

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge
October/November 2025



Harvesting vegetables at Papa's Pantry, (left to right) Rob Stoy, Nancy McCarthy and Suzanne Carswell, courtesy Nancy McCarthy

From Garden to Table: Master Gardeners are Nourishing Communities with Homegrown Goodness

By Barb Schirmer, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As we approach the end of summer, harvesting vegetables from the garden becomes a regularly performed task of our Cherokee County Master Gardeners. The crops grown by Master Gardeners at our two county produce gardens were always destined to be donated to local food pantries, where they will be available to our neighbors in need. The 2025 growing season has produced a bumper crop of vegetables, including potatoes, tomatoes, squash, beans, cucumbers, peppers, onions, blueberries, and more, that have found their way onto the tables of community residents through two county locations.

In 2016, the Master Gardeners assumed the management of the gardens at Encompass Ministries on Commerce Parkway in Woodstock, embracing it as both a community service and an opportunity to refine and share gardening skills with the local community. With five raised beds, this garden annually produces around 500 pounds of produce that goes to Papa's Pantry, operated by Encompass Ministries. The outreach of this food pantry is 22,000 people annually. Partnering with Encompass Ministries has also provided classroom space, allowing our Master Gardeners to share their expertise with individuals and families who would like to learn to grow vegetables for their own consumption.

On the other side of the county, at Cherokee Veterans Park in Canton, a second garden has taken shape over the past few years. This garden, known as the Backyard Agriculture Education Station (BAES), sits in the upper corner of the park on property managed by the Cherokee County Recreation and Parks Department.

With 11 raised beds and a fruit tree orchard, this garden is in its third year of food production, with over 950 pounds of produce going to Blessed Hope Baptist Church's food pantry, House of Hope, which reaches 200 families per week. With the gardening skills of over a dozen Master Gardeners, under the direction of Extension Agent Josh Fuder, this garden serves as a teaching garden throughout the year, offering classes that focus on food production and maintenance. They have offered 25 classes, reaching over 300 local gardening enthusiasts.



Raised beds at the BAES (Backyard Agriculture Education Station) courtesy Crystal West

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The Intriguing Oddity of Witches' Broom

By Carol Nable, Cherokee County Master Gardener Intern

Have you spotted a dense cluster of tiny branches sprouting from one spot on a tree or shrub—resembling a broom? This phenomenon, known as **witches' broom**, isn't mystical—it's nature's distress signal.

What Is Witches' Broom?

Witches' broom is a deformed growth—twigs, branches, or buds—that cluster together in a broom-like shape. It typically appears on woody plants, including both deciduous trees and evergreens. Despite its eerie name, it's a natural reaction, not a supernatural one. Because brooms were once made from bundles of twigs, and witches were presumed responsible for anything unusual, these abnormalities became known as witches' brooms.

What Triggers This Odd Growth?

Witches' broom arises from stress that disrupts normal growth. Common culprits include:

- **Fungi, viruses, bacteria, and phytoplasmas** (tiny wall-less bacteria) such as those seen in ash, elm, and peach.
- **Mites, aphids, nematodes**, and insect feeding.
- **Parasitic plants** like mistletoe.
- **Environmental stressors** such as herbicide exposure or mechanical injuries.
- **Genetic mutations**, which in rare cases give rise to ornamental dwarf cultivars.



Witches' broom on loropetalum
courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

Certain tree types often hint at specific causes—pine brooms often point to rust fungus, cherry and blackberry deformities may be fungal, and ash or elm examples frequently tie back to phytoplasmas.

Recognizing the Signs

- Often displays as a tight, dense cluster of twigs or branches erupting from one point.
- Frequently shows on branches or stems and is often more noticeable in leaf-off seasons.
- May occur as a single broom or multiple clusters on one plant.

Should You Treat It?

Good news: in most cases, witches' broom is cosmetic, not lethal. It typically doesn't threaten overall plant health.

Removal Tips

- **Prune it out** a few inches below the base of the cluster.
- **Sterilize tools** between cuts—use bleach or alcohol—to prevent spreading pathogens.
- **Monitor regrowth**, as clusters may recur, especially if the underlying cause remains.

