

# PRIME'S CLIPPINGS

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## It's Fall! Get Outside and Enjoy a Great Time of Year

Fall officially began September 23, and as our days shorten we will enjoy several weeks of really pleasant weather. What is there to not like? For sports lovers it is football season and the Rangers are in the playoffs. For outdoorsmen hunting season has begun, fishing is great, and conditions are perfect for hiking, boating and other activities. For north Texas gardeners, Fall means harvesting *and* planting season!

We had some nice greening rains in September, (nice for everyone except the unfortunate folks living in flood prone areas.) These late summer rains always have an immediate positive

impact on our lawns and gardens, supplying a much higher quality water than what we have been able to supply with sprinkler systems and hoses.

A walk through wildflower areas found bluebonnets sprouting like mad after the rains. Of course, that means that henbit and a few other less desirable "wildflowers" will be popping up in our lawns and beds. Be sure you have us apply a pre-emergent weed control soon if you aren't already on the schedule!

After being cooped up in air conditioning for months, it's time to get out. See you at the stadium, golf course, hiking trail.....



## Finally—It's Time for Pansies and Violas!

The time for us to finally plant the cheerful little flower that so many of our northern cousins get to enjoy during the summer is here. It looks like October is starting out with temps in the sixties to eighties, perfect for pansies. If we jump back into the nineties pansies will struggle a little, and we always have to deal with aphids and cut worms until we get a freeze or two, but well established pansies will thrive through most all of our typical winters.

We will begin changing our seasonal color beds starting about mid October and continue into December. There are so many choices of colors and types of blooms. Some of the standards that we use are the Majestic series with large blooms and the traditional face. The Crown and Delta series has a similarly sized flower but no face, often a better choice for massing colors. Other types that have done well for us are the Silhouette, Matrix, Colossus, and Bingo series, some offering unique color combinations on each flower and the best pastels for a soft look.

Another plant that we are encouraging you to try is the viola, also known to long time gardeners as Johnny Jump Ups. There have been many color combinations developed in the last decade, and these plants may often be tougher than a pansy and better suited for slightly shaded areas. The flowers are much smaller than pansies, but violas produce many more blooms. The difference though is how they are used. If your beds are set

back from the street or viewing area, pansies will grow taller and make a better show. Violas work well in intimate settings and as a lower border for a large bed.

Ornamental cabbage and kale are the ideal companion plants for pansies. Available in white, pink, and purple, they will grow larger and are best in the back of the bed. Dusty Miller is a silver foliage plant that can also be a nice contrast

We work a good organic based fertilizer into the soil when we plant and then hand water the plants in. If your beds do not drain well or are not rich in organic matter, we will suggest adding compost, expanded shale, or other amendments. Pansies don't like too much water, but of course for the first few weeks they can't be allowed to dry out completely. Once they have a good root system established they will often do best with water no more than once a week or with only rainfall unless we have a really dry winter. Poorly drained soils and over watering are the two biggest reasons for pansy failure!!

We have contracted about 3000 flats from our growers this year but not all colors will be available all season. If you want specific colors *please*

*call  
ASAP to  
place  
your order!*



## Protect Your Trees For Just \$3.95

If you have young trees under 6 inch caliper planted in your lawn areas, protect them from accidental weedeater or mower damage with Tree Guards. These heavy duty expandable plastic guards simply snap in place around the base of your tree. It is particularly important to protect trees during the first few years of establishment and virtually impossible to avoid occasionally dinging them while mowing around them. Order yours today, we'll install them on your next regularly scheduled service. *That's protecting your landscape investment for less than the cost of a fast food lunch.*

# Best Fall Plants

I suppose at some point everyone notices that this is not New England. Our fall leaf color can be unpredictable, and even in a good year we don't have as many varieties of really colorful trees as some of our northern neighbors. We do however have several ornamentals that can be spectacular in the fall regardless of how our trees are doing. Here are just a few, both wild and cultivated that you may notice about town.

