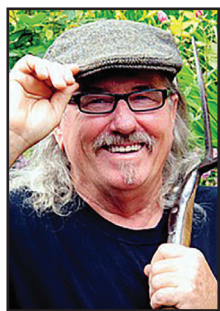


Getting started on that summer-winter transition

There is a tried-and-true wake-up call every October that alerts me to the fickle nature of Autumn gardening. Right on cue, it happened this week.

sweet potatoes, angelonia, and a scraggly tomato on its last gasp.

But to make a smooth transition for winter I'm already gently working up dirt between the plants I want to hang in a little longer, and plugging in small winter plants so they will get established and start flowering by the time I need to pull the larger summer plants.



FELDER RUSHING

It's not the colorful tree leaves floating in my water garden, or geese flying southward, or other natural phenology events. What gets me going in earnest is the State Fair, which starts out hot and dry, with attendees wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts, and then we get our first truly chilly evening causing the kids to put on jeans and jackets.

And it reminds me that Autumn is here. We'll get another "Indian summer" warm spell before a really cold snap melts cannas, bananas, and elephant ears into slimy goo and burns coleus and other heat-loving summer stuff to the ground.

That reminds me of an incident in Oz, when Dorothy, trying to douse Scarecrow's fire, splashed the witch who, with her classic "What a world, what a world" lament, melts into the ground.

Sorry, back to gardening. Main point is, we are all facing the dilemma of what is most expendable right now, and what can stay 'til winter hits hard, and what to do in between.

My zinnias are still glorious long-stemmed cut flowers swamped with butterflies, so they'll stay till frost browns them out. Ditto with peppers, basil, ornamental

lettuce and other cool-weather plants. This brings up an interesting phenomenon concerning heat and cold tolerance. We all can rattle off flowers and vegetables that love heat and die quickly in a frost, and those few that grow better over the winter. But there are some in-between ones that don't really like either our summers or our winters, and have to be coddled through one or the other.

These "half hardy" gambles, which include snapdragon, Siberian wallflower, lettuce, hollyhocks, larkspur, burgundy mustard, tall types of dianthus, and parsley, grow best in areas with long, cool seasons; they get damaged, stunted, or even killed

by the sudden hard freezes that hit Mississippi after several weeks of mild winter temperatures. Horticulturists have bred new varieties of those that can tolerate a wider range and can limp through the summer and perk back up in the fall, or which tolerate temps down into the teens.

But in general, I plant those for summer in my terrace garden in northern England, and in Mississippi I plant them in the fall and hope they do well before a hard freeze. Those that don't make it I sometimes replant in mid to late winter so they can perform before it gets hot again; sometimes I luck up and enjoy them longer than expected.

There is another warning signal to be careful: newly-emerging foliage of red spider lilies remind me that other spring bulbs are down there somewhere needing to be dug around, not sliced into.

But the State Fair says it's hard decision time. Gardeners who want a smooth transition summer-winter transition, get started.

Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and



Hanging basket of half-hardy edibles.

There's another way to bridge the gap between summer and winter, especially for those who are too warm-hearted to pull stuff ahead of time, waiting until summer stuff has already died down to start planting for winter. Containers can be started to one side, then placed strategically later. I plant super-easy hanging baskets of lettuce and other cool-weather plants.

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weeks at a local MDOT maintenance facility before being discarded.

Candidates may retrieve signs from MDOT without penalty. Illegally placed campaign signs contribute to our state's \$3.2 million litter problem that spoils Mississippi's natural beauty.

For information about right-of-way distances in specific areas along a state-maintained highway, call your local MDOT maintenance facility.

For more information, call 601-359-7074 or visit GoMDOT.com.

Central Holmes Christian School 2020 Homecoming Queen crowned



Hayley Haffey, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Haffey, of Kosciusko, was crowned the 2020 Central Holmes Christian School Homecoming queen on Friday, October 16 on Hammett Field in Lexington.

(Photo by Lamb's Photography)

Prepare a wildlife friendly yard for winter

Dr. Adam Rohnke MSU Extension

When all things "pumpkin spice" start filling up your social media feed, you know it's time to start winter preparations for backyard wildlife.

Many people feel invigorated to get outside and do yard work in the first cool days of October. To help you channel this energy, here are some easy tips on how to provide needed habitat for our critter friends while still tidying up the yard.

Prune landscape plants to maintain shape, promote and direct spring growth, and remove broken or diseased parts. When possible, leave intact vegetation on lower lying branches to increase cover for ground-dwelling birds and mammals. Avoid deadheading native flowers or grasses, and leave seed

heads in the landscape to provide natural seed sources for birds and small mammals.

Finally, don't throw trimmings in the trash; build a wildlife brush pile. Brush piles not only provide cover from the elements for wildlife, but also attract food sources such as worms, insects and other invertebrates.

Clean your bird feeders or hang new ones. Fall is a great time to clean, repair and transition to winter feed sources. Thoroughly clean all feeders with a 10% bleach solution and brush to remove heavy debris. Rinse and let dry fully. Routinely clean bird feeders throughout the year, dependent upon usage.

Black oil sunflower seeds, which are widely available, are the preferred seed of most backyard bird species. Providing thistle seeds

through a thistle tube or sock diversifies your offering for several finch species, including the fan favorite American Goldfinch. Suet feeders provide high fat and calorie energy sources for birds during the coldest times of the year.

Add sources of water. Water is essential year-round for wildlife to survive, but it is especially important in the winter. Daily water intake is needed to perform the most basic body functions like thermoregulation. Providing water can become particularly problematic during freeze periods when water is frozen.

Consider adding multiple types of water sources in your landscape, including bird baths and small backyard ponds with circulating pumps to combat freezing temps.

Political signs are illegal in rights-of-way

Press Release

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) reminds political candidates that campaign signs are not permitted on state highway right-of-way. To maintain traffic safety, the following rules govern the placement of signs:

According to Section 63-3-317 of the Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, it is illegal to place signs within the right-of-way on state highways.

The width of highway right-of-way varies by location and includes the driving lanes, shoulders and mowed areas; the right-of-way can potentially reach distances of 300 feet or more from the centerline of driving lanes.

Keeping the right-of-way clear prevents safety hazards and interference with the traveling public along roadways.

Signs with steel or wooden posts pose potential hazards

that may cause harm to roadside workers, may damage roadside equipment and may become projectiles if hit by mowers.

Signs are not permitted within areas necessary for clear vision at intersections; signs must not interfere with the sight distance of a driver.

No signs are allowed in limited access right-of-way.

Typically, the right-of-way is larger near roadway inter-

sections. Any illegally placed signs will be removed. Signs removed by MDOT crews will be kept for two



A purple finch visits a thistle seed feeder during winter.

(Courtesy photo for MSU Extension/Bill Stripling)