



It is October and change comes softly to the garden. One day it rains but the next the sun wards off the morning chill. The season's colors are gold and amber and the great green leaves of the hostas fade to yellow. Invariably, I fall under the charm of the Sedum Autumn Joy as it transforms from rosy pink to burnished mahogany. And I revel in the many-splendored dahlias as they put on a final glorious show. The earth cools, and my spirit stays warm as I plant tulips in the russet light, knowing they will welcome spring.

~Irene

OCTOBER 2017: In the Garden with Irene Virag

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Harvest tomatoes before night temperatures get much colder or they'll be mealy.	2 Learn how to dig and store dahlias at tonight's Mid Island Dahlia Society meeting. Click for info.	3 Perk up planters with pansies, ornamental kale and cabbage – and chrysanthemums, too.	4 Bring houseplants inside. Repot them if they've outgrown their containers. Hose away bugs.	5 Keep your Christmas cactus outside for now. It needs short days and cool nights to set buds.	6 Put in perennials before the month's over so they settle in before the big chill.	7 Clean tomato cages and stakes, soaking them in a 10% bleach solution. Rinse and store.
8 Bring in tuberous begonias before frost – or you'll have to buy new ones next year.	9 Plant daffodils – squirrels and other critters won't eat them. Ditto alliums and fritillarias.	10 Plant little bulbs for a big show – try scilla, snowdrops, grape hyacinths and <i>Chionodoxa</i> .	11 Trim back the foliage of bearded irises and clean up debris where borers can lurk.	12 Pick pumpkins and winter squash before frost. Leave a 2-inch stem to prevent rotting.	13 Dig up chives, rosemary and parsley and put them in pots on a sunny windowsill.	14 Be dazzled at the Long Island Dahlia Society's 2-day show at Bayard Cutting. Click for info.
15 Let potatoes stay in the ground. Harvest as needed at least until Thanksgiving.	16 Trim back the foliage of bearded irises and clean up debris where borers can lurk.	17 Snip out the central tip of Brussels sprouts so small sprouts can grow. Don't harvest yet.	18 Plant camellias against a west-facing wall to keep early buds safe from winter's blast.	19 Sow lettuce and radishes to fill the salad bowl into fall. Kale, too – but not the ornamental kind.	20 Dig up gladiolus. Trim foliage, let corms dry a few weeks. Hang in mesh bags in a cool dark place.	21 Test your soil's pH. Don't add lime or other amendments unless you really need to.
22 Divide 4-year-old rhubarb plants. Separate into clumps of 6 stalks; trim to 4 inches; replant.	23 Harvest carrots and beets before the ground gets hard. Parsnips can winter in the garden.	24 Remove dead or diseased wood from shrubs. It's the only pruning you should be doing now.	25 Prep beds so peas can go in extra early next spring. Sow spinach seeds now.	26 Tidy the rose garden. Don't compost black-spotted leaves – and don't prune or fertilize.	27 Plant or transplant deciduous trees and shrubs – but only after their leaves have fallen.	28 Clean out flower and veggie beds and work compost into the soil. Don't be stingy.
29 Ready dahlias for their beauty rest. Dig up tubers; clean, dry and label before storing.	30 Fill empty veggie beds with a cover crop like winter rye to feed and lighten the soil.	31 Keep mowing, keep weeding, keep watering – especially just planted shrubs and perennials.	30 Help nature recycle. Start a compost pile with all those leaves you're raking up.	31 It's Halloween. Smile at ghosts of summers past. But vanquish vampires with garlic.		Drop me a line: irene@irenevirag.com 1019 Ft Salonga Rd. Suite 10 – #302 Northport, NY 11768