



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – Helpful Hints

October, 2025

October is a great time for fall planting in the garden! You can add a variety of perennials, bulbs, and wildflowers to the garden for a second season of planting. This helps alleviate some of the stress in the spring. The more cleanup and planting you do in October, the less you have to do come spring! Here are some important garden chores for this fall.

Things to do in the garden this month:

Planting

October is an ideal time to add perennials, bulbs, and wildflowers to the garden.

Perennials:

The cooler air and warm ground temperatures make fall an ideal time to add perennials to your garden. Fall-planted perennials will experience less transplant shock and have plenty of time to acclimate their roots to your garden before the winter. Once the ground warms, the new plants will grow bigger and bloom more profusely than if planted in the spring.

Wildflowers:

Fall is the perfect time to add wildflowers to your garden before the ground freezes for the winter. Plant after there have been a few hard frosts and the seed will stay dormant until the early spring. Fall-planted wildflowers often bloom weeks earlier than if planted in the spring.

Bulbs:

Some of the most colorful spring bloomers — including Tulips, Daffodils, Allium, and more — require a wintering over period in order to bloom. October is the time to get these bulbs in the ground.

Weeding

While weeding is always an important garden task, it's extra important in the October garden because you're trying to prevent weeds from going to seed and coming back stronger next season. If you can't get around to weeding until the early spring, you still should cut back your weeds so they won't seed and discard the seed heads somewhere they can't make their way back to the garden.

Rake Leaves/Add to Garden

As your trees start to become bare for the winter, rake up any debris from the gardens and lawn. Use a mower to chop up your leaf pile into pieces, use the chopped-up leaves as mulch and protection for your garden beds over the winter. Come spring, most of the leaves should have broken down into your soil and anything remaining can be raked out. Also, it's helpful to select an area of your yard where you can **"Leave the Leaves"**. Many beneficial insects overwinter in fallen leaves and the stems of dead plants.

Lawn Care

Rake leaves from your lawn now to prevent disease and prepare your grass for easy spring growth. If there are bare areas, seed in the fall and cover with a layer of compost for a jumpstart on early spring growth.

Dig Up and Store Tender Annual Tubers/Bulbs

Tender bulbs like Dahlias, Gladiolus, and Calla Lilies should be cut back, dug up, and stored for the winter. You can store tubers and bulbs in a cool, dark area of the home. Once there is no more chance of frost in the spring, you can take them out of storage and re-plant them.

Prep Soil

Whether you're planting in fall or simply want to get your soil prepared for spring planting, October is the time to do it:

- If you're planting wildflowers in the fall, clear all existing growth from the area (grass, weeds, etc.) and rototill the area. Plant wildflowers on bare dirt.
- If you're planting bulbs, make sure you're planting in a bed with rich soil. Add compost or organic matter if necessary.
- Consider planting quick-growing cover crops in your vegetable garden to help add nutrients and build the soil before next year's planting
- October is also a great time to get a soil test to learn what amendments your soil may need for next season. Cover crops, like White Clover, can be added to the garden in fall to help build the soil and add nutrients.

Clean-up/Remove Diseased Plants

If your Bee Balm had powdery mildew or other plants were diseased this past season, October is the time to clean up and remove all infected debris.

Cut back any diseased plant all the way to the ground and discard the foliage in the trash. Make sure to clean any tools you used for this process before using them on healthy plants. Soak tools in a solution of 9:1 water to bleach and rinse thoroughly afterwards to prevent corrosion. Or sanitize the tools using bleach cleaning wipes.

Cut Back Your Gardens

October is the time to cut back your perennial gardens to help prevent rot and disease, as well as allow your plants to put out new, healthy growth come spring. Wait to cut your perennials back until the foliage has turned yellow. Cut back many perennials including Daylilies, Hosta, Bee Balm, Peonies, and more.

Plants That Should Be Cut Back in the Fall:

- Hosta (2" from the ground)
- Yarrow (1" from the ground)
- Peonies (all the way to the ground)
- Coreopsis (6" from the ground)
- Bee Balm (all the way to the ground)
- Daylilies (4" from the ground)
- Hydrangea - Only remove dead blooms of hydrangea macrophylla (mophead varieties)
- Iris (4" from the ground)
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Leave Ornamental Grasses, Sedum, Echinacea, and Wildflowers up through the winter. They provide food and shelter for local birds as well as interest and texture in your winter garden. In the early spring, cut them back to get ready for new growth.

Plants That Should Be Cut Back in the Early Spring:

- Milkweed
- Sedum
- Echinacea
- Hydrangea- remove dead stems and cut back any remaining dead blooms of hydrangea paniculata (panicle varieties)
- Wildflowers

Divide Overcrowded Perennials

Just like fall is the perfect time to plant perennials, it's also a great time to dig up and divide perennials that have gotten overcrowded or taken over.

Plants That Can Be Divided in the Fall:

- Bearded Iris
- Hosta
- Daylilies
- Siberian Iris
- Black Eyed Susan
- Ornamental Grasses

Reflect on the Growing Season

Now that most of the garden has finished for the season, it's time to take out your garden journal and write notes about what did well and what didn't. These notes will help you plan for a more successful growing season next year!

Happy Fall Gardening!



Resource:

[American Meadows Planting Guides: October Garden Chores.](#)