

Garden Checklist

October

Lawns

Warm Season Grasses

Bermuda and Zoysia – Begin to raise the mower deck height slightly to acclimate the turf before the first frost. Do not apply nitrogen. Lime, sulfur, or potassium can be added based on soil testing results. In late Oct, apply a pre-emergent if desired. Do not apply a pre-emergent if overseeding with rye. Overseeding with ryegrass is optional in the winter months. It is best practice to seed in mid to late October so the seed has plenty of time to germinate.

Mow frequently enough so that no more than 1/3 of the grass blade is cut. Aerate grass in Sept-Nov to loosen compacted soil and promote healthy growth.

Cool Season Grasses

Kentucky Bluegrass – Mow frequently enough so that no more than 1/3 of the grass blade is cut. Aerate grass in August – November to loosen compacted soil to promote healthy growth.

Tall Fescue

Lower the mower deck height to cut at a height of 2 ½ – 3 ½ inches. Apply a 16-4-8 fertilizer at label rates in October and use 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. Water lawns in the morning with 1 inch of water per week (unless raining) to prevent disease. Apply post-emergent herbicide to control dandelions, wild onions, and cudweed.

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Annuals

- Save seeds from favorite self-pollinating, non-hybrid flowers such as marigolds by allowing the flower heads to mature. Lay seeds on newspaper and turn them often to dry. Store the dry seeds in glass jars or envelopes in a cool, dry, dark place.
- Avoid pruning or removing late blooming annuals as long as possible for pollinator food!
- Direct sow wildflower seeds like Nigella, Poppy, and Larkspur so they get a few weeks of cold temps which will aid in their germination.

Perennials

- Plant spring-flowering bulbs late this month and complete prior to Thanksgiving.
- Dig and divide spring and summer flowering perennials now. Late summer and fall flowering ones can be done in the spring. Cut foliage back, replant, and water well. Add new mulch for winter protection.
- Leave seed heads on coneflowers, asters, sunflowers, and cosmos for birds to eat.



Shrubs and Trees

- October marks the beginning of the dormant season for most woody plants. Planting new trees and shrubs in the landscape at this time minimizes transplant shock and allows some establishment before cold weather sets in.
- October is one of the driest months of the year here, so don't forget to continue watering new plantings this month as needed to prevent wilt.
- Mulch your beds for the winter. Bagged mulch is always available, but getting a truckload delivered is very economical. If you don't think you can use a whole truckload, ask your neighbors if you can split a load.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Pumpkins, summer squashes, and gourds to be stored should be harvested before the first frost. Pumpkins that have begun showing color will continue to ripen after harvest. Use great care not to nick the rind during harvest since this will lead to more rapid deterioration.
- Keep harvesting second plantings of the cool season vegetables including radishes, lettuce, Chinese cabbage, chard, spinach, broccoli, and the other cole crops. Some such as parsnips, peas, Brussels sprouts, and kale actually have enhanced flavor after a frost.
- Dig up sweet potatoes and peanuts while the weather is still warm; cure them before storing.
- Plant garlic, shallots, and perennial onions.
- Keep an eye on the weather and harvest any remaining summer produce like beans, eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes before a hard frost rolls in.
- Cut and dry or freeze remaining herbs.
- Make a note of any productive or unsatisfactory varieties of vegetables that you planted this year. Such information can be very useful when planning next year's garden.
- Cover broccoli and cauliflower on frosty nights.

Miscellaneous

- Disconnect hoses and winterize outdoor plumbing and water features as nighttime temperatures dip below 40 degrees
- Collect soil samples now for testing to prepare for next year's fertilization of the lawn, the vegetable garden, the shrub border, and flower beds. Submit separate samples for distinct areas used to grow different types of plants and where growing conditions are different for the same plants.
- Houseplants that have been "vacationing" in the backyard this summer should be brought in by mid-month. Give them a good blast of water all over before bringing them in to help remove freeloading insects. Insects in the soil are probably not damaging but more of a nuisance when brought indoors – flood the containers multiple times about 1 week before moving them inside to flush out ants and identify if treatment is needed. For the first few weeks after the move inspect your plants daily for any emergent insects and remove them or treat them as needed.