When Witches' Broom Is More Severe

- **Rose rosette disease** (caused by a virus carried by mites): forms dense, thorny brooms accompanied by redleaves—often fatal.
- **Fungal or phytoplasmal infections**: may cause branch weakness, yellowing, or dieback; severe cases might warrant removing the plant entirely.

Generally though, most cases remain benign and manageably pruned.

A Note on Ornamental Value

Intriguingly, some witches' broom clusters are genetically stable. Gardeners have used these natural mutations to create dwarf or unique ornamental plants, turning a "defect" into a desirable feature.



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Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University, Bugwood.org

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The Misunderstood Mum

By Tracey Ussery, Cherokee County Master Gardener Intern

As the days grow shorter and evenings cooler, the urge to replace spent spring annuals with fall favorites like pansies and snapdragons becomes irresistible. Mums, the darling of big box stores and family nurseries alike, are a favorite for adding color to fall decor. Mistakenly viewed as a fall annual whose flash of color is fleeting, mums are often relegated to life in a pot and discarded after blooming. However, hardy garden chrysanthemums are indeed herbaceous perennials that will thrive when planted directly into the garden.

Mums are part of the Asteraceae family which includes asters, Shasta daisies, sunflowers, zinnias, marigolds, dahlias, and a wide range of prolific garden favorites. An abundance of September and October bloom is followed by dormancy after first frost. In spring, new foliage emerges around the base of the plant crown. By early June, buds start appearing, and if left unchecked, will begin blooming in late June through the end of July.

How do you get the most from your hardy garden mums? First, purchase a winter-hardy plant. Second, select the right spot in your garden for optimal performance. And finally, provide a bit of care to make sure your mum continues to thrive for years to come.



Photo courtesy Annie Keith



'Gethsemane Moonlight' Flower
Close-up (Wake County, NC) Cathy
Dewitt [CC BY 4.0 NCSU.EDU](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Plant Selection:

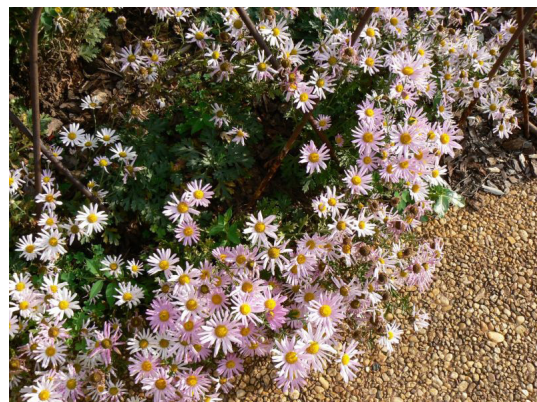
Look for autumn mums or florist's mums (*Chrysanthemum x morifolium*). This variety is hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 9 (we here in North Georgia are in Zone 8) and is the one most readily available in garden centers. Autumn mums grow 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide. The hardy garden mum or old-fashioned mum (*Chrysanthemum rubellum* group) is another great choice and is a bit more tolerant of cooler climates, with hardiness in Zones 4 to 8. Hardy garden mum cultivars can be a rare find, so you may have to visit nurseries that specialize in providing a wide selection of perennials. These mums are larger than the autumn mum, growing from 2 to 3 feet tall and wide.

All mums are relatively well-behaved in the garden, especially with proper pruning, but they can spread if left to their own devices. The best time to plant is in spring after last frost so plants have time to establish a robust root system. Most garden centers only carry mums in the fall, so if you really want to plant in spring, you may have to order from an online garden center. When selecting a mum for fall planting, pick one with plenty of unopened buds so you can enjoy the new blooms. Also, check the soil to make sure your mum has been well watered as these plants can easily dry out in the pot. Perhaps the most difficult part of plant selection is deciding on which color and flower style to pick.

