

# SEPTEMBER GARDENING TIPS

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By Jeanne Grunert



The picture on these September gardening tips is one of my favorites. I snapped this photo very soon after my dog, Shadow, discovered three abandoned kittens in the woods near our home right after Labor Day. The kittens were, according to our veterinarian, about 12 weeks old. Groucho, the tiniest of the litter, loved to hide in shrubs or plants like these mums. Mums will always remind me of that time. I never expected to have not one, but three kittens prancing about the house that fall, but here they were, and I fell in love – hard – for those tiny furballs.

Fall is the time for mums, for pumpkins and another round of pansies, for soft golden twilights and leaves crunching underfoot. September is the last month here in zones 6 and 7 when the garden is lush and full. We're harvesting the last of the tomatoes here at Seven Oaks, my farm near the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as peppers and green beans. The last potato harvest is gathered now, as are the sweet potatoes. We watch the parsnips, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower, keeping a close eye on the weather forecasts. After the first frost, they taste sweeter, and it's probably the best time to harvest.

But in the meantime, there are hikes to take, long bike rides, lingering evenings with friends. And now that the kittens are a year old, they sit with us, instead of hide in the mums.

## September Gardening Tips

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- Find a weather report on television, radio or the internet that you feel is the most accurate. This is hurricane season along the Atlantic seaboard, and August and September are the most active months. Learn [basic hurricane preparation tips](#) from the American Red Cross and take steps now to secure your family, your pets and your home against possible storms.
- In addition to paying attention to hurricanes and storms, listen to the temperature forecasts. If a frost is predicted, take steps to protect tender annuals if you wish to extend the season.
- Harvest the last of the warm weather vegetables: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, green beans.
- Harvest root crops: sweet potatoes, potatoes, beets, carrots.
- Wait to harvest other crops until after the first frost or two. These crops taste sweeter after they're touched by frost: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, parsnips.
- When vegetables are finished, remove the plants from the garden and compost them or throw them in the trash. Shake the soil off the roots back into the garden bed.
- Turn the compost one last time before the fall.
- Finish ordering spring flowering bulbs: daffodils, tulips, crocus, others.
- Move any perennials now, before the weather turns too cold.
- Divide and replant daylilies now.
- Plant fall annual flowers: mums, cool weather pansies, ornamental cabbage.

- Add mulch to plants. Place a layer of mulch around the plant in a circle. Mulch prevents heaving, or freezing and thawing of the soil. It also helps plants retain moisture near the roots where it can be used by the plant.
- Continue watering the garden if you do not receive enough rainfall in your area.
- Start feeding the birds if you take seed feeders indoors during the summer months. Make sure feeders are clean. A general, all purpose seed mixture is fine for most wild birds.
- Take down hummingbird feeders after you notice the liquid levels remain the same for at least two weeks. I often see a stray hummingbird or two in the gardens at Seven Oaks until October as they finish their migration to Mexico and Central America.



**SNOWBALL VIBURNUM LEAVES IN THE FALL.**



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Photos and text by Jeanne Grunert.