

HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

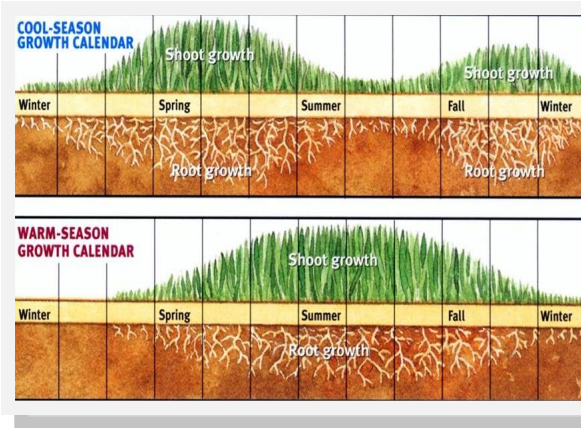
TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION RANDALL COUNTY

FALL EARTH-KIND® PRACTICES

As the temperatures continue to drop and our plants begin to wind down from the summer growing season, there are some Earth-Kind® practices that can be performed in the planting beds.

Fall Planting:

Fall is an excellent time to plant annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs. The cooler temperatures allow plants to get established in a stress free environment. Falls in the Texas Panhandle are typically very pleasant. The past two years, our first freeze has not occurred until mid-November. This has been later than a typical year where our first freeze falls around October 31st; only time will tell when this year's first freeze will be. Look for some great plant deals in stores. Plants are marked down as the growing season comes to an end. Pansies are a winter annual that can be planted in the fall, provide color during the winter while also establishing great roots, then continue blooming throughout the spring and into the summer months until the hotter temperatures finally cause the pansies to die back.



Fertilization:

Fescue lawns benefit from fall fertilization. As the temperatures become cooler, the fescue grass which is a cool season grass is no longer stressed by the hot, summer temperatures and shoot growth begins to ramp up again. Re-seeding fescue lawns in the fall is also a good idea. Because fescue grass is an annual plant, if it is not re-seeded, bare spots can begin to form. Bermuda grass begins to go dormant as the temperatures drop, so fertilization is not necessary.

Mulching:

Either establishing or re-establishing a 2-4 inch mulch layer on flower beds insures that moisture is held in the soil, weed growth is suppressed and soils are insulated which means plants are protected from winter temperatures. As the mulch layer decomposes, nutrients are returned to the soil keeping the condition of the soil favorable for plants. Mulch is available through most lawn and garden stores as well as larger stores such as Lowe's, Home Depot, and Wal-Mart. Several free chipping sites are available in the Canyon/Amarillo area.

By taking some time now to work outside ensures that during the winter, plants are protected and less work will be required in the spring. **As always, happy planting.**