

## Farmer Fred - SEPTEMBER GARDEN CHORES FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY, FOOTHILLS & BAY AREA

- Protect your backyard grape crop from scavenging birds. Attach flash tape to some of the branches; or, place netting over the vines and secure it to the ground.
- Tomato hornworms are arriving late this year. Look for them when they are actively munching on your tomato leaves, early in the morning or just after sunset.
- If your automatic sprinklers come on while you're asleep, take a few minutes to turn them on manually to check for any broken or clogged sprinkler heads.
- If you'll be renovating your lawn on a weekend this fall, now's the time to call the rental yard to reserve a dethatcher and aerator.
- Plant a short row of lettuce every two weeks until mid-October. The loose leaf varieties, including Green Ice and Ruby, do best here.
- Add organic matter to the garden bed before planting winter crops such as broccoli, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, onion sets, garden peas, garlic, carrots and beets.
- Ferocious winter winds that whip through the Delta and the Central Valley are on the way; check the ties on stakes that support young trees and tree roses. However, to allow a tree's root system to fully develop, don't continue to stake any tree that can stand straight on its own. One year for tree stakes is usually enough.
- Nurseries will have a good selection of tulips, daffodils and crocus bulbs this month for planting in October. Chill tulip bulbs in the refrigerator for four weeks before planting.
- Looking for perennials that will provide some Christmastime color in the yard? Plants for our area that are available now include euryops, primroses, freeway daisy and winter blooming bergenia.
- Add shrubs that bloom in the winter. Among the ones that do well here are camellias, daphne, forsythia and flowering quince.
- Shorter days and cooler daytime temperatures reduces the amount of water your lawn needs. Cut back your sprinkler time by 25%.
- Plant daffodil bulbs every two to three weeks from now through November to prolong the bloom period next spring.

- Nurseries have a good supply of winter blooming annuals in supply now; don't overlook their selection of onion sets, which will be coming soon.
- Keep cabbage loopers, aphids and whiteflies away from your winter vegetable crops with row covers.
- Feed your lawn now with a complete, slow release fertilizer. Look for three prominent numbers listed on the bag, which refer to the percentage of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus of the fertilizer.
- Remove the dead and dying summer vegetable plants from your garden. Work compost into the area, giving it a head start for next year's crops. A good rule of thumb: rototill in one cubic yard of compost for every 300 square feet of garden space.