

# The Ansley Garden Club TIP OF THE MONTH

## IS IT FALL OR STILL SUMMER?

With global warming, it may be hard to tell. Hold off planting winter flowers until at least mid month. In early October, it is still just too hot to plant flowers or bulbs. You will see flowers for sale, but don't succumb. Go ahead and buy bulbs as soon as you see them offered, but store them in the refrigerator until a more appropriate planting time.

Recently **Amanda Bennett**, ABG VP for Horticulture and Collections, spoke to Ansley Park Garden Club about bulbs with great advice. (She knows—ABG plants 80,000 bulbs!) Layer bulbs of various kinds in pots then top with pansies. Tulips will have longer stems if stored for a week or two in the refrigerator to provide the "chill hours" that we can no longer count on. Be careful about buying bulbs on sale—it is tempting but may be disappointing. They have often been allowed to get too hot or dry out. Bulbs require effort to plant, so start with great bulbs to set yourself up for success. Mail order sources provide bulbs that have been stored and handled correctly and are delivered at the correct planting time. Give [brentandbeckysbulbs.com](http://brentandbeckysbulbs.com) a try. (When bulbs are delivered, plant them immediately or put them in the fridge.)

It is too late to prune. Pruning, especially when the weather is still warm, stimulates new growth that will be tender and likely killed by winter cold. Not only will this look unattractive, but the plant will have to try again to regrow—why make it do this twice? This could require enough energy to stunt or even kill the plant. Wait until February to prune.

October is often our driest month so be prepared to continue watering. You do not want to lose a plant that has survived summer to lack of water in October.

— Sylvia Attkisson, Ansley Park Garden Club



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# MAKE THE SWITCH TO ELECTRIC LAWN MAINTENANCE

Noise and exhaust from gas-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers is a nuisance and a health hazard. These blowers emit one thousand times the pollutants of a car, and their unhealthy noise travels for blocks. Home Depot reports that 85% of the powered lawn equipment they sell is now electric. Apparently, people who can choose their own lawn tools overwhelmingly reject gas motors. In Ansley Park we have not benefited much from this transition to electric tools because most of us, myself included, use commercial lawn services. Many such businesses are not very concerned about noise, air pollution, or their workers' health. The recently passed Georgia law banning restrictions on gas-powered blowers was their doing.

Fortunately, there are now many lawn companies in Atlanta that do care about health and the environment, and they are already using electric tools. More and more Ansley residents are switching to these companies. So how is this going for your neighbors?

To share my own experience, it has been very good indeed. Metro Lawns was using gas equipment when I started with them. It is a smaller company, and the owner, **Chuck Vogt**, usually works alongside his crews. One day I saw Chuck with a snazzy new electric blower and battery backpack. I went outside to find out what was going on, and he told me that he was switching to electric. It has been a few years now, and for me it has been wonderful! Often I don't even notice that he is working in the yard. And, surprisingly, he didn't increase his prices, although I would have happily paid extra.

At the Ansley Arms Condos on Piedmont at 15th Street, **Denise Wright** and her neighbors used COVID as an impetus to enhance their outdoor spaces. Their goals were to reduce lawn size, establish a pollinator-friendly garden, and to eliminate noise and pollution from gas mowers and blowers. They worked with **Bret Hightower's** company, Clean Air Lawn Care, and couldn't have been more pleased. Their basic maintenance costs did not increase. With Bret's guidance, they've turned an overgrown and unused space into an environmentally friendly oasis for all their residents to enjoy, sans gas fumes and noise.

**Chris Sawyer**, a resident of Walker Terrace, has had a long career in environmental law. Until recently he hadn't encountered local landscapers using electric equipment. Then someone put him in touch with Clean Air Lawn Care. "Once I met Bret and talked to him for a little while, it was kind of a no-brainer to switch," says Chris. "When he cuts the grass, there's hardly any sound . . . likewise with the blower. So, I mean, it's fabulous." Chris acknowledges that it's hard to fire your long-term landscaper just because they still use gas tools. On the other hand, these gas machines are harmful, and reducing that impact is "a big deal." Chris had much more to say about this, and I've posted our interview at [www.ansleypark.org/Leaf\\_Blowers](http://www.ansleypark.org/Leaf_Blowers). There you will also find a list of ten companies providing electric lawn care in Ansley Park. Seems like a good time to do something good for the environment and your neighbors.

—John Long, Contributor

