

THE PURDUE LANDSCAPE REPORT

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Fall Pruning and Planting for Indiana Gardens

(Karen Mitchell, mitcheka@purdue.edu)

Fall is quickly approaching, bringing cooler temperatures, refreshing rains, and fewer pests. It's a perfect time to tackle garden tasks, from pruning perennials to planting vegetables.

Pruning

Fall is a good time to prune out dead, damaged, or diseased plant material (Fig. 1). You can also tidy up perennials that have finished blooming and make light shaping cuts on shrubs. Consider saving some stems when cutting back the spent blooms of herbaceous perennials. When left standing, these stems provide habitat for pollinators and food for wildlife while also adding winter interest to a garden that may otherwise remain empty for the cold months ahead (Fig.2).



Figure 1. The highbush cranberry (*Viburnum opulus*) provides

year-round interest with ornate flowers, bright berries, and vibrant fall foliage. These spring-blooming shrubs are best pruned after flowering, but damaged or diseased branches can be pruned out at any time.



Figure 2. When left standing, the spent blooms of purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) provide habitat and food for wildlife while adding winter interest.

Do not prune spring-blooming shrubs such as lilacs, forsythia, or spicebush in the fall, otherwise you'll cut off next year's flower buds. The bigleaf and oakleaf hydrangea also produce blooms on old wood (Fig. 3). These are best pruned immediately after flowering. Always use sharp, clean tools and cut just above a bud or branch junction at a slight angle. For pruning best practices along with a comprehensive list of recommended pruning times for common woody perennials, refer to [Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs](#).



Figure 3. The 'Ruby Slippers' oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) should be pruned after flowering to remove spent blooms, maintain shape, or reduce the overall size. However, as seen here, spent blooms may be left for continued interest.

Planting

Fall is prime time to plant hardy perennials, trees, and shrubs. The soil remains warm long after the air temperature drops, giving roots time to establish before the ground freezes. Aim to finish planting by mid-to-late October in most parts of Indiana. Consider natives such as purple coneflower (Fig. 4), serviceberry, or buttonbush for low-maintenance beauty. Visit the Indiana Native Plant Society's [Native Plant Finder](#) to explore other native options for your landscape.

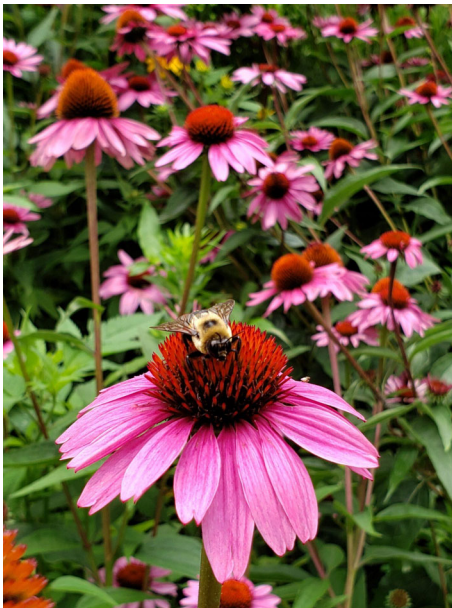


Figure 4. Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) has a long bloom period starting in June and extending into September or October. The vibrant blooms also provide food for a wide range of pollinators.

It's also the season for planting bulbs for spring blooms and

vegetables for a fall harvest. Tulips, daffodils, and crocus should be planted before the soil freezes to provide a burst of early spring color. You can also sow quick-growing cool-season vegetables like leaf lettuce, spinach, and radishes for a fall harvest (Fig. 5). Check out [The Fall Vegetable Garden](#) for a planting guide on cool-season vegetables.



Figure 5. The cooler conditions in fall are ideal for cool-season crops like spinach, which prefer temperatures between 50°F and 60°F.

Prep for Winter Protection & Spring Success

Trees, shrubs, and perennials should continue to be irrigated deeply up until the ground freezes. Add a layer of mulch after the soil cools to insulate roots from harsh temperature swings. Be sure to keep mulch a few inches away from tree trunks or shrub stems to prevent rot or rodent damage (Fig. 6). [Winterize Your Trees](#) offers more tips on protecting your perennials from the often frigid and dry conditions of an Indiana winter.



Figure 6. Adding a layer of mulch around trees and shrubs insulate the roots from harsh temperatures and help to retain moisture. However, avoid piling mulch against the trunk. Volcano mulching, as seen here, causes problems such as rot and provides shelter for rodents as they chew on the trunk.

