

The Garden Corner

By: Art Kammerlohr

Master Gardeners of Johnson County, Missouri

The National Weather Service has issued their extended outlook for the next three months. Thanks to a stronger than normal El Nino our temperatures are going to be below normal with just a slight increase of precipitation. Don't know about you; but, that sounds like a perfect setup for an outstanding fall in this part of our country. So, what are we going to do with all the beautiful days to come? Of course, there are all the bulbs that got ordered many months ago that will need to be planted. Almost every package comes with the planting depth for the type of bulb you've purchased. Those depths are not suggestions; they're requirements for the best development and display of that particular plant. Also, might I suggest as you prepare your planting spot to incorporate a goodly amount of bone meal mixed into the soil. And, yes, if you use bone meal; that will invite the local critters to dig up your new flower bed! I take chicken coop wire and stake it over the newly planted bed to keep our furry friends out and the bulbs in.

Now that you have your bulbs tucked into the land for a bright, spring, shower of blooms; what else can be done this time of year? What about adding some trees, shrubs, or bushes to the landscape? By planting now, you get a tremendous jump on next year's growth. How so? While new or top growth will be negligible, the plants will welcome the cooler temperatures and gentle rains and will begin to establish their root systems. When winter does make its chilly appearance and the ground freezes causing the plant to go dormant, it will have had three to four months of good growing conditions in preparation for spring 2016. Now is a tremendously wonderful opportunity to plant the trees, shrubs, and bushes you've been wanting to add. Still have splitting of perennials to accomplish? What are you waiting for?

Are you thinking of getting your lawn in great shape going into winter? There are three actions you can perform to insure a beautiful start to next year. Perhaps the most ignored part of lawn maintenance is the failure to perform aeration of the soil. Our clay dirt compacts really nicely making it difficult for the roots of grass to go deep and become established. Aerating your lawn will open the soil allowing the roots to spread. Once you've run the core aerator back and forth across the area, reseed with your favorite seed mixture. Once that operation is complete, go ahead and apply your fertilizer. If we don't get plenty of rain, you will have to water to insure your planted seed germinates and grows.

And finally, I'll finish with my annual reminder of gathering the leaves that will begin to fall shortly. Mulched or shredded leaves make some of the absolute best soil amendments available to all of us; and, they're free! If possible, pick an out of the way place and create a mound of shredded leaves. Moisten them – turn them every now and then and you'll have plenty of mulch for your beds next year.

Soon the 90 degree days with high humidity will be visible only in the rear view mirror and we will all be out doing "gardening stuff" It will be time to reflect upon both the successes and failures of our efforts. Should you come across some question or if you want to share one of your many secrets, write: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or

email: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I'll get right back with you. Most of all: Enjoy the time we have been given.