



## **“From the Potting Shed”**

### *Riverview Garden Club – Helpful Hints November - 2023*

Tend to these tasks in November and you'll help your garden transition smoothly into winter and prepare for a successful garden next spring.

*Things to do this month ...*

#### **Flower Beds, Trees, and Shrubs:**

- Remove remaining dead plant material, including annuals and spent perennials.
- Leave ornamental grasses to protect the crown from freezing temperatures and provide seed for winter birds.
- Top-dress your perennial beds with a layer of compost. Mulch flower beds and the base of trees and shrubs to provide insulation for roots during winter.
- Use dormant oil sprays to control scale on ornamental plants, trees, and shrubs.
- Water young trees and shrubs deeply before the ground freezes. Spray evergreens with anti-desiccant to prevent drying and protect from winter burn.
- Consider wrapping the trunks of young trees with burlap or tree guards to protect them from winter damage.
- Finish planting spring-blooming bulbs early in the month if you haven't already. Make sure to water them well after planting.
- Prune deciduous trees and shrubs after they have dropped their leaves. Remove dead, diseased, or crossing branches. Avoid heavy pruning, as it can stimulate new growth that may be damaged by frost.

### **Vegetable Garden:**

- Harvest any remaining root vegetables and winter squashes before the ground freezes. Remove and store any remaining herbs for winter use.
- Work compost or well-rotted manure into vegetable beds to enrich the soil for the next growing season.
- Consider sowing cover crops like winter rye or clover in vegetable beds to prevent soil erosion and add nutrients.

### **Lawn:**

- Rake leaves off the lawn to prevent them from suffocating the grass. Consider using shredded leaves as mulch in flower beds or compost them.
- Mow the lawn one final time, cutting the grass slightly shorter than usual. This helps prevent matting the grass under snow.
- If you haven't applied winter fertilizer yet, do so early in the month to help the grass store nutrients for the winter.

### **General Garden Chores:**

- Clean, sharpen, and properly store garden tools for winter. Drain and store hoses indoors to prevent freezing and cracking.
- Remember the birds. As you prune, make a small pile in the back of the yard for your feathered friends.
- Inspect garden structures such as trellises, arbors, and fences. Make any necessary repairs before winter storms.
- Remove and dispose of any diseased plant material. Cleanliness in the garden helps prevent diseases from overwintering and spreading next year.

### **What to Do with Your Fall Leaves:**

1. Add them to your compost pile—or start one right in your own backyard.
2. Leave the leaves for wildlife. Fallen leaves provide habitat for many wildlife species, including chipmunks, wood frogs, toads, earthworms, and thousands of insect species.

3. Create “**leaf mold**” to enrich garden beds. Leaf mold is the light, fluffy, rich, and crumbly result of decomposed leaves.

### **How to Make Leaf Mold**

- Just rake your leaves into a pile and make a hollow in the center to catch rain. Moisture is necessary for decomposition. Two years later you’ll have crumbly, lovely earth.
- No room on your property for a big pile of leaves? Then shred the material. Shredded leaves can be used immediately. You can till them into the soil, or just dump them onto your garden beds as mulch.

### **How to Use Leaf Mold**

- If you have raised beds in your kitchen garden, you need only to fill them once with purchased soil. Thereafter, top off the beds with leaf mold, or with fresh, shredded leaves. The beds are moisture-wise because leaf mold can retain 500 times its own weight in water!

### **Shredded Leaves Can Be Used Immediately**

- Do not use whole, not-yet-decayed leaves on your garden beds. Whole leaves become matted when wet and keep moisture from reaching the soil below.
- If you have a lawn mower equipped with a bag, simply mow over the leaves to shred them. As you work, dump the contents of the bag into a pile or empty them directly onto a garden bed.

***Happy Fall Gardening!***

#### **Sources:**

*Hanover County Master Gardeners, “November Garden Chores”.*

*Garden Design Newsletter, “What To Do with Your Fall Leaves”, October 19, 2023.*