Referenced resources

Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs – Purdue Extension HO-4-W

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-4-W.pdf>

Indiana Native Plant Society's – Native Plant Finder

<https://finder.indiananativeplants.org/>

The Fall Vegetable Garden – Purdue Extension HO-66-W

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-66-W.pdf>

Winterize Your Trees – Purdue Extension FNR-484-W

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/fnr/fnr-484-w.pdf>

International Society of Arboriculture Find an Arborist Tool Update For Both Tree Owners/Managers and ISA Certified Arborists

(Ben McCallister, bmccalli@purdue.edu)

Having a healthy tree canopy around your home and throughout your community is something that benefits all. Ask most elementary students what trees do for us, and they will almost always come up with answers like clean air and shade, but they do so much more for us. Trees not only provide oxygen, but they also clean the air, filtering out pollutants. With shade comes a cooling factor that can help conserve energy use in our homes and make sidewalks and streets more comfortable, increasing community spirits and boosting local economies. Trees filter water and reduce stress on city wastewater systems by soaking up water in storms and preventing soil erosion. We can get food from trees, use them for noise reduction, and as visual barriers. They help people heal faster, reduce violence, and bring people together. The benefits of trees go on and on, but caring for trees can be dangerous to do on your own without the proper training. This is where a certified arborist comes into play. Finding experienced and professional tree care specialists can be a difficult task. It can also be a challenge for professional arborists to promote themselves.

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) provides training and certification for arborists around the world. ISA Certified Arborists are recognized as qualified, competent, and safe tree care professionals who are sought out by the public, government organizations, and other professions. ISA provides a useful tool to find local arborists in your area. The *Find An Arborist* tool at www.treesaregood.com assists tree owners/managers with locating ISA Certified arborists. This tool has recently been updated. Users can search by multiple resources. Narrowing by credentials can lead to not only certified arborists, but Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, Certified Urban Forest Professional, or Certified Arborist Utility Specialist, to name a few, or searching by location allows for statewide or city searches, and with the city, you can specify the surrounding radius to search within (Fig. 1). A skills search can assist with your needs, for example, whether you

require pruning and removals, diagnostics, community tree assessment, or appraisal (Fig. 2).

The screenshot displays the 'Find an Arborist' search tool interface. It features three main filter sections: 'Credentials', 'Location', and 'Skills'. The 'Credentials' section includes checkboxes for 'ISA Certified Arborist' (checked), 'ISA Certified Urban Forest Professional', 'ISA Certified Arborist Utility Specialist', 'ISA Certified Tree Climber', 'ISA Certified Tree Worker Aerial Lift Specialist', and 'ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification' (checked). The 'Location' section has a 'Filter by city' dropdown set to 'West Lafayette, IN, USA', a 'Specify a surrounding radius' checkbox (checked), and a 'Unit' selector set to 'Miles'. A radius slider is shown with 'Selected radius: 30 miles'. The 'Skills' section includes checkboxes for 'advanced tree diagnosis' (checked), 'aerial rescue', 'arboriculture', 'communication', and 'community tree assessment'. Each filter section has a 'Clear' button. The interface is clean and modern, with green accents for checked items and clear buttons.

Figure 1: Search by Credentials or Location.

Figure 2: Search by Skills.

This update is for Certified Arborists as well. With the changes to the search tool, ISA professionals will need to update their profiles. The Find an Arborist tool is now being populated from Accredible instead of ISA's database. Due to privacy reasons, Accredible cannot automatically populate certain information, like someone's location. However, every credential holder can go into their profile and opt to input their location, as well as other things like a photo, website, LinkedIn profile, etc. So, if you are an ISA credentialed professional and would like to be searchable, be sure to log into your profile to make the needed changes.

Super cool & super dry for August's end: How the weather tables have turned

(Jacob Dolinger, jdolinge@purdue.edu)

With brute and sudden force, the atmosphere is doing its job: acting like a fluid. Weather is not a precise science, which means the atmosphere is constantly shifting. There tends to be some sort of pattern shift come mid-late August, and it looks like it's just about here. Temperatures are on their way down, as the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) predicts a nearly 100% chance of sustained below-normal temperatures 6-10 days out from writing, so August 26-30 (Figure

1). We're talking lows in the upper 40s in certain spots across northern Indiana—brrr! Cities like Fort Wayne, Lafayette, South Bend, and Valparaiso could be seeing these temperatures. The last time minimum temperatures dropped below 50°F in Lafayette and South Bend was on June 2.

