

WEATHER—This monsoon season has been fairly normal this year. But it seems the west side of Santa Fe has gotten more rain in some areas and out by me on the southeast side of town, it has been a little dryer. Many days I watch the rain clouds go around me. Still, I'm grateful for the moisture we have received. There have been quite a few days I was able to turn off the drip system and save some water.

September brings cooler daytime and nighttime temperatures. Daytime temps have finally come down to the 80s having been in mid-90's in August. We are just getting in the mid-50s at night, which is delightful, but those cooler nighttime temperatures start to slow down the ripening process of many warm season veggies, especially tomatoes.

To extend your season, we need to be prepared for some cold nights in LATE September by having row cover ready to throw over your plants at night and off in the mornings, so your plants warm up in the day.

HAIL—I haven't seen any hail this year at my place. I've been using 30% shade netting as hail and shade cloth over most everything and the plants are doing very well and that shade cloth will help if hail does come. I especially like it over my squash plants as they tend to wilt in the middle of a warm day, and they are much happier with a little shade over them. Looking back, I would get all 30% shade cloth from Johnny Seeds and use it as hail netting and shade cloth.

DISEASE—There is a fair amount of **Early Blight** on tomatoes this year due to the higher humidity and moisture from the monsoons. For Early blight, trim the infected leaves and branches off, **disinfect your shears between** plants with 10% bleach/water solution so you don't spread it, and spray the whole plant, both the top and under the leaves with **Copper fungicide** or **Monterey Complete Disease Control**.

There is also some Powdery Mildew on the cucumbers and squash and I have used **Monterey Complete Disease Control** for that too. You can spray for both Powdery Mildew and Early blight with it which makes it easier that I don't have to get two different products for different fungal diseases. I use a 1-gallon hand sprayer.

BUGS— **APHIDS**- I haven't seen any. But if you do, spray a hard stream of water on the plant but not so hard you destroy the leaves. Use organic NEEM or AZAMAX in the evening AFTER the bees go away and when it is cooler. **Do not spray on a warm day or sunny day or it may burn your plants.**

SQUASH BUGS-They are here. I hand pick adults and scrape off or cut off eggs every 7 days to keep them under control. This year one out of three of my yellow summer squash variety called Friulana got squash bugs. This is the first time in many years of growing them that I have had some, so I can't say you'll never get them, but the other 2 plants are ok.

GRASSHOPPERS- Maybe the shade netting is keeping the adults from getting on the plants. You can try spraying Neem in early evening or use Row cover over them.

TOMATO TALK!

So now we come into September with both the days and nights getting cooler which is good and not so good. Good because tomato blossom drop only happens when it is 92°F or warmer and the days will not be getting that hot again. The not so good is because it is getting cooler now at nights, it will slow down the ripening of the actual tomatoes. Is there anything we can do to speed the ripening process? Not really. Some people revert to putting row cover back on their tomato plants at night, but I don't do that. I just keep a close eye on them daily to see what is ready to pick and bring them inside to finish if they have some color.

I don't see any more blossom end rot, sun scalding or cat facing on the tomatoes. Sometimes they outgrow these problems. However, if there is a big storm coming, I usually turn off the drip system for a day or two to try to keep the tomatoes from cracking. But as most of you know, heirloom tomatoes are prone to cracking with their thin skins.

If you go out at night with a UV flashlight, you can see tomato horn worms to pick off.

HARVEST TIME

September is another big harvest month, like August and will be full blast right now.

CHARD/KALE and CARROTS—The chard, kale and carrots which have hung in there all summer under my 30% shade cloth are loving the cooler weather too. Harvest is good for them with the cooler weather.

BERRIES—The blackberries continue to do well with huge harvests, and the raspberries are kicking into high gear as well. This year in spring I used ***Epsoma Berry Fertilizer*** around the established plants and have noticed a big difference in the size and number of berries. I get so many, I put them in a single row on cookie sheets lined with wax paper and put them in the freezer till frozen and then, I put them in Ziploc freezer bags where I can easily get out what I need at any time and you can make jam with frozen berries.

CABBAGES—The cabbages are ready to harvest and should be cut off at the bottom of the stem and then I peel off the outer layers that may have cabbage loopers and keep the core which is solid where no bugs can get into them. You can compost the leaves or give them to someone who has chickens.

PEPPERS—The peppers are a little slower this year since I got a very late start to planting them since I was in Europe in the spring when I normally plant seeds so that put me behind. Now they seem to be growing but I'm not getting as much blossoms or peppers as I would expect for this time of year.

SUMMER SQUASH—The summer squash finally kicked in and the variety I grow every year called Friulana did attract squash bugs on one plant but the other two right on either side of it did not have squash bugs. I pulled up the one with bugs.

WINTER SQUASH—I'm growing Butternut squash again this year and they are really doing well. I rotated them to a different bed. No squash bugs out of 18 plants. Amazing.

DRY BEANS—All the dry beans I grow are for William Woys Weaver, a rare seed collector and they are doing well. Some of the dry butter beans I'm growing are starting to dry out and it is very exciting to see all the different colors of dry beans he sent this year! I really enjoy growing for him because these are rare beans that the stock needs to keep fresh, so they don't go extinct. You can't get these beans at any seed catalog. I give him most of them and keep some for myself, so my bean collection continues to grow as well as his. Plus, he pays me!

GREEN BEANS—I didn't grow any green beans this year, but people tell me they are doing well.

FALL GARDEN— Many cool season crops can be grown again for a fall harvest since the heat is basically gone. At this point, you can either plant some by seed or buy starts to get a fall harvest. If you buy starts from a nursery, you will be ahead by about 3 weeks than if you plant by seeds because they do the germination for you. But you can still plant lettuce, arugula and radishes by direct seeds in the ground because they germinate so quick and you will have enough time to still harvest them.

FRUIT TREES—September is a great month to plant fruit trees. Get your fruit tree varieties from a local nursery. Ask for varieties that are known to do well here in New Mexico. Good to plant new trees in September as it gives the roots time to grow more before winter.

FALL GARDENING!

There is still a little time to start a fall garden. The following cool season crops need to be started now-like EARLY Sept.

-Lettuce, Mesclun, Arugula, Spinach, Dwarf Bok Choy

-Garlic-hard neck varieties do better in our colder climate. Order now and plant in Oct. before first frost

-Shallots- Order now and plant in Oct. before first frost

FINALLY

September might be your last month to really enjoy your garden, so get out there before the cold hits and if we are lucky, we may get a long fall and be able to continue to grow and harvest through October.