



20 Quick Tips for your Home & Garden: Fall

Contributed by Chesterfield Master Gardeners

Late September Tips

- Now is the time to fertilize and reseed your cool season grasses. Warm days and cool nights provide ideal conditions for seed germination and establishment of tall fescue.
- Fall is a great time to plant and divide perennials and shrubs for next year's garden. By planting in the fall, your plants do not endure the stressful summer heat during establishment and have time to form sufficient root systems before winter dormancy.
- No more pruning your shrubs or trees unless it is necessary. Pruning may encourage new growth to occur, which might be damaged during the winter.
- Clean out your vegetable garden once plants have stopped producing. Discard those that were susceptible to disease and insects. Bag diseased debris; do not place in compost or mulch piles.
- Plant seeds or transplants of cool-season vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, beets, carrots, onions, spinach, and turnips.

October Tips

- Fall is the time to control certain broadleaf weeds in the lawn including chickweed, white clover, dandelion, wild onion, plantain, and Canada thistle. Call your local Extension agent for control recommendations.
- Remove leaves from lawn to reduce lawn problems. Compost them or save them for next year's mulch.
- Add mulch to your perennial border. A 1-inch layer of weed-free straw or chopped leaves will help conserve soil moisture, protect the root system, and reduce plant loss by soil heaving during the winter.
- Be sure to remove debris from base of your perennial flowers, such as rose and peony. If left on the ground, leaves and stems can harbor diseases and provide convenient places for pests to spend the winter.
- Add leaves and organic material to your compost pile. If you do not have a compost pile, find a quiet corner of the yard, and start one.

November Tips

- After several killing frosts have occurred this fall, cut back dormant perennials to about 3 inches above ground. After the ground is frozen, plants can be mulched to guard against displacement due to soil heaving. These steps ensure a successful show of plant foliage and color next season.
- Keep your shears and loppers in good working order. Wipe them with a rag dipped in paint thinner to remove sticky resins. Sharpen and oil thoroughly.
- Cut away suckers from the base of lilacs, forsythia, and crape myrtle.
- Just because it is late fall does not mean that watering of your plants is unnecessary. They need moisture all year, so make sure that they are hydrated by watering under the foliage with a hose wand.
- Dense planting in containers works best for small bulbs. Plant as many bulbs as fit, as long as they do not touch each other or the pot. For a 6-inch pot, try 6 tulip or 15 crocus bulbs.

Beginning of December Tips

- In empty garden beds, spread manure and compost over the garden and plow under to prepare your soil for next year.
- Time to start planning next years' garden.
- Look around for garden tools and supplies that you're missing and add them to your holiday gift list! Find gifts for others!
- If you are an early Christmas tree shopper looking for a live tree for the holidays, be sure to select a Christmas tree that will survive in your climate and soil. In Virginia, white pine, Norway spruce, and blue spruce are excellent choices for live Christmas trees that can also be planted outdoors after the holidays.
- Be careful when using de-icing salts around driveways and walks this winter; salt is toxic to many flowers, trees, shrubs, and lawn grasses. Sand, sawdust, or a combination of these work well for de-icing walks and will not injure plants.