

Down to Earth As Autumn Approaches

The official first day of autumn is about a month away. Gardens, landscapes and fields are all signaling the approaching season with characteristic colors, crops, blooms, wildlife behavior and a certain slant of light. Gardeners are planning fall plantings, farmers will soon be readying harvest equipment, and many life forms are soaking in the recent rains and will slowly adapt to shorter days and cooler temperatures. We humans simultaneously grieve the passing of summer and yet anticipate the bittersweet glory of autumn colors, clear blue skies, cooling breezes and a change from the summer routine.

The transition from summer to autumn is incremental and features different milestones for each living species. Animals and plants that have already completed their reproductive cycle are now intent upon storing up energy for the next season or are dispersing their seeds to guarantee a new generation next summer. Some wildlife species have already begun the trip to their winter quarters while others are scouting out hibernation sites or gathering a winter food supply. Gardeners and friends of the wild can assist in several ways while we



ourselves adjust to seasonal change.

- Keep bird feeders stocked for the migratory

ing species don't frequent feeders, hummingbirds do. They face a 20-hour, 500-mile flight that includes a crossing of the Gulf of Mexico. Every calorie counts.

- Manage for greater biologic resilience. Deliberately increase the amount and species diversity of native plantings in your landscape. An inexpensive option is to gather native plant seeds to toss into a promising spot for additional diversity in your realm. For

lily, or periwinkle. Consult lists of "bad actor" species from reputable sources like government or university sites.

- Take steps to increase soil health. The first order of business is to minimize any cultivation (destroys soil structure) and drastically reduce, or better yet, eliminate pesticides. Many living species are threatened or out-

right killed by widely applied insecticides, fungicides and herbicides. Increase organic matter content. Plant cover crops now; annuals like forage radish or buckwheat which will winter kill, for example. Depending upon how you plan to use the cover cropped area, whether next summer or longer term, numerous other alternatives exist. Apply composted food and yard waste, leave organic debris on the ground to decay, top-dress with organic materials like clean straw,

aged manure, shredded bark, etc.

- Leave this year's plant top growth (stalks, seedheads, fallen leaves) until bumble bees emerge next spring. Organic debris of varied character provides a rich wintertime neighborhood for hibernating insects, snakes, herps, and small mammals.

- Wait to do prescribed burns until after amphibians, reptiles, insects, and nectar-dependent birds have migrated or settled in for hibernation. Many egg-laying snake species hatch in mid-September. The young need time to feed enough to be ready for hibernation. By mid-October many turtle and snake species are finding winter accommodations. Most over-wintering butterflies will have taken shelter by late November.

And for the gardener, there's always next year to anticipate, and much to learn as the seasons turn. It's just another kind of transition, but one filled with opportunity to reexamine and perhaps improve the impact of our personal human footprint upon the wildlife with which we share our world.



birds who are feeding heavily now in hopes of storing enough fat to fuel the trip ahead, despite its uncertainties. Many perils await bobolinks and yellow-billed cuckoos who must cross the Atlantic Ocean, flying 2-3 days for a total of about 2,000 miles to northern South America for the winter. While these two amaz-

Lands Sake!, the local native biome entity, will host a number of seed gathering events as the season progresses (forlandssake61@gmail.com).

- Roadside ditches also offer a surprising number of prairie, savanna, and wetland plant species whose seed is available. Biologic resilience is enhanced by not only the number of native plant species in a locale but also the genetic diversity within species. Most experts on native plants encourage gathering the introduced genetic material from within 200 miles or so from where it will be placed into a gene pool.

- Minimize invasive species with appropriate management. Many techniques exist to choose from. Mowing woody invasives like multiflora rose, Tartarian honeysuckle, barberry or burning bush is one tool. Prescribed fire is another. Used wisely controlled burns can increase plant diversity by controlling overstocked cedars, invasive woodies or competition from cool season grasses like brome. A controlled burn workshop is planned for late fall headed by Madison County Conservation Board. Remove ornamentals known to escape cultivation, such as purple loosestrife cultivars (even if billed as sterile), blackberry

NOTICE OF ELECTION AND PUBLIC TEST MADISON COUNTY AUDITOR SPECIAL ELECTION

A special election for the Office of Madison County Auditor on Tuesday, August 26th, 2025

Notice is hereby given to the qualified electors of Madison County Iowa that a SPECIAL ELECTION of said district will be held on Tuesday, August 26th, 2025, where eligible voters within Madison County will have the opportunity to vote for the Madison County Auditor to fill a vacancy.

Optimal Scan Equipment will be used to count the votes cast. A public test of voting equipment to be used in the upcoming August 26th, 2025, Special Election will be held on August 20th, 2025. The test will commence at 8:30 a.m. and proceed until completion in the Auditor's IT Office on the first floor of the Madison County Courthouse at 112 N John Wayne Dr, Winterset, IA, 50273.

The polls will be open at 7:00 AM and will close at 8:00 PM. For this Special Election to be held on August 26th, 2025, voting centers will be available. For this election only, any qualified elector of Madison County may vote at one of any of the following locations on election day:

Macksburg WRC Hall- 110 South St, Macksburg, IA, 50155
St Charles Parish- 305 Main St, St Charles, IA 50240
Earlham Community Building- 140 S Chestnut Ave, Earlham, IA, 50072
Winterset Jackson Building- 1146 W Summit St, Winterset, IA, 50273

Any voter who is physically unable to enter a voting location has the right to vote in the voter's vehicle. For further information, please contact the County Auditor's office at the telephone number or email listed below.

Telephone: 515-462-3914 Email: CoAuditor@madison-county.iowa.gov

Pre-registered voters are required to provide an approved form of identification at the polling place before receiving and casting a regular ballot. Voters who are not pre-registered – such as voters registering to vote on election day – and voters changing their residence must also provide proof of residence. A voter who is unable to provide an approved form of identification (or prove residence if required) 1) may have the voter's identity/residence attested to by another registered voter in their precinct, 2) prove identity and residence using Election Day Registration documents, or 3) cast a provisional ballot and provide proof of identity/residence at the County Auditor's Office by 12:00 PM on Tuesday, September 2nd 2025. Election Day registrants must provide an approved form of identification. For additional information about providing proof of identity and/or residence, visit: <https://sos.iowa.gov/voterid> or phone 515-462-3914

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