



Fall brings more than glorious color and crisp mornings - it also brings a beneficial time to plant new perennials, shrubs, and trees in the garden. Here are a few things to keep in mind when planting in the fall.

#### **Plants continue to grow in the fall**

Soil temperature and moisture levels are usually at a level that promotes rapid root growth needed to sustain plants through that first critical year in the landscape. Plants shift their objectives when the sun wanes and the temperatures go down. They stop the spring and summer work of making leaves, shoots, flowers, berries, and fruit. All the plant's energy goes into establishing roots.

#### **Less stress on plants**

Fall planting lessens transplant shock and allows the plant to build a healthy root system. With roots already established in the fall, plants are bigger in the spring and often can withstand dryer conditions during the following summer. There are also fewer pest and disease problems in the fall to deal with.

#### **Remember to water**

Even though the weather is cooler and plants are less thirsty while they are going dormant, they still need water. Recently planted shrubs and perennials and trees do need a deep, thorough soaking at planting time. Although precipitation generally increases in the fall, keep in mind that plants need to be well watered up until the ground freezes.

#### **Garden design**

Take some time to review what worked or did not work in your garden over the past season. Fall is an ideal time to move plants (or remove plants) if you feel that they are not working in their current location. Fall is also a great time to plant spring blooming bulbs. It's a good time, too, for dividing perennials. Division not only maintains the health of your perennials, but it's also an easy way to propagate your plants so that you'll have more coverage next season.

#### **Growing time**

Many seasoned gardeners and nursery professionals will tell you to allow about 6-8 weeks of growing time before the first hard frost to make sure your plants are established. For all the season's benefits, fall is not a good time to dig trees out of a field where their roots have sprawled and would have to be trimmed back. In Iowa, it's better to wait till spring to plant shrubs or perennials that are marginal—things like buddleia or caryopteris. Country Landscapes also does not recommend fall planting of redbud and river birch.

#### **Enjoy your garden more**

Planting in the fall allows you to enjoy your garden even more and appreciate the beauty it gives you season after season. In autumn, there seem to be more good days to be outside than in spring. Take advantage of the cooler days to prepare your garden for winter. Wait until spring to cut back sedum, rudbeckia, and ornamental grasses. The dried foliage protects the crowns of ornamental grasses through winter, and offers winter interest.

#### **Gardening tips for fall planting**

- Dig a hole larger than the diameter of the pot.
- Backfill with the natural soil - do not use soil amendments in the fall.
- Here's the most important caution. Do not fertilize after planting - wait to do this in the spring since heavy fertilizing in the fall can damage root systems and kill plants. A fertilizer that is high in nitrogen would encourage succulent, green, spring-like growth at a time when the plant is preparing for dormancy.
- Water well and continue to water plants in the fall if there is little rain.
- Mulching after planting will reduce weeds and conserve moisture.

#### **Call Country Landscapes**

As always, the Nursery Sales staff in Ames or Clear Lake is available to answer your plant and plant care questions. Stop out, call 515.232.6864 (Ames), 641.357.4919 (Clear Lake), or toll free 1.800.794.9795, or email us at [info@countrylandscapes.com](mailto:info@countrylandscapes.com).