Mums come in a wide variety of shades and flower shapes that range from daisy-like to button. Excellent cultivars of the hardy garden mum include 'Clara Curtis' (pink), 'Mary Stoker' (apricot), 'Princess Margaret' (bright pink), and 'Venus' (white to light pink). Outstanding autumn mum cultivars include 'Bedazzled Bronze' (gold and orange), 'Gethsemane Moonlight' (pale yellow), 'Kermit' (green), and 'Moonbeam' (white).

Plant Location:

You may choose to enjoy your mum in a pot as part of your fall decor before placing it in your garden. If so, make sure you water often, being careful to water below the flowers and foliage directly into the soil. Once you are ready to place your mum in the garden, trim back spent blooms, leaving about 4 inches of stem.



Chrysanthemum x rubellum 'Clara Curtis'
courtesy Mary Tucker

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Beware of Home Invasions!

By Judy Lester, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Prepare your homes! Home invasions are on the rise. Thankfully, I am not referring to armed, life-threatening, two-legged home invaders. The home invaders causing concern this fall have six legs, wings, and small bodies: boxelder bugs (*Boisea trivittata*), brown marmorated stink bugs (*Halyomorpha halys*), and Asian lady beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*). This article focuses on Asian lady beetles, but the tips on securing your home from insect invaders are useful with marmorated stink bugs and boxelder bugs, as well as with Asian lady beetles.

“Not ladybugs!” you may exclaim. “I love ladybugs!” Allow me to clarify. Technically, ladybugs are correctly called lady *beetles*. They are beetles, members of the family Coccinellidae. Lady beetles are associated with good luck, and gardeners welcome their help in the home garden and on the farm. Lady beetles dine on aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, and other soft-bodied insect pests. All lady beetle species aid the control aphids and other pests on important crops. The Asian lady beetle was introduced to the United States in the 1970s for this very purpose.



Asian lady beetle, Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

However, all lady beetles are not created equal. The native lady beetles are not gregarious. Their life cycles sync with our climate, so they do not need to overwinter inside homes. In contrast, Asian lady beetles seek shelter as temperatures drop in the fall. The insects look for shelter on the sunnier sides of homes. Openings in window screens, door jams, and attic vents are inviting to these invaders.

Being gregarious, Asian lady beetles seek each other out. If a few Asian lady beetles choose to shelter in your home, they will almost certainly attract more of their fellow insects. Before you know what is happening, you are hosting a full-scale invasion! If this is not the autumn house party of your dreams, read on.



Asian lady beetle larvae, David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

What is a homeowner to do? The first step toward control is to accurately identify the Asian lady beetle. Asian lady beetles are small beetles with oval bodies only $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long. They have a black “W” or “M” on a white background on their pronotum, or “shoulders,” just behind their heads (photo above). The adult Asian lady beetle has two rows of black spots on its red/orange back. This beetle’s larvae, (left photo) resemble small, spiny alligators with a blue/black body. Note that there are many variations in the appearance of Asian lady beetles.

The best deterrent to an Asian lady beetle invasion is to prepare your home before cooler weather arrives. Make sure your doors have tight-fitting sweeps or thresholds and weather stripping around the rest of the door. All utility openings, such as air conditioning pipes, cable entry points, and the like should be sealed with caulk, cement, urethane foam, or copper mesh. Caulk around windows, doors, siding, and fascia boards. Make sure your window screens are intact and functional. Lastly install insect screening behind attic gable vents. These exclusion techniques will also exclude boxelder bugs and brown marmorated stink bugs.

If pesky Asian lady beetles manage to invade your home despite your efforts, do not smash them since this can stain furnishings. Insecticide treatments in your home are not recommended because if the beetles’ carcasses accumulate inside walls or in attics, their dead bodies attract and feed other pests such as carpet beetles. Instead use your vacuum cleaner to collect them. Soon after you vacuum, take the sealed bag outside and dispose of it.

Asian lady beetles do not eat furniture or wood. They are helpful in gardens in the spring and summer. I can’t guarantee they bring good luck, but they are certainly cute. Keep them out of your home and enjoy their benefits in your yard and garden.

Happy gardening! Happy autumn!

