). For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly>