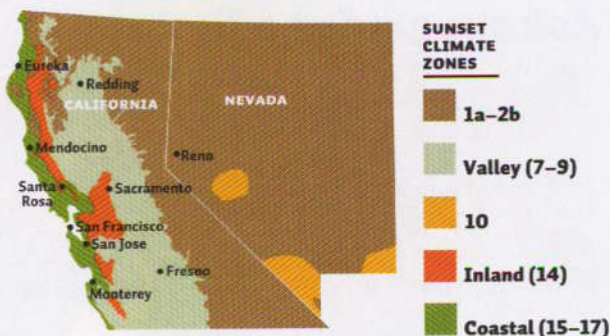


What to do in Northern California

September

WHAT'S YOUR ZONE?



Check out the *Sunset Western Garden Book* and our Plant Finder (sunset.com/plantfinder) for more about climate zones.

Get inspired and shop

Learn about sustainable gardening Attend the Late Show Gardens in Sonoma (Sep 18-20; tickets from \$20; thelateshowgardens.org or 415/721-1550), a new event focusing on landscape ideas that address drought, global warming, and sustainability. See 18 professionally designed display gardens; go to lectures by well-known authors, photographers, and horticulturists; and buy art and top-of-the-line plants including organic, drought-tolerant, and rare choices from well-known nurseries.

Plant now

Plant garlic In mild-winter areas, start bulb sets late this month or next for a harvest in early summer. In areas that regularly get frost on consecutive nights, plant them four weeks before the last frost date. Place cloves 6 inches apart, pointed ends up, with tops 1 inch deep (in coldest zones, plant up to 4 inches deep). Buy soft-neck varieties for braiding after harvest, or hardnecks for their extra cold hardiness.

Start cool-season greens Sunset climate zones 7-9, 14-17: Set out transplants of broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower. Sow seeds of bok choy, chard, mustard greens, peas, and spinach. For vivid colors and striking leaf shapes and textures, try these new seed selections from Botanical Interests (botanicalinterests.com or 720/880-7293): Asian Salad Mix mesclun, 'Bordeaux' spinach, 'Five Color Silverbeet' chard, and 'Ruby Streaks' mustard greens.

Tend your plot

Care for or remove lawns Deep-water grass to keep it green during this often very hot month; rake out thatch and aerate soil. Or replace your lawn this fall with shrubs and groundcovers that need little water. Check out a range of options for lawn-free landscapes on page 46.

Harvest tomatoes Let tomatoes ripen on the plant to their deepest color for maximum sweetness, then store them at room temperature. If night frost is forecast, throw a sheet over the plant. This month or next, pick the last fruits and ripen them indoors in a closed paper bag.

Outsmart pests

Manage ants Ants streaming up the trunk of a bush or tree probably are protecting scale or aphids from predators. Stop them with Tree Tanglefoot Insect Barrier (a sticky, chemical-free substance that traps crawling insects) applied to a collar of duct tape around the trunk. Otherwise, leave ants alone since they aerate the soil and clean up garden debris, advises Annie Joseph, an educator with Our Water Our World (ourwaterourworld.org), a program devoted to pest-management strategies that protect waterways. —HAZEL WHITE



Plant a late-summer bloomer

Grow 'Frenzy' gaillardia for a bold splash of color just as other blooms begin to fade. The flower's fluted petals radiate red from the center and end in blasts of yellow for a ruffled look. This compact perennial reaches 1½ to 2 feet tall and wide. Plant it in a sunny spot with well-drained soil. Buy locally, or order from Bluestone Perennials (bluestoneperennials.com or 800/852-5243) or High Country Gardens (highcountrygardens.com or 800/925-9387). —JOHANNA SILVER



Save cash by buying perennials like rudbeckia, salvia, and yarrow instead of annual blooms that need regular replacing.