On the wildflower side, take a drive down most country roads that have some open areas and notice the brilliant white displays of Snow on the Mountain, *Euphorbia marginata*. The white you are seeing isn't a flower, but rather a white bract similar to a poinsettia. The sticky latex makes this plant inedible to cattle, so it will often form borders around a grazed pasture. Texas also has its share of wild asters in shades of lavender and white comparable to Baby's Breath. Bitterweed has been blooming all summer but is particularly noticeable now. It is the 12 – 24 inch tall solid yellow mass you see in fields and along roadsides. This little plant tolerates poor and disturbed soils and even grows in cracks in asphalt and concrete. Larger yellow flowering wildflowers might include cow pen daisy, goldenrod, and sunflowers. Wild morning glory is too invasive for the home garden but blankets fences and roadsides with lavender blooms from late summer into fall. We may also see patches of *Clematis vitalba*, or Old Man's Beard dangling from fence rows with its feathery white plumes. Some of the great perennials that have made it into the nursery trade and are widely available for your home garden include the tall purple and white spikes of Mexican Bush sage, *Salvia leucantha*. This is a spectacular plant

for irrigated or non-irrigated areas, often blooming sporadically throughout the summer but saving its big show for October. Texas Blue Fall Aster, *Aster oblongifolia*, is a soft companion plant with masses of pale blue or lavender flowers with a yellow eye that bloom throughout October. The yellow flowers of Mexican Mint Marigold, *Tagetes lucida*, contrast nicely with these purples too. All of these plants are well suited for xeriscape settings, often forming a more compact habit when they are not over watered. In our family of salvias, there are many shades of red, pink, purple, and white Sweet Autumn Sage, or *Salvia greggi* available, with a great show every spring and fall. For a sweet scent in September - October, plant Sweet Autumn Clematis and give its root system some shade or mulch to keep it cool in the summer. It will reward you with cascades of sweet white flowers every year.

The reliable family of Knockout roses from A&M will continue to bloom heavily into the fall. There are many other good roses that will put on a good fall bloom, it's just that few are as carefree as the Knockout series. And don't forget our 2 best varieties of Texas sage, *Leucophyllum frutescens*, Silverado and Greencloud. After a good rain these guys will burst into bloom with bright purple flowers and their foliage colors can't be beat.

We do manage a fair amount of tree color in some years. Watch for some nice yellows and oranges on our pistache, elms, crape myrtles, Mexican plums, chinquapin oaks, and even hackberries. We'll see some reds in our Shumard oaks, Bradford and Aristocrat pear trees, and watch the roadsides for masses of flameleaf and other sumacs in all their red glory.

## Landscape Season in Full Swing

Just a reminder that our favorite landscape season is in full swing. Now is the time to get most new plants in the ground. Do yourself and your plants a favor and give them a chance to get a root system established before we get into another dry summer. Our landscape crews are currently staying booked

out about 1 - 2 weeks, but in the Spring we may book out 1 - 2 months. Please think ahead and let us take care of you before the Spring rush.



## October Chores

- Pull up spent annuals
- Cut off tops of spent perennials
- Divide perennials
- Plant spring-blooming perennials, cool season annuals, and wildflowers
- Turn the compost pile

**Thank you for  
your business.**

## Moonflower - an unusual accent

Moonflowers are a unique feature in any garden. The large 4-7 inch wide blooms *audibly pop* as they open at dusk and then flower all night, closing in late morning. They are a favorite forage of the hawk moth, a fascinating night feeder with the size, beauty, and grace of a hummingbird. *Ipomoea alba* is the moonflower vine commonly available from seed, but my favorite moonflower is the more rugged Jimson Weed that is native to our area, *Datura wrightii*. *Datura* will establish as a woody perennial, growing to about 5 ft wide x 3 ft tall. It is tough as nails and now available at select nurseries.

**To Contact Us:**

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