



UConn Plant Science & Landscape Architecture  
Knowledge to Grow On!



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*"By all these lovely tokens, September days are here. With summer's best of weather and autumn's best of cheer."*  
-Helen Hunt Jackson

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## Late Season Plants for Pollinators

### Annuals



Photo by H.Zidack

- Zinnias are a long-season pollinator plant that will continue to perform into the fall. You may even see them returning to garden centers to be included in fall containers.
- Other late season bloomers like Tithonia, Lantana, Marigolds, Sunflowers and Cosmos are particularly important food sources for migrating butterflies and other insects. Hummingbirds are very fond of lanatana nectar, so they will benefit as they migrate through in September.

## **Perennials**



*Photo by Pamm Cooper*

- Native goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*) provide nectar and pollen for diverse species of insects and seeds for birds and small mammals. Different species bloom from August- late September or even into October, when other native plants are past bloom time. They are important sources of energy for migrating butterflies and for bees that are active late in the season.
- Other late season pollinator plants include Echinacea, Rudbeckia, Sedum and Asters

[The Fall Garden is Great for Pollinators](#)

[Planting for Pollinators](#)

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## **Late Season Cucurbit Harvesting**



*Ripe watermelon on vine. Note brown curly tendril opposite of fruit. Image: Utah State*

## **Watermelons**

Watermelons take 35-45 days to mature after flowering, but temperatures and variety will affect time to harvest To determine if a watermelon is ripe, use these signs:

- There is a curling tendril closest to the melon- this should turn brown and dry out
- Carefully turn melon over to see if the white blotch where soil contact was made is now yellow
- Rind should be dull, not shiny
- Thump the melon- sound should be hollow-sounding, deep and resonant. Unripe melons will have a higher pitched flatter sound
- Check the days to maturity as given on the seed packet. If it says 65 days, then it should be ripe at that time, but check above signs, too. If you do not know the variety, then use 1-4 as a reference.

## **Pumpkins/Gourds**

This time of year is when pumpkins will start reaching maturity. Harvest will be here before you know it! Keep these things in mind while deciding "is it time?"

- Skin should be thick and pumpkins should be firm
- Leave the stem intact to ensure a longer shelf life
- Never lift or carry a pumpkin by the stem

[Read More Tips](#)

## **Winter Squash**

Winter squash have many of the same harvest characteristics as pumpkins and gourds.

- Similar to pumpkins, the skin should be hard and difficult to puncture with a fingernail
- Leaving 3-4 inches of stem attached helps preserve the fruit

[Read More Tips](#)

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## Preparing and Storing your Harvest



Photo by H. Zidack

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center is here to help you get your plants from seed to harvest!

While we're not able to answer your questions about what happens once the produce is picked, we do have partners who are here to help you with just that!

UConn's Food Safety program can take you "from Harvest to Feast!"

[UConn's Food Safety Program](#)

[Home Food Preservation at UConn](#)

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## Native Plant Highlight: Shrub Dogwoods



Red twig and gray dogwoods both have white fruit and silky dogwood have blue fruit. Photos by Pamm Cooper

Shrub dogwoods like silky (*Cornus obliqua*) and red osier (*Cornus sericea*) and gray (*Cornus racemosa*) not only provide food for pollinators in the spring, but they are an important source of food for birds and animals in late summer and fall. They are

available at most garden centers that feature native plants and their a cultivars. Many can tolerate some shade and moist soils.

[Learn More About Shrub Dogwoods](#)

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## **Fruit & Vegetable Gardening Resources**

During the growing season, UConn Extension publishes a regular pest alert. Additionally, the New England Vegetable Management Guide offers a lot of information about specific vegetable crops.

The UConn Fruit Program publishes a fruit update, very similar to the IPM Vegetable Pest Alert. If you keep fruit trees, this may be a valuable resource for you!

While the target audience for these publications is usually commercial growers, home gardeners can learn a lot from these materials including identification and management of common pests in your veggie gardens!

If you ever need confirmation on an ID or have additional questions about what you read in these reports, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at the Home & Garden Education Center! We're happy to help your gardens thrive.

[Vegetable Pest Alert – 8/30/2024](#)

[Read Previous Pest Messages](#)

[New England Vegetable Management Guide 2023-2024](#)

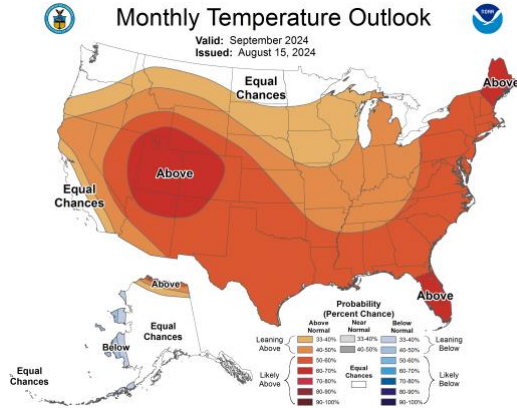
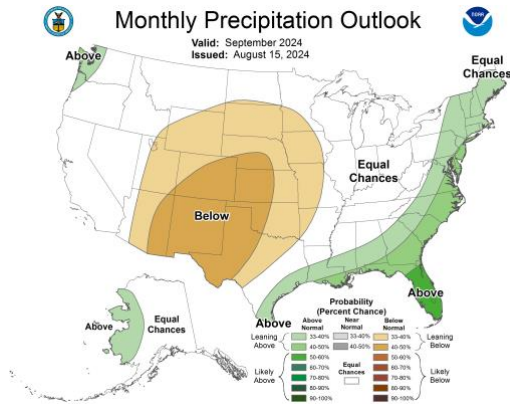
[Read the latest UConn Fruit Update](#)

[Read Previous Fruit Updates](#)

[New England Tree Fruit Management Guide](#)

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## **September 2024 Weather Outlook**



A seasoned gardener always keeps their eye to the sky at any time of year! NOAA's National Weather Service released their discussion about how weather patterns in August will bring us closer to harvest season!

