

Preparing the garden for winter

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Master Gardener

Question: Now that it is fall what should I be doing to prepare my garden for winter?
Answer: As the temperatures drop and the days get shorter we start thinking about making hearty soups and pulling out the cozy sweaters; it is also a good time to think about preparing your garden for winter and the next growing season. Whether you have a large vegetable garden, acres of turf, or

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flowing perennial beds, there are tasks you can do in the fall to help your

garden be ready for winter, or to “put your garden to bed”. Below is a list of suggestions for winter preparation; this is of course is not an exhaustive list, and for more detailed month-by-month information visit the Oregon State University Extension website at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/gardening-calendar>.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

- Harvest ripe tomatoes and peppers before the first hard frost. You can ripen green tomatoes off the vine by wrapping them individually in newspaper.
- Carrots, beets and parsnips should be harvested and stored. If left in the ground they can help pests such as the carrot rust fly become established in your garden.
- Harvest potatoes when the tops die down; store them in a dark location.
- Late fall is a good time to add lime to your beds; of the many benefits, lime supplies calcium and magnesium and neutralizes soil acidity. It’s best to test your soil first, but in the absence of a test, 5-10 pounds of lime per 100 square feet.
- Plant cover crops of annual rye or winter peas (often called green manure crops); this is an inexpensive way to build better soil for next year.

PERENNIALS, BULBS AND OTHER PLANTS

- Be ready to cover cold tender perennials with row cover or plant blankets, or to move them into a green house.
- Once roses have stopped blooming prune them down to about 2 ½ feet to keep them from toppling in winter winds; in late winter you can do a final pruning.
- If frost threatens, it is time to dig, clean and store tuberous begonias.

- Transplant woody ornamentals, and fall is also a good time to divide and transplant perennials.
- Plant daffodils, tulips and crocus for spring bloom; when selecting bulbs, the size of the bulb directly correlates to the size of the flower. It is helpful to add calcium and phosphorus into the soil below the bulbs at planting time.
- Fall is a good time to plant trees, shrubs and perennials; this gives them all winter to establish healthy roots.

TURF

- August into September is a good time to establish a new lawn.
- Aerate established lawns.
- September is a good time to add nitrogen to your lawn; apply 1 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. To reduce the risk of run-off into our local waterways, don’t apply just before rains and prevent overwatering by irrigation so that it doesn’t run off into the street.
- For more information about lawn care visit <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/2016/09/establish-lush-lawn-renovating-or-planting-early-fall>

OTHER HELPFUL TASKS

- Round up garden tools, clean, sharpen and store them for next year. For tools with wooden handles it is helpful to coat the handles with linseed oil to weather proof them. You may also want to store your small tools in a bucket of sand with a little oil added in - this keeps them dry and rust free for next year.
- Clean and store empty containers so they are ready for next year.
- Control slugs; non-toxic methods include barriers and traps (such as rolled up moist newspaper), or baits. When using baits, as with all chemical control read and follow all directions, and use caution around pets.
- Toss annuals and dead plants into the compost bin; make sure to not include deceased plants, they should be removed from your property.

Follow along during the 2016 growing season with the Weekly Pest Alert for timely comments about potential pests in Douglas County at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/douglas/horticulture>

Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-236-3052, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg (1pm to 4pm).

Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.



Freeze sensitive perennial Germander (Teucrium).

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Salvia (Victoria blue)

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