



by Kathie Marlow, HCMG

August Landscape Gardening Tips

Perennials, annuals and bulbs: Take a few minutes to pick off the dead flowers on your annuals and perennial plants. A little time spent grooming the plants will make a big difference in the overall appearance of the garden. By removing the spent flowers, the plants will not go into the seed producing stage and should continue to flower longer into the season. Perennial and biennial plants can be started from seed sown directly into the garden this month or next.

Container grown perennials, shrubs and trees can be planted this month. Take time to properly prepare the soil by mixing generous quantities of peat moss, compost and processed manure with your existing soil.

Spring flowering perennials can be divided and transplanted this month or next. Be sure to do this during the coolest part of the day and water the plants thoroughly after transplanting.

Shrubs and trees: Summer blooming shrubs should be pruned for shape after they have finished flowering. Remove any dead or diseased branches.

House plants: In late August, poinsettias and Christmas cactus should be brought back indoors and you should begin preparing them for Christmas flowering. Poinsettias are short day plants. Although they will eventually bloom, if you want the plants in bloom for the holidays they must be kept at about 65 to 70 degrees and subjected to at least six weeks of 14 hours of total darkness per day (mid to late September). Place the potted plant in a closet or unlighted room, or cover the plant with black cloth, black plastic over a frame or a cardboard box. The plant must then be returned to the light each day and given a minimum of 4 hours of direct sun, or 10 hours of bright light. The application of a 0-10-10 fertilizer this month and again next should help encourage the development of flower buds, then feed your plant every 2 weeks with a high nitrogen fertilizer once color has begun to show.

Christmas cactus needs the same general care, with the exception that they require cooler temperatures of about 50 to 60 degrees. Continue to watch for insect or disease damage and take the necessary steps to control the problem. Warmer and drier weather means it will be necessary to water and mist your house plants more often.