References:

extension.uga.edu/content/dam/extension-county-offices/webster-county/anr/lady-beetles.pdf

<https://fieldreport.caes.uga.edu/publications/B1412/insect-and-arthropod-pests-of-southeastern-neighborhoods/>

<https://site.extension.uga.edu/fultonag/2021/01/garden-friends-or-home-invaders/>



The Valuable Resource of Fallen Leaves

By Ashley Frasca, Cherokee County Master Gardener

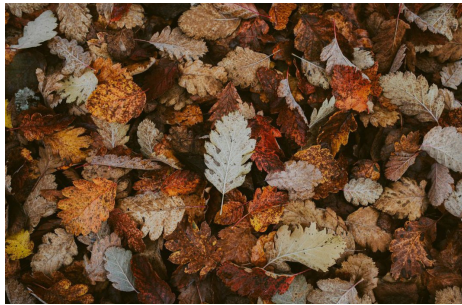
Fall is ushered in by shorter days, cooler temperatures, football games all weekend long, and by falling leaves. When late summer is dry, and days that follow stay sunny and cool, we tend to have a more colorful leaf change.

Once days begin getting shorter, the chlorophyll needed to turn sunlight into food begins breaking down, and pigments of colors other than green are visible on deciduous trees. Then abscission occurs, which is when the leaf detaches from its stem. Once the show is over, however, what are we to do with all these valuable leaves that have fallen to the ground?



The phrase “leave the leaves” has become quite popular thanks to the growth of environmental consciousness. Aside from the fact that this is the simplest thing to do in terms of yard work, the benefits of using fallen leaves far outweigh the reasons to remove them.

Dead leaves still have nutrient value, and when they break down, they add organic matter back to the soil. Shredding or mowing over leaves allows them to break down more quickly. The alternative is keeping them whole, to protect the insect eggs, caterpillars, and cocoons that may be living in them.



Fallen leaves provide cozy habitat for overwintering insects, not to mention cute creatures such as lizards and frogs. And according to the Xerces Society, at any point in their lifecycle, fireflies may “be found in leaf litter, under rocks or moss or rotting wood, in small burrows, or even in the furrowed bark of trees.” See the references below.

Leaves serve as a natural mulch, suppressing weeds and providing a uniform look to beds and areas with no grass. Dead leaves are a tree’s “carpet,” keeping moisture in the soil and insulating the roots during the cold winter months.

If there is simply no place for leaf piles in the landscape, consider asking neighbors if they’d like them or taking them to a green or vegetative landfill. Locally, two are in Ball Ground and in Marietta. Both charge a fee for dumping leaves, but at least you know they’re being recycled.

Going back to the growth of a more environmentally conscious movement, statistics from the E.P.A. show that in less than three decades, the millions of tons of yard trimmings entering landfills declined more than 4%. That’s huge considering that in 1990, yard waste accounted for 35 million tons of the municipal solid waste in landfills. Over those almost 30 years, many state legislatures stepped up to help reduce green materials being put in landfills by increasing efforts to educate homeowners on the benefits of composting and of leaving leaves and grass trimmings.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division currently has programs in place that encourage municipalities to divert yard trimmings from landfills by composting them or using them as mulch. Everyone wins when we “leave the leaves”!

Visit these sites for more information about the benefits of “Leaving the Leaves” and “Life in the Leaves” for winter.

<https://xerces.org/blog/leave-leaves-these-invertebrates-depend-on-it>

<https://www.nwf.org/Home/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2020/Dec-Jan/Gardening/Winter-Yards>

