

# Horticulture Hints

"As I leave the garden, I take with me a renewed view and a quiet soul." - Jessica Coupe

September 2021

September brings Autumn - but not usually here. September here brings the greatest hurricane risk. Our prayers and thoughts go out to those along the north Gulf coast, who have been hit yet again with a massive storm. Stay alert - we're not out of the woods yet.

Gardening is about nothing if not about experimentation, losses and mistakes. I made a big one. Or at least one that won't be an easy fix. I planted a crape myrtle tree



*Carolina Jessamine Mid-Haircut*

too close to where I already had a Carolina jessamine vine growing. About five years ago, when I planted the jessamine vine, my object was to allow it to spill over the corrugated metal fence at the front of our property. It did so beautifully. It looks lush, drapery, and spectacular in the early spring

when covered with yellow flowers. That wasn't the mistake. The mistake was when I planted the crape myrtle with complete disregard for the jessamine growing close by. The jessamine said, "Woo hoo! Something to grow on!" And proceeded to do just that. Three times this summer I trimmed the vine off the tree with little result. Within a few weeks it was trying to strangle the tree once more. Since I didn't want to move the tree, the only thing left is to move the vine. A haircut resulted in a vine about 2/3 less in bulk. But I can't even imagine what the root system is going to look like. I'll keep you posted on how this move carries on.

Ever since moving to Florida, I've been trying to decide what style of gardening most closely matches my own, and I think I've finally found it: naturalistic gardening. The publication *Fine Gardening* had several good



*The High Line, New York City*

articles online this month in their "All Access" section, concerning this particular style. The

style has become very popular of late with urban garden planners, as evidenced in the High Line in New York City and the Chicago Botanic Garden. It has also been called matrix-style planting, and layered-style planting. This style not only emulates nature, in that any given area is a mix of plants, but it also is low care, because the plantings are so thick that weeds are suppressed almost completely. And no need for mulch. The downside is that a large number of plants are required to make it really work. Picture a fruitcake, where the cake itself is the matrix, or foundation of the garden. This layer in a garden setting is usually a tufting grass, such as muhly grass, and should cover 30-50% of the ground area. This layer is visible all or most all of the year. Next is the fruit and nuts. This layer is a variety of annuals and perennials scattered in and around the matrix plants, and planned for their variety of seasonal peaks. The idea is to keep something in bloom each month of the year. This style of gardening is not only beautiful and low maintenance, but provides a great benefit to birds, insects and many other critters. If you wish to get more information on the subject, see *Fine Gardening* ([finegardening.com](http://finegardening.com)). See also books *Planting in a Post Wild World* by Thomas Rainier and Claudia West and *Planting A New Perspective* by Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury.

September is a great time to plant cool season vegetables. Root crops do especially well. While it's still pretty hot, they're getting a nice start underground. By the time their heads are showing, the weather is cooling a little, and when it's time for harvest, the weather will be what you might definitely call cool (or at least **cool-er**). But don't forget the collards, broccoli, kale and spinach. These often taste sweeter after a frost! Just keep the soil moist while the seeds are trying to sprout. And don't forget mint, basil and rosemary.

Some bedding plants to include for this time of year are celosias, zinnias, ageratum, wax begonia, cleome, nicotiana, gazania and marigolds. As your summer container gardens may be fading now after the heat of summer, you can either freshen them up or replant completely. Head into fall with a whole new set of containers.

Happy gardening!!