

IN THE DIRT

Things To Do In Your Garden This Month

If volunteer tree seedlings, such as elm, mulberry, hackberry or maple are found growing in your yard, remove them as soon as possible. If left too long, they will take over gardens and other landscape plantings.

Do not wait for frost warnings to move your plants indoors.

Temperatures of 45°F or lower can damage many tropical house plants.

Fall is a good time for improving your garden soil. Add manure, compost and leaves to increase the organic matter content.

Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time. Plants will delay their dormancy process that has already begun in anticipation of winter in the months ahead. New growth can be injured by an early freeze.

Divide lily-of-the-valley.

Tree wound paints used after pruning are no longer recommended as they can slow healing and may promote decay.

Storing Vegetables and Fruits

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After a successful garden season, you may have vegetables and fruits you would like to store until you are ready to use them. Proper storage conditions are needed for fruits and vegetables that are not consumed immediately after harvest. The key to good storage is in controlling the temperature and relative humidity of the storage area. If not stored properly, they will rot and you will lose your produce.

Vegetables

Carrots:

Trim carrot tops to one inch. Layer unwashed carrots in a container of moist sand. Carrots can be stored in a cool place, 35–40°F for 4-5 months.

Onions:

Harvest onions when the tops have fallen over and begun to dry. Cure onions by spreading them in a single layer in open box and in a well-ventilated place for 1–2 weeks. Store cured onions in a dry location at 35–40°F.

Potatoes:

Cure fresh dug potatoes 1–2 weeks in a dark, dry location at 50–60°F. Store cured potatoes in a dark location at 40°F for 5–6 months.

Sweet potatoes:

Cure fresh dug sweet potatoes at 80–85°F for 10 days. Store cured sweet potatoes in a dry, dark location at 55–60°F for 4–6 months.

Turnips:

Trim turnip tops to one inch. Layer unwashed turnips in a container of moist sand. Turnips can be stored in a cool place, 35–40°F for 4–5 months.

Winter squash:

Cure vine ripen winter squash for 10 days at 80–85°F and high humidity. Store mature, cured winter squash in a dry location at 55°F for 2–6 months. Acorn squash will keep well in a dry place at 45°F for 35–40 days. Do not cure acorn squashes before storing them.

Fruit

For fruits such as apples, grapes and pears, store them in cool temperatures at 32–40°F and moist conditions at 90–95 percent relative humidity. Other fruits should be canned or frozen after harvest. Select containers for storage that have smooth inner surfaces. Baskets, melon crates or boxes are suitable. Line these containers with aluminum foil to help retain moisture.

Apples and pears will likely last through the fall and winter if stored properly. Apple varieties should be harvested firm and ripe to insure the longest storage possible. Harvest pears when they are full sized but still green and hard. Pears ripen quickly at 60–65°F.

Grapes will usually keep for one or two months. Grapes should be stored alone because they pick up odors of other fruits and vegetables.

Early Fall in the Landscape

Early fall brings us a host of “to-do’s and not to-do’s” in the acreage landscape.

First, a couple of not to dos:

- Avoid fertilization of trees, shrubs and perennial flowers. Fertilization at this time tends to promote new growth, which would likely be injured by upcoming fall frosts.
- Don’t water with the same frequency and volume as in summer. In all seasons, endeavor to keep the soil moist, not soggy or dry, which is likely to require less due to the cooler temperatures in fall.



Fertilize the lawn in September according to label rates.

Some timely “to-do’s”:

- Take cuttings of annuals such as begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens. Make arrangements to overwinter them in a sunny window.
- Plant a fall crop of radish, mustard greens, spinach and lettuce. These veggies will develop in the cooler weeks ahead and be a fresh source of salad ingredients.
- Pot up herbs and move them to a sunny kitchen window. They can add a real “spice” to winter meals.
- Fertilize the lawn in September according to label rates, in the 0.75 to 1.0 lbs of nitrogen per 1,000 square foot range. Later in fall, as the grass stops vertical elongation, apply a very light rate of 0.2 lbs per 1,000, just to beef it up a bit going into winter.
- Inspect the lawn for broadleaf weeds. Spray dandelions, thistles, white clover, plantain, black medic, field bindweed and false strawberry with Trimec, Powerzone or Weed B Gone Maxx. Be sure to read the entire label and follow the instructions for safety and effectiveness.
- Take advantage of close-out deals at garden centers to purchase perennials and trees/shrubs at reduced prices. Fall is a great time to plant!