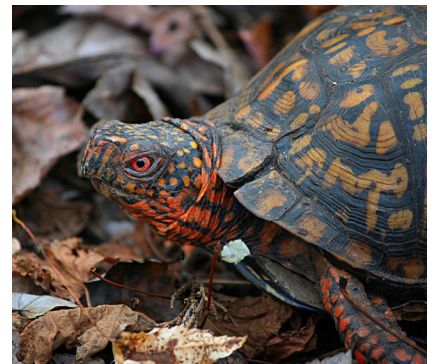


Photo: Pixabay / JamesDeMers

All photos courtesy CANVA unless noted

From Garden to Table article highlight continued from page 1

This year, Master Gardeners grew and donated a total of 1450 pounds of food, with a fall crop still to come, which is estimated to provide about 1,200 nutritious meals to residents of Cherokee County that are in need. The estimated dollar value of this contribution is approximately \$2,905.00. Fresh produce can be scarce in food pantries due to its perishability and storage challenges. Our weekly delivery of fresh produce helps reduce food waste by utilizing garden surplus, promotes local and seasonal eating, and minimizes fuel use and packaging waste due to the short farm-to-table distance. Additionally, “grown with care” conveys a different quality than “picked off a truck.”



Photo courtesy Crystal West

The Intriguing Oddity of Witches' Broom ...continued from page 2

What You Can Do

1. **Inspect** your trees and shrubs seasonally.
2. **Identify** and document symptoms.
3. **Prune and sanitize** tools regularly.
4. **Determine** underlying causes—pathogens, pests, injuries, or chemicals.
5. **Act accordingly**, with occasional pruning for benign cases or removal for serious diseases.



Witches' broom on loropetalum courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

Witches' broom may look bizarre, but it's simply a plant's response to stress. With careful observation and timely pruning, you can keep your garden tidy—and occasionally even embrace the odd beauty it offers.

The Misunderstood Mum continued from page 3

This remaining stem protects the crown and encourages root development during dormant months (and it will help you locate your mum in the spring). Discard foliage, blooms, and stems, as debris may harbor fungus that could impact new spring growth. Water your mum well, and gently tease roots apart before planting. Place your mum in a sunny spot with rich, moist, well-draining soil. Mums prefer a neutral soil pH of 6.0 to 8.0, so in our area additional lime may be required to reduce soil acidity. (If you haven't already, have a soil test done to ensure the right pH for mums and all your garden plantings.) Your bed should be free of debris and be well mulched. Mums planted in shadier spots will grow and bloom but will not have as tidy a habit or grow with the same vigor as those planted in the sun.

Plant Care:

While in bloom, take a moment to remove your mum's spent flowers. This will lengthen flowering time and keep your mum looking better longer. Once planted, make sure you water as needed until first frost. After spring growth emerges, remove any brown stems left from the previous fall and watch for bud development. Once buds appear, remove the top ½ to 1 inch of the plant. This will encourage branching, delay blooming, and lead to a fuller, non-splitting habit. You may need to pinch back more than once during the summer, with your last pruning in late July to early August. If you do not trim, you will have summer blooms, which is OK, but you may forfeit fall blooms because the plant will not have time to regenerate before first frost.

Applying a 5-10-5 fertilizer in spring and additionally during the growing season (midsummer and early fall) will encourage robust root growth and will give your mums extra hardiness during the winter. Don't forget about watering regularly as mums are thirsty plants, especially during bloom time and the first year in the garden. Mums benefit from dividing every two to three years. Do this in the spring for best results, and spread the joy!

Fall is an excellent time to plant perennials. With the abundance of mums in garden centers and local nurseries, consider adding mums to your garden for enjoyment for years to come. The variety of colors and flower style provide something for everyone. Mums are easy to find, easy to plant, and easy to care for. What do you have to lose? Give this often-misunderstood perennial a shot!



Chrysanthemum collection
courtesy Annie Keith



By Mary Tucker, Master Gardener

The development of autumn leaf color is a rather complex symphony of factors involving three categories of pigments: chlorophyll, carotenoids, and anthocyanin.

- Chlorophyll gives leaves a green color and is needed for photosynthesis. Chlorophyll is present during the growing season and declines as the days get shorter.
- Carotenoids display shades of yellow to orange. Along with chlorophyll, they are present during the growing season, but the yellow tones are masked by the green of the chlorophyll.
- Anthocyanins are in shades of red, from bright red to maroon or purple. These pigments are produced in the fall as a response to changes in light and temperature.

In the autumn, as the chlorophyll declines, the colors of the carotenoids and anthocyanins are unmasked and become apparent.