### [Outlook for September 2024](#)

## Knowledge to Grow On



Read our Ladybug blogs written weekly:

[GMO Tomatoes](#)

[A Summer of Flowers](#)

[What does A PB&J have to do with Garden Pests?](#)

## Upcoming Events and Things to Do

- [See the Calendar of Fairs in Connecticut](#)
  - [The Mattabesett Trail](#) is a 62-mile trail that features some of the most outstanding cliff views and ridge walking in Connecticut, especially on the western sections. It links to many state forests, land trust preserves and parks. Other sections have brooks, bogs, hardwood forests and high ledges looking over the Connecticut River.
  - It's [Apple Season](#)! Visit a pick-your-own orchard, or find your favorite apple flavored treats starting this month!
  - Farmer's Markets are still very active! [Find one near you!](#)
  - [The Big E](#) is this month! Visit for agricultural displays, food, entertainment, and more! Starting Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>
  - Sept 15-21 is National Indoor Plant Week.
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## Educational Opportunities and Workshops

- [Letterboxing & Geocaching](#), September 12th, Hamden, CT
  - [Bat Appreciation Day](#) - September 15th, East Granby, CT
  - [Bird Walk](#), September 21st, Milford, CT
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## Upcoming UConn Educational Events



### **2024 UConn Master Composter Program**

Interested in learning more about composting and sharing your knowledge with others?

UConn will be holding its Master Composter program this September. The Master Composter program is a train the trainer program where participants will learn about the various aspects of composted and then donate a minimum of 20 hours volunteer time engaging in outreach projects that may include activities such as tabling at events, giving presentations or working with schools or community gardens. When outreach goals have been met, participants will be certified as Master Composters and receive a certificate of completion. There is a registration fee.

The 2024 program will be a hybrid program with two in-person Saturday sessions, September 14 & 28 along with two evening online sessions, September 19 & 27 via WebEx. The two Saturday classes will be held at the Middlesex County Extension Center, 1066 Saybrook Rd, Haddam, CT 06438. It is anticipated that two field trips will be offered this fall, also on weekends

If interested, please visit: [The Master Composter Homepage!](#)

Feed The Earth.....Compost!



**CT Invasive Plant Working Group  
In-Person Symposium**

October 29th, 2024  
UConn Student Union  
Storrs, CT

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**September Gardening Tips**



- September is a great time to have your soil tested!
- Early fall is a good time to plant trees and shrubs and allows time for the root systems to get established before the ground freezes.
- Visit a local nursery or garden center and select spring flowering bulbs to add to your gardens. Plant the bulbs among perennials, under trees and shrubs, or in larger groups for a splendid spring show. Choose colors that complement other spring flowering plants as well as nearby plantings. Work a little Bulb Booster or 5-10-10 into the bottom of the planting holes.
- Continue to water any new shrub or tree plantings until the first hard frost.
- Do not fertilize trees, shrubs and perennials in late summer. Doing so may cause new growth that will not harden off before winter.
- Use a mulching blade to finely chop fallen leaves of healthy trees and let them decompose on the lawn. Completely remove and dispose of any leaves that have shown signs of disease.
- Move the houseplants to their indoor locations before the furnace gets turned on so they can start becoming used to the lower indoor light and humidity levels.
- Pot up or propagate herbs to bring indoors for winter use.
- Watch for frost warnings and cover tender plants.
- Do not add diseased leaves or stems into the compost pile. Temperatures of home compost do not usually get high enough to kill pathogens and can cause disease to reoccur in your garden next year.
- Do not add weeds with mature seed heads to the compost pile. Many weed seeds can remain viable and germinate next year when the compost is used.

[More September Gardening Tips](#)

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Notice something going on in your garden? The UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory diagnoses plant problems including diseases, insect pests and abiotic causes. Submitting a sample is easy! For details, visit the [UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)

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Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micronutrients: Send your soil sample in for testing now to avoid the spring rush. For details on sending a sample, go to the [UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

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## Did You Know?

Bald-faced and other hornets/wasps will be looking for some serious sugars in late summer and early fall. Look out when sipping any sweet beverage outdoors, as they will be attracted by the sugars in soda and other sweetened beverages.



Photo by Pamm Cooper

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*This Month's Newsletter Contributors:  
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For Gardening Questions Visit our website:

### **UConn Home and Garden Education Center**

*UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center: We are on a collaborative journey working together with farmers, families, communities and businesses to educate and solve problems concerning food, health and sustainability.*

*Join us.*

#### **The UConn Home & Garden Education Center**



1-877-486-6271



ladybug@uconn.edu



<https://homegarden.cahn.uconn.edu/>



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#### **WHAT WE DO AT THE UCONN HOME AND GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER**

Plant, insect, and plant disease identification and control options

Advise clients on plant selection and cultural requirements

Receive samples for diagnosis either by drop-off or mail

Give presentations on gardening topics including IPM, pollinators, lawns, invasive plants and insects, landscaping and gardening with native plants, gardening to support bees, birds and wildlife

Staff a booth every year at the CT Flower and Garden Show- bring soil samples for pH testing & your gardening questions

Publish weekly blogs and a monthly newsletter available for free by subscription

Publish fact sheets, newspaper, and magazine articles

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