



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints



October 2020

There is a chill in the air now, especially in the mornings. Wait until the sun warms the air, then wander outside to carry on the duties of cleaning up your gardens, putting away your garden art, emptying your flower pots, and storing them for the winter.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE-recycle disease free plant material and kitchen vegetable and fruit scraps into compost. Don't compost diseased plants unless you are using the "hot compost" method of 120-150 degrees F. Drain or blow out your irrigation system and insulate valve mechanisms in preparation for winter. Clean, sharpen, and oil tools and equipment (lightweight oil such as vegetable cooking oil works well) before storing for winter. Scrub wooden or fiberglass handles to remove dirt and debris, sand any rough spots to reduce splinters, and use a furniture paste wax or linseed oil on the handles to keep the wood from drying out. Use a sharpening stone, file, or bench sharpener to sharpen shovels, spades, trowels, hoes, and lawn mower blades before storing them for the winter. Store garden supplies and fertilizers in a safe, dry place out of reach of children. Cut back ornamental grasses once the foliage has dried down, otherwise leave them until spring and enjoy the vertical accent during winter. Protect trunks of young trees from winter cracking by wrapping them with a white reflective tree wrap. The last mowing of the season should be 1-1 1/2 inches high to minimize disease problems. Apply a quick-release nitrogen fertilizer in late fall, after the last mowing (late October-early November) for early green up next spring. Use burlap or other soft materials to wrap evergreens to prevent snow breakage. Continue watering gardens, shrubs, and trees if rainfall doesn't reach an inch or more every week. It's important for plants to go into cold weather with adequate moisture. When watering duties are finished for the season, drain the garden hose, coil it up, and store out of the elements. Spray evergreens, including newly planted ones, with an antidesiccant when temperature is above 40 degrees F to protect them from drying out.

MULCHING-use newspaper or cardboard covered by mulch to discourage winter and spring annual weeds in garden beds. Place mulch over roots of roses, azaleas, rhododendrons, and berries for winter protection. To suppress future pest problems, clean up flower beds by removing diseased plant materials which can overwinter insect pests. Mulch with manure or garden compost to feed the soil and suppress weeds. Cover asparagus and rhubarb beds with a mulch of manure or compost.

SAVING SEEDS-harvest sunflower heads and use seed for birdseed or roast for personal use. Save seeds from the vegetable and flower garden. Dry, date, label, and store in a cool and dry location.

VEGETABLES and FRUIT- ripen mature, green tomatoes indoors and check often to discard rotting fruit. Harvest and store apples at about 40 degrees F and moderate humidity. Plant garlic cloves from mid-October through early November for harvesting next summer. Try overwintering carrots, beets, and parsnips in the ground by placing mulch over them which prevents the ground from freezing. Rototill leaves, compost and manure into the vegetable garden to enhance the soil microbe activity.

PLANTS AND BULBS-dig and store geraniums, tuberous begonias, dahlias, and gladiolas when leaves begin to yellow. Pot and store indoors tulips and daffodils to force into early bloom in December and January. October is prime time for planting spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips, daffodils and hyacinths. Plant about 3 times as deep as their height with the pointy end up. Finish by mid-November or before the ground freezes.

HOUSEPLANTS-reduce water, place in cool area and increase time in darkness (12-14 hrs.) to force Christmas cactus to bloom in late December.

Enjoy your time outdoors as the weather is cool and invigorating which will save you work next spring.



--Sandy