Different species of plants will produce different fall color, and genetic variation among plants of the same species may also affect autumn appearance. Growing conditions, such as light, temperature, and moisture, may also result in varying fall color from year to year.



Photo courtesy Mary Tucker

Garden TRIVIA Time

In autumn, the American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) bears clusters of vivid magenta berries, which the genus name references.

Do you know what Callicarpa means?

To find out, look in the October/November 2020 issue of the Cherokee County Master Gardener newsletter, Gardening with the Masters. Archived issues can be found on the CCMG website, <https://cherokeemastergardeners.com/>.



Native beautyberry fruit
courtesy Mary Tucker




American beautyberry, Susan Strine [CC BY 2.0 ncsu.edu](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)



Project FeederWatch is a program to count birds, sponsored by the non-profit Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and provides valuable data used to detect changes in bird populations. The FeederWatch survey takes place every year from November 1 to April 30. Based on a flexible schedule, you can count as much or as little as you wish. The small fee of \$18 to participate provides website and database management, but also participant support, project materials, and analysis of information learned from FeederWatch data. It's a fun project for the whole family to help identify bird species. Full information can be found at the Project FeederWatch website: <https://feederwatch.org/>

The previous newsletter issue was missing rainfall comparisons, so this issue has included four months.

RAINFALL COMPARISONS						
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	May 2025	June 2025	YTD 2025	May 2025	June 2025	YTD 2025
Actual	7.3	5.3	31.5	6.8	4.6	26.9
Normal	4.3	4.2	29.6	3.2	4.5	24.9
Deviation	3.0	1.1	1.9	3.6	0.1	2.0


RAINFALL COMPARISONS						
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	July 2025	Aug 2025	YTD 2025	July 2025	Aug 2025	YTD 2025
Actual	3.9	3.9	39.3	3.0	7.0	36.9
Normal	4.7	4.2	38.5	4.5	4.5	33.9
Deviation	-0.8	-0.3	0.8	-1.5	2.5	3.0





Photo sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) courtesy Marcia Winchester

OCTOBER GARDENING TIPS

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Tomatoes need an average daily temperature of 65°F or more for ripening. If daytime temperatures consistently are below this, pick fruits that have begun to change color and bring them inside to ripen. Use recipes that require green tomatoes, or place a ripe apple in a closed container with green tomatoes to encourage the tomatoes to turn red. Ripe apples give off ethylene gas which causes tomatoes to ripen. **For growing tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**
- Cure pumpkins, butternut, and Hubbard squash at temperatures between 70-80° F for two to three weeks immediately after harvest. After curing, store them in a dry place at 55- 60° F. If stored at 50° F or below, pumpkins and squash are subject to damage by chilling. At temperatures above 60° F, they gradually lose moisture and become stringy. **For more info on summer and winter squash, click [HERE](#).**
- A final weeding of your strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries will help keep weed problems down to a minimum. Strawberries covered in the fall with a spunbonded polyester material and uncovered in the spring just before bloom produced up to 60% more fruit than plants given the conventional straw or hay mulch cover.
- Make a note of any particularly unsatisfactory or productive varieties or crops. Such information can be very useful during garden-planning time in the spring.
- Clean up home orchard and small-fruit plantings. Sanitation is essential for good maintenance. Dried fruits or mummies carry disease organisms through the winter that will attack next year's crop.
- If there is a threat of frost at night, harvest your cucumber, eggplant, melon, okra, pepper, and summer squash so the fruits are not damaged by the frost.
- Hot peppers store well dry. Pull plants and hang them up, or pick the peppers and thread on a string. Store in a cool, dry place.

