



"From the Potting Shed"

Riverview Garden Club – October Helpful Hints

2021

As the new month begins with the days growing shorter, darker and damper, here are the essential October gardening jobs to keep you warm while you are working away outside making sure your garden is looking its best!

What to do this month...

Plant 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.

Plant Wildflower Seeds

Fall is the perfect time to add wildflowers to your garden. Plant seeds after there have been a few hard frosts (after October 18) and the seed will stay dormant until the early spring. Before planting seeds, prepare the planting bed in a sunny location; sprinkle wildflower seeds over the soil; compress the seeds by walking over the area; water lightly and allow the seeds to lay dormant and will begin to sprout when soil warms above 55 degrees. Fall-planted wildflowers often bloom weeks earlier than those planted in the spring.

Plant Spring Bulbs

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

Keep Weeding!

While weeding is always an important garden tasks, 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-possibly in a hot compost pile or out in the trash.

Rake Leaves and Add to the Garden

As your trees start to become bare for the winter, rake up any debris from the gardens and lawn. You can use your mower to chop up your leaf pile into pieces. Come spring, most of the leaves should have broken down into your soil and anything remaining can be raked out. Use the chopped-up leaves as mulch around perennials or in empty vegetable beds. Also, you can compost the chopped-up leaves over the winter and then add to your garden in the spring.

Lawn Care

Rake leaves from your lawn now to prevent disease and prepare your grass for easy spring growth. Fertilize cool-season lawns according to product directions. Fall is a great time to reseed problem areas in the lawn. You can also overseed to help thicken thin areas. Apply herbicides to control weeds-always read the label first! Choose broadleaf weed control for perennial weeds such as dandelions, clover, or plantain. Use a preemergent herbicide for fall-germinating weeds, such as henbit or chickweed. Core aerate cool-season grass. A core aerator actually pulls out a plug of soil and drops it on the lawn. The hole creates easy access for needed air, water, and fertilizer to connect with grass roots. If you plan to aerate and overseed, aerate first.

Dig Up and Store Tender Annual Tubers/Bulbs

Tender bulbs like Dahlias, Gladiolus, Elephant Ears and Calla Lilies should be cut back, dug up, and stored for the winter. Tubers and bulbs should be stored 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.

Prepare Soil in Vegetable Garden

After pulling out all the spent plants, add some amendments such as compost or manure along with mulched leaves and grass clippings. Let it all “cook” over the winter. And if you need to plant a cover crop, now is the time. A favorite is clover, as it helps correct any nitrogen issues.

Pruning

October is good for pruning most deciduous trees. After the leaves have dropped, pruning is easier, because you can see the “skeleton” of the tree, and they are in a dormancy period. Wait on the Crape Myrtles until March, and roses until February. Evergreens can be pruned now, and most folks feed them lightly after pruning, as well as in the late winter (around March).

Garden Tool and Equipment Maintenance

Sanding, sharpening, and oiling will preserve your tools for many seasons. Make sure to dip tools in a bleach/water solution (one-part bleach to three parts water) if you had fungus issues, otherwise, you will still have those issues next season. Let them dry, then spray with oil such as boiled linseed oil, tung oil, motor oil, lamp oil, or cooking oil. Boiled linseed and tung oil are probably the best choices, but you can use whatever you have available.

It's important to get those power tools cleaned up and oil and filters changed, blades sharpened, add fuel additives, check pull chords, tires, lights, etc., before putting them away. Remember to drain and coil hoses before they freeze. Store in a garden shed, garage, or basement for winter. If you must store your hose outdoors, remove watering wands and nozzles to store indoors. It's also important to close shut-off valves for exterior faucets. Open outdoor faucets to drain.