

Tips for the Landscape and Garden

Tips adapted from Bob Westerfield, State Consumer Horticulturist for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, and Walter Reeves, Retired Extension agent for DeKalb County and Saturday Morning Gardening Show Host on WSB Radio.



For best growth, plant spring bulbs where they will get full sun in the spring. It is OK if the area is shaded after trees leaf out as the foliage will die back once the bulbs have finished producing food for next year's flowers.

Cut 12-inch lengths of angel trumpet and plumeria limbs to bring indoors. Placed in 6 inches of water, they will root and be ready for planting next May.

Drain your irrigation system and outdoor faucets. If the faucets cannot be drained, wrap pipes with insulation for the winter. Cover outside faucets with insulated faucet covers.

Keep leaves raked (or blown) off your newly planted fescue lawn.

Squirrels are moving into their favorite winter home, your attic! If you hear noises late at night or early in the morning, you will need to purchase a cage trap and bait it with peanut butter. Seal entrance holes after animals are removed.

It is time to fertilize your pansies and other winter annuals that you planted a few weeks ago. Use a slow-release product that will feed through the next 3-4 months.

Pull or dig out chickweed, violets and wild onions you find in your lawn.

As soon as chrysanthemums are through flowering, cut the stems to within a few inches of the ground. This will help root development and make plants send out vigorous sprouts in the spring. Dispose of these stems and all dropped and dried leaves and branches in the compost.

Newly purchased Chrysanthemums left in pots as outside décor can now be cut back and planted out into the garden for blooms next year. Remember to mulch around plants after a good rain.

Check house gutters for fallen leaves, pine needles, and twigs. Heavy, fall rains will quickly overflow clogged gutters, possible damaging foundation plants below them.

If you use manure as a soil conditioner, apply it now and till it under. Manure can be a source of weed seed. Composting before application can reduce the number of viable seeds. Check that manure is not from fields that used herbicides such as Grazon, as these can persist in the manure for up to 5 years and interrupt plant growth. Well-rotted cow or chicken manure might be a better choice.

Rough plow or spade garden plots containing heavy, clay soil. Add organic matter [compost, manures] and amendments 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 and slugs overwintering in the soil. A rough soil surface also catches more moisture and reduces erosion.

Keep an eye out for spider mites on your house plants. They thrive in dry air. At the first sign of any insect infestation, isolate your plant. Several thorough washes with plain water may bring them under control. If not, apply an appropriate insecticide. Follow the instructions on the product label.

Take a walk through your garden as the fall season winds down. Take time to reflect on the successes and failures of your gardens this year. Make notes in your gardening notebook for new things to try, and things to fix, next spring. Make plans for maintenance projects that can be done in the winter such as building paths and raised beds.

If there is any evidence of scale on trees and shrubs, spray with a dormant oil spray in late fall and again in early spring.

Remove grass and weeds from around the 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 from nibbling on the bark.

Fertilize fescue lawns for the second time. With a strong root system, your lawn will be better able to withstand drought conditions next summer. Check out lawn maintenance calendars on the UGA Extension website.

Continuing deep watering of evergreens and newly planted trees until freezing weather occurs.

Continue to plant lettuce seeds and other hardy vegetables such as beets, cabbage, and spinach to extend your vegetable season. Cover with frost cloth if a hard freeze is predicted.

Time to plant garlic! It will be ready to harvest next June.

Gardening is excellent physical exercise. Studies have shown that one hour of weeding burns 300 calories, the same as walking or bicycling at a moderate pace.

Roses should be winterized after a heavy frost. Place a 6-10 inch deep layer of mulch over each plant. Ground up leaves or pine straw work well. Save major pruning for February but trimming excessively long canes will not hurt. Do NOT prune climbing roses now.

Garden ponds benefit from having bird netting stretched across the surface to catch falling leaves and pinecones, etc. to reduce fouling of the water and using up oxygen needed by fish. It also helps protect fish from

predators as they do not have as much plant cover in the winter.

Mulch strawberries for the winter with pine straw by applying pine straw loosely but thick enough to hide plants from view.

Reduce or stop fertilizing house plants until spring as most plants slow their growth when light levels decrease in winter.

Dig caladium, elephant ear, and dahlia bulbs/corms now while you can still find them. Brush off loose dirt, trim any remaining stems, and store in a cool, dry spot in a box/basket filled with shredded paper. Label carefully.

Continue to plant trees and shrubs. The ground is still warm enough to allow roots to establish. Avoid fertilizing until spring.

Feeding birds is fun but use black oil sunflower seeds that birds will pick out and eat. Avoid seed mixes with millet and filler seeds. These are rarely eaten by the birds and attract rodents and undesirable wildlife.

Build a compost pile from your fall leaves and grass clippings. If you want a structure, make an inexpensive three-sided bin using poultry wire and metal stakes or three pallets. Pile in leaves as you rake them and water well. [Chopping leaves with a lawn mower and bagging attachment will speed decomposition.] Add a layer on green materials [grass clippings and kitchen veggie scraps] before the next leaf layer. When finished, let the pile cook a few weeks then turn it occasionally to introduce air that will increase decomposition. If using any garden vegetable plant remains, you need a hot pile to destroy diseases. If you are not sure your pile will get hot enough, dispose of these plant materials in the trash.



Compost pile made of pallets.

This is a great time to reconsider your yard and plant for wildlife be it pollinators, native amphibians, or birds.

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