

# Park Cities People

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## Letter From The English Gardener: October Odds and Ends

Fall is the perfect time to plant new trees

Patrick Butterworth



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Butterworth

Dear Bill,

I am thoroughly enjoying the book on John Adams. When you think of it, quite a few of our founding fathers were indeed close to the soil.

The perseverance folks had in those days was really something. Can you imagine not only being an attorney, but also a farmer, too?



Cockspur Hawthorne

During October, under a full moon, known back then by colonial settlers as the hunter's moon, folks collected the harvest, and prepared, packed, and pickled goods for the winter, and started to get the fields ready for the next year.

Little has changed when it comes to farming or gardening. October is the perfect time to turn over the soil, add lots of good manure and compost, and if you have the space, you may wish to plant some vetch or clover seeds in those areas that you will not need until next spring.

No, I am not wasting your time, both crops are legumes, and they add nitrogen to the soil. Then, next spring, once it starts to warm up, you turn over the clover into the soil, let it decompose, and in no time, you will have incredibly good soil.

A lright, apart from getting the garden tidied up in autumn and the beds ready for planting, do not forget, when you pull out the weary summer colors, freshen up the soil before planting those winter annuals.

### If You Go

**What:** Gardenscape  
2008

**When:** 9:15 a.m. to 3:45  
p.m.,  
Oct. 18

**Where:** Texas Agrilife  
Research and Extension  
Center Dallas, 17360  
Coit Road

They may look delicate, but because they bloom in winter, Johnny Jump Ups and pansies are greedy little plants. Make sure they have plenty of soft, well-drained soil to spread their roots.

So, you have been planning on planting a couple more trees? Now is a very good time to select both the spot and type of tree. When you go after new trees, be prepared. Pick out the spot carefully. Does the tree grow in your type of soil? What about drainage? Is there enough room for growth? Remember, the plant you plant in November will hopefully be growing for many more years.

If you want to learn more about trees for Texas, make a date to go to the Master Gardeners meeting Oct. 18, and listen to Steve Houser. He will be giving a talk about the best trees and shrubs for North Texas.

By the way, I still have this love affair with the Mexican plum trees, they're very useful for our part of the world. But if you want a real Texas-sized tree to make a statement, how about a Texas ash? They grow up to be very

handsome. Another great local tree, especially if you want a wind or privacy barrier, and evergreen on top of all that, is the eastern red cedar. Some folks laugh at me when I say plant soapberries, but yes, they are a good tree. They may get a few problems, but they can be very dramatic in the right spot, mixed with other suitable plants.

So, think soil and bed work. I hope you are ready to start a new compost heap. You really will need somewhere for all the old begonias and zinnias to go. They will help feed the garden next year.

There is still plenty of time to fill up some of those spaces with a few clumps of lettuce seed. I know, I keep on about growing lettuce, but listen, I resent paying for fresh lettuce when it is so easy to grow.

Now if you have a few twigs, about two to three feet long, make yourself a nice little teepee-shaped frame. Stick the twigs in the soil, then yes, here we go, pop those English pea seeds around the sides of your teepee. Not only will they taste good, but they will look pretty good while they grow.

The weather has stayed mild, so don't be afraid to feed the garden once more, as long as the plants grow, you need to keep the food coming. Plants are like children, always hungry, and need lots of love and discipline.

So there are a few thoughts for October, the month of the hunter's moon and yes, Sukkot, the ancient Jewish harvest festival usually starts around the new moon. In ancient times, while gathering the harvest, the tribes built shelters in the fields so that they could utilize the time to their best advantage, and of course, keep an eye on the crops.

That is what fascinates me so much, a great deal of what we do in the garden has been passed down over the ages, and how great it is passing on history and tradition. There is nothing quite so important as growing and gathering our daily bread.

As always, remember — the answer lies in the soil.