



# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for September

By Cynthia Brian

*"Count the garden by the flowers, never by the leaves that fall." ~ Source unknown*



*Fill a vase with orange and yellow gerbera, grape leaves, and asparagus ferns to brighten your autumn kitchen.*  
Photos Cynthia Brian



*Kangaroo paw is available in a variety of colors. It's drought and deer tolerant with long lasting conversation inducing flowers.*

Summer is winding down and autumn is fast approaching. For gardeners, it's a time for deadheading our perennials to keep them flowering until the first frost. September is the time to determine if you want to plant a fall vegetable garden to provide fresh vegetables throughout the colder season without the headaches of weeds, pests, and water conservation. This month is also the time to plant a cover crop to enrich tired soils with vital organic matter, adding nitrogen while protecting the bare ground from erosion. Cover crops suppress weeds and improve the overall structure and water retention capacity of soil. Water conservation is an ongoing challenge. Scientists have now changed their prediction of an El Niño this winter from an 80 percent chance to less than 60 percent. Even if we do get substantial precipitation, drought conditions will continue to prevail. Keep water awareness in mind when planting this fall and choose drought resistant species whenever possible. Ornamental grasses take center stage as they sway in the wind with their feathery fronds offering texture and beauty with minimal water requirements.

- **PLANT** a cover crop of fava beans. This giant vetch can easily reach 4 feet tall. It is grown both for its edible beans and as a soil-building cover crop planted in late summer, then overwintered and tilled under in spring before planting.
- **VISIT** the National Heirloom Exposition with hundreds of farmers, "The World's Largest Pure Food Fair," Sept. 9-11 in Santa Rosa. [www.theheirloomexpo.com](http://www.theheirloomexpo.com)
- **SHOP** for produce in season. If you don't grow your own, buy locally grown at farmers' markets.
- **FREEZE**, pickle, or dry the extra produce from your garden, including herbs. Whip up a pesto paste with cilantro, basil, fennel, sage, and thyme, put into ice cube trays, save in freezer bags for whenever you want a quick and delicious sauce. Presto pesto!
- **GREEN** up your lawns by adding sugar chelated liquid iron during the hot weather. It absorbs quickly while building chlorophyll without promoting excessive growth or the need for extra water.
- **DIG** up your potato crop. Spread on newspaper to dry for three hours before storing in a dark, cool place. Make sure to store only undamaged, disease free tubers, or your whole crop will spoil.
- **RAISE** pumpkins and squash off the ground by placing a piece of wood underneath to prevent rotting.
- **PLANT** garlic bulbs, onions, parsley, snap peas, and arugula while soil is warm and sunshine is still abundant.
- **TIDY** the garden by cleaning up crops that have finished their cycle.
- **RAKE** falling leaves to add to your compost pile.
- **DEADHEAD** annuals and perennials to extend their autumn color.
- **CUT** fall blooming gerberas for indoor arrangements. Mix with grape leaves and asparagus ferns for a natural look.

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