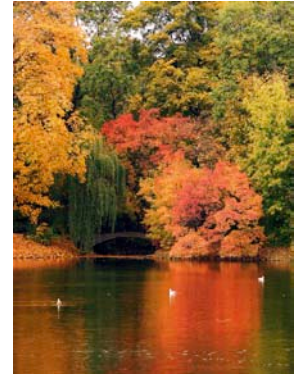


GETTING THE GARDEN READY FOR FALL

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The cool crisp evenings, the warm (not too hot) summer days and the smell of freshness in the air can only signal one thing - the end of summer and the return of fall. As we hustle to finish off the summer tasks and prepare children for returning to school, the yard and garden work is often put on the back burner. Not to worry though, many garden tasks can wait until late September and October. Some garden and yard work can even go into November - like keeping trees and shrubs watered until the ground freezes.

Completing these tasks in the fall will make your spring gardening efforts much easier and less daunting. Tasks that can be completed during the months of September, October, and November include:

Perennial Gardens

- Cut down everything that will be flattened by snow or that is easier to cut down when green—nepetas, goldenrods, etc.
- Pull out annuals, but leave in annuals that you want to reseed like snap dragons
- Leave standing hydrangea and sedum blossoms which are pretty in the snow and some ornamental grasses
- Leave perennials with seed heads such as Echinacea (cone flower) for finches
- Don't bother cutting down daylilies or hostas as they are easier to clean up in the spring
- Plant new bulbs—tulips and daffodils, hyacinths and crocus
- Mulch perennial gardens with clean straw or leaves *after* the ground freezes, doing so before will not allow the ground to freeze properly and cause a delay in plant dormancy. Mulches also protect the ground during the January thaw and spring freeze/thaw cycle. You want the ground to stay frozen until mid-march. Freeze/thaw cycles will cause perennials to heave from the ground and die. Use straw and not hay. Straw is hollow and will insulate much better. Using leaves will give good tilling ability in the spring. You can also fill bags of leaves and place them over the garden as well.
- Pile/rake leaves or straw on to clean annual beds and veggie beds to keep the soil soft for spring and then just till the leaves right in
- The best plants for splitting in the fall are Peonies (September), wood anemone, brunnera, lily of valley, Virginia bluebells, epimedium, nepeta, and oriental poppy. Those you can do in spring or fall: coreopsis, yarrow, hardy geranium, campanula, monarda, astilbe.
- If you have a lot of leaves bag them up and place on the garden. In the spring run the leaves through the lawn mower and place around the garden plants as mulch. This provides an abundance of nutrients for the soil and great visual contrast to the plants.

Trees, Shrubs and Roses

- With Tea Roses, use the Minnesota tip method. If there's not enough room for the "Tip" method, protect the crown of the bush by piling soil around it, maybe use fencing and fill it with leaves. For information on how to do the Minnesota tip - <http://www.extension.umn.edu/yardandgarden/ygbriefs/h112rose-mntip.html>
- If you use rose cones make sure you have air holes on the top sides for ventilation on warm winter days. Remove rose cones early in spring when days start warming in early March.
- Cut down the shrub roses that die back to the crown over winter.
- Don't cut down shrub roses that return on old wood
- Trees and shrubs can be planted in the fall but be sure to water until the ground freezes. This will allow the trees or shrubs to have enough moisture in their systems to survive warm winter days and the freeze/thaw cycle of spring. This will also give them ample moisture supply to come out of winter dormancy easier and healthier.
- Before trimming trees and shrubs, check which ones can be trimmed in the fall. Some blooming shrubs set next year flower buds right after flowering (lilac and magnolia for example) and you could end up removing next year flower buds.
- There are two great resources for tree and shrub trimming online at <http://www.mntrees.org/treecare.cfm> and <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG0628.html>

Maintenance

- Make sure to keep watering all new trees and shrubs through November or until the ground freezes
- When watering is complete, drain hoses and turn off outside water faucets
- Put away all statuary and clay pots to keep them from breaking in freeze/thaw cycles
- Disconnect the pond pumps and bring in the gold fish before it freezes
- Put away glass-topped patio table, stack the chairs, and bring in the cushions
- Do the deer eat your arborvitaes and some shrubs during the winter months? Wrap desirable trees and shrubs in burlap or wire fencing. You only need go as high as the deer can reach.
- Put up burlap fencing on the south side of evergreens and arborvitaes to protect from winter sun scold. When the sun reflects off the snow and becomes stronger on the evergreens, it will cause moisture to evaporate from the needles leading to browning and dieback.
- Trim back and spray for bugs all the plants you want to bring inside to winter over, as well as the houseplants and Christmas cacti which have been outside all summer

Lawn

- September is the best time to start a new lawn or reseed areas of lawn.
- Fertilize lawns in late October, which aids in strengthening the grass plant roots before freezing.
- Fall is a good time to control broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, creeping Charlie and others.
- For more fall lawn care tips visit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/waterprotection/lawntips.htm>

Education

- Learn all you can about sustainable and responsible gardening and landscaping so your work is not more work but an enjoyable past time.
- Attend the Fall Garden Gab sessions presented by the Westonka Horticultural Society to learn more about fall yard and garden tasks.
- For more information about gardening and landscaping, visit the University of Minnesota Extension site at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/>

Blaha is the executive director of the Westonka Horticultural Society and society members provided this information. Learn more about the Westonka Horticultural Society at www.westonkahort.org or email westonkahortday@gmail.com.

Sidebar

Horticulture program

Members of the Westonka Horticulture Society will host Copious Compost, Sustainable Soil & Marvelous Mulch at the Gillespie Center, 2590 Commerce Blvd., Mound from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Oct. 17. The program will offer information and tips about when, what and how to enhance and enrich garden soil. Admission is \$5 for non-members and the program is free for Westonka Horticultural Society members. For more information, visit the society's Web site at <http://www.westonkahort.org/> or call (612) 247-3189.