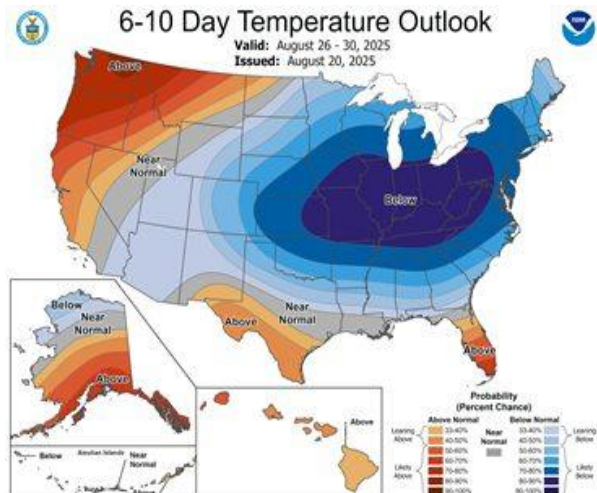


Figure 1: The CPC indicates a nearly 100% chance of below normal temperatures over much of the Midwest.

This is all welcome news for anyone who has worked outdoors and has not enjoyed what has been an incredibly humid summer. The Lafayette area has had the second-highest number of dew points greater than 70°F this summer. For reference, dew points of 65°F-70°F are generally considered humid, while dew points above 70°F are very humid. Dew points can also reach above 75°F, as they have on several occasions this summer, and that is considered oppressive humidity. We're going to see some very low dew points through the end of the month, but that doesn't mean the humidity has left for good. Some models indicate a major warm-up again around Labor Day Weekend—another example of the atmosphere acting as a fluid, with all of its highs and lows.

Even with all the dramatic swings in temperatures and humidity, we will at the very least have sunshine. In fact, maybe too much sunshine, as below-normal precipitation is also quite likely in the 6-10-day outlook (Figure 2). We tend to get a bit drier in Indiana in August and September, but this period is expected to be drier than normal, which means anyone with stakes in agriculture may want to monitor soil moisture closely.

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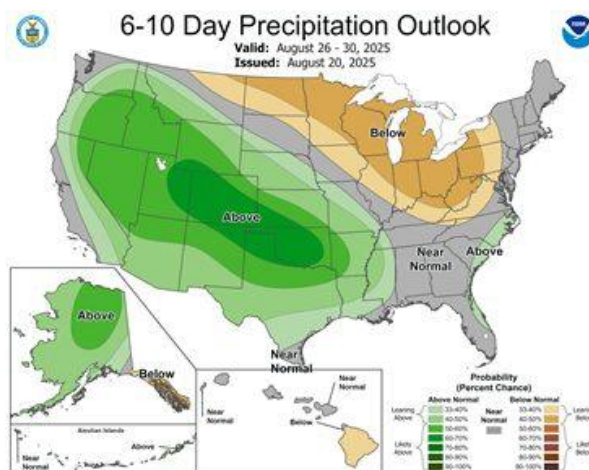


Figure 2: The CPC indicates a likely chance of below normal precipitation across the Midwest.

Join the Women of the Green Industry for a Cowles Bog Trail Hike in the Beautiful Sand Dunes on Lake Michigan

(Kyle Daniel, daniel38@purdue.edu)

Join the Women of the Green Industry for an expert-led hike through wetlands, oak savannas, and dunes on Lake Michigan. The hike will begin at 10:00 am (Central) on September 21st, 2025. Everyone is invited, and there is no cost to attend this educational and networking opportunity! If you have questions, email Pedra Sage at sagepedra@gmail.com.



Women of the Green Industry Cowles Bog Trail Hike

When: 10am-4pm on September 21st, 2025

Who: Yourself, family, friends, pets...

What: Women led hike of a 4.7 mile loop-Wetland -Oak Savanna-Sand Dunes-Lake Michigan

Where: Cowles Bog Trail at the Indiana Dunes. Meet at Main Lot (North) - 1450 N Mineral Springs Road, Dune Acres, IN 46304 (Look for the gravel entrance road on the right just before the town guardhouse)

Bring: Your lunch, water, and sun protection

Questions? Reach out to Pedra Sage at sagepedra@gmail.com

Figure 1. Don't miss the women-led, expert hike through the dunes located along Lake Michigan.