OCTOBER MISCELLANEOUS

- Do not apply quick-acting fertilizers while tilling the soil in the fall; nitrogen will leach away before spring. Materials that release nutrients slowly into the soil, such as rock phosphate or lime, can be worked into the soil in the fall.
- When removing disease-infected plant parts/debris, do not place refuse on the compost pile. The disease pathogens will live in the compost pile and can be transmitted with the application of compost to other garden beds, unless compost temperatures reach above 180° F and decomposition is complete. **For a guide to composting and mulching, click [HERE](#).**
- Kudzu, poison ivy and other weedy vines are more susceptible to chemical control this time of year. Be sure to follow the directions, and protect other plants from drift of the spray. **For kudzu control, click [HERE](#). For poison ivy control, click [HERE](#).**

ORNAMENTALS

- October is the best month to plant fall annual beds. It is cooler for the transplants and gives their roots time to become established before winter cold hits. Try mixing dwarf snapdragons with pansies for color, and parsley, kale, mustard, and Swiss chard for background color. Make sure your beds have good drainage. **For more info click [HERE](#).**
- Plant love-in-a-mist, poppy, bachelor buttons and larkspur seed now for early spring annuals.
- If climbing roses are in an exposed location, tie them up firmly with broad strips of rags or padded foam tape so the wind will not whip them against the trellis and bruise the bark.
- Don't prune roses this late as new growth would become subject to winter injury. The rose garden should be raked and cleaned, removing all fallen leaves and mulch to prevent black spot and other diseases next year. Replace mulch after the ground has frozen. Continue spraying for fungus.
- Clean up around perennial flowers, such as peonies. If left on the ground, leaves and stems can harbor diseases and provide convenient places for pests to spend the winter.
- Cut down stems and foliage of herbaceous perennials when the leaves begin to brown. Leave 3 inches of stem to ID the plant's location.
- October and November are generally considered the best months to plant trees and shrubs. Garden centers and nurseries usually stock a good selection of woody plants now. Select some accent plants for your landscape that will provide autumn colors. Trees that turn red include chokeberry, dogwood, red maple, red or scarlet oak and sourwood. Shrubs with spectacular fall foliage include viburnum, fothergilla, hydrangea, blueberries, itea and amsonia. **For more info on growing dogwoods, click [HERE](#).**
- Plant trees at least 6 feet away from sidewalks, concrete pools, and driveways so growing roots do not crack the concrete. Trees that get quite large need to be placed even further away from concrete.
- Small imperfections, such as nicks and loose skin, should not affect the quality of most bulbs. Store bulbs in a cool area (below 65° F). Do not plant before Nov. 1. **For more info on flowering bulbs, click [HERE](#).**



NOVEMBER GARDENING TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Protect the roots of azaleas and rhododendrons with a heavy mulch of organic materials (i.e. oak leaves, wood chips, or pine straw) on the surface. **For growing azaleas, click [HERE](#).**
- For best growth, plant spring bulbs where they are out of the direct sun during the middle of the day. Bulbs have a chilling requirement that is satisfied by winter soil temperatures, so avoid planting bulbs near heated basements where the soil may not stay adequately cold. Do not plant bulbs before November 1.



Photo *Narcissus x medioluteus* "Twin Sisters", courtesy Barbara H. Smith, ©2018 HGIC, Clemson Extension

- Watch for standing water in perennial beds after rain. Water that collects on the surface during winter will freeze and can damage perennials. Dig shallow trenches to help drain excess water away. Make a note to raise that bed in spring or plant with plants that like "wet feet".
- When placing plants around the home, remember as a general rule that plants with thick leaves can take lower light levels than those with thin leaves.
- If there is any evidence of scale on trees and shrubs, spray with dormant oil in late fall and again in early spring. Follow label directions. **For scale management, click [HERE](#).**
- Avoid transplanting shrubs and trees on windy days; the roots can be exposed to too much light or drying winds, putting undue stress on the plant.
- Peonies that don't require a long cold winter perform better in the South. They can be planted now in full sun and fertile, well-drained soil that is rich in organic matter. Dig holes 18" deep and fill halfway with a mixture of soil, compost, and a handful of 5-10-10 fertilizer. Add a few more inches of soil and set the tubers so the buds are 1-2" below the soil surface. Backfill, firm the soil, and water thoroughly. Peonies do not grow well after being moved and will not bloom for several years. **For more info on growing peonies, click [HERE](#).**

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Remove grass and weeds from trunks of fruit trees and grapes to prevent damage by mice and rodents. Leave a bare circle (one foot wide) around tree trunks when spreading mulch to keep mice from feeding on the bark. A collar or fence of poultry wire or a commercial tree guard approximately 18 inches high will deter rodents and rabbits.



