

Front Range Fall Gardening Checklist

A research-backed monthly guide for winterizing Colorado landscapes, adapted from CSU Extension and PlantTalk Colorado guidelines.

OCTOBER TASKS (Active Preparation)

- **Core Aeration:** Mechanically aerate lawns to relieve soil compaction. Water heavily 24 hours prior if the ground is dry so the machine can extract deep plugs.
- **Spring Bulb Planting:** Plant tulips, daffodils, and alliums roughly 3 times their bulb height deep before the hard freeze sets in.
- **Vegetable Bed Sanitation:** Pull and bag dead vegetable plants (especially squash and tomatoes). Avoid home composting to interrupt pest and pathogen overwintering lifecycles.
- **Sow Cover Crops:** Seed open vegetable beds with winter rye to stabilize vulnerable topsoil and lock in nutrition.
- **Winterize Sprinklers:** Schedule and execute a professional compressed-air irrigation blowout before deep freezes split underground PVC lines.

NOVEMBER TASKS (Late-Season Protection)

- **Winterizer Fertilization:** Apply a late-season fertilizer to lawns in early November. This encourages root carbohydrate storage for an early spring green-up.
- **Establish Winter Watering:** Give trees, shrubs, and perennials a deep root soak before winter dry spells. Target the drip line when air temperatures rise above 40°F on unfrozen days.
- **Lawn Mower Care:** Run the gas tank completely dry or mix in a premium fuel stabilizer to prevent ethanol varnish from gumming up the carburetor.
- **Mulching & Shredding:** Grind fallen autumn leaves using your mower. Use them to insulate flower beds or till them down into the soil to boost natural organic matter.

SPECIALIST FEATURE: Front Range Winter Rose Care

Hybrid tea, grandiflora, and floribunda roses require explicit structural protection to weather harsh Front Range winters. Follow this sequence in late autumn:

1. **Timing:** Wait until after a few hard, killing freezes have pushed the rose bush completely dormant (typically mid-to-late November). Mounding too early traps heat and delays dormancy.
2. **Soil Mounding:** Pile a 10-to-12-inch mound of loose, high-quality garden soil or compost directly over the center (graft union) of the bush. Do not scrape up soil from around the base of the plant, as this exposes shallow roots.
3. **Securing the Mound:** Anchor the soil pile by topping it with mulch, evergreen boughs, or straw to prevent high winter winds from blowing the protective layer away.
4. **Pruning Retraint:** Avoid heavy pruning in the fall. Tall canes can be trimmed back slightly to 30-36 inches only to stop them from whipping and snapping in high winds. Save structural pruning for spring.

This document is adapted from science-based gardening information provided by CSU Extension and PlantTalk Colorado.