Photo open wooden cold frame with lettuce Adobe Stock 262041130

- Plant lettuce and hardy vegetables, such as beets, cabbage, and spinach, in cold frames for winter or early spring crops. **For more cold frame info, click [HERE](#).**
- If you use aged manure as a soil conditioner, apply it now and till it under; it can be a source of weed seed.
- Rough plow or spade garden plots containing heavy, clay soil. Add organic matter and lime if indicated by a soil test. Leave the soil rough. Winter's thawing and freezing will break up the clods and kill some of the insects overwintering in the soil. A rough soil surface also catches more moisture and reduces erosion.
- When time or weather conditions prohibit plowing or cover cropping, you may let your garden lie under a mulch of compost, non-diseased plant wastes, or leaves all winter to be plowed/tilled under in the spring. If using heavy organic matter, chop fine enough so it can break down over the winter.
- Store pesticides in a frost-free location away from food and out of the reach of children. If a pesticide is in a paper container, put the whole package in a plastic container and seal it. Be sure that all bottles and cans are tightly sealed and well labeled. **For pesticide safety, click [HERE](#).**

NOVEMBER MISCELLANEOUS

- Keep an eye out for spider mites on your houseplants; they thrive in dry air. At the first sign of any insect infestation, isolate your plant. Several thorough washings with plain water may bring them under control. If not, apply an appropriate insecticide and follow the instructions on the label. **For more info on common pest control, click [HERE](#).**
- During the cooler temperatures and shorter days of winter, the growth of most houseplants slows. Unless plants are grown under an artificial light source that is left on 16 hours per day, new growth will be minimal until spring. Reduce fertilization and water until late April or May when new growth resumes. **For more info on houseplants, click [HERE](#).**
- African violets do well when potted in small pots. A good general rule is to use a pot one-third the diameter of the plant. To humidify African violets, surround the pot with moist peat contained in a second pot. **For more info, click [HERE](#).**

October/November Recipes

Crisp Apple and Cheddar Salad

Submitted by Maurya Jones

INGREDIENTS:

10 ounces lettuce, rinsed, drained, and roughly chopped
1/4 medium red onion, thinly sliced
4 ounces Vermont extra sharp white cheddar cheese bar, cut into small cubes
1/2 cup slow-roasted pecans
1/3 cup Private Selection Crisp Apple Honey Vinaigrette (a Kroger brand)
1/2 Granny Smith apple, cored and thinly sliced
1/2 Honeycrisp apple, cored and thinly sliced

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In large bowl, combine lettuce, onion, cheddar, and pecans.
2. Pour dressing over top, tossing to coat.
3. Arrange apple slices on top. Serve immediately, refrigerating any leftovers.

NOTE: If you cannot find the Crisp Apple Honey Vinaigrette, you can substitute a raspberry vinaigrette.



All photos courtesy Maurya Jones

Cheesy Chicken and Hash Brown Casserole

Submitted by Maurya Jones

Serves 6 to 8

INGREDIENTS FOR

STEP 1:

4 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 13-ounce bag of Ore-Ida shredded hash brown potatoes
1/2 large, diced onion



INGREDIENTS FOR STEP 2:

8 ounces cream cheese
16 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons deli mustard
1/2 tablespoon creamy horseradish
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
2 dashes Tabasco
1/4 cup white wine, optional
Sazón seasoning

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 1:

1. Grease a 10 x 15 baking pan
2. Combine hash browns and onion; place in prepared pan.
3. Pound chicken breasts and place on top of potato and onion mixture.
4. Salt and pepper the above to taste.
5. Bake the above for 30 minutes and remove from oven.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STEP 2:

1. Combine all step 2 ingredients and spread over the hot chicken.
2. Sprinkle salt, pepper, and sazón seasoning on top.
3. Bake an additional 30 minutes, and then broil for 2 minutes.

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