

Fall Checklist: Prepping Your Landscape For Winter

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For avid gardeners, it feels as though as soon as the growing season arrives, it's gone. For the blooms this might be true, but for your landscape as a whole, there is still plenty of time to care for it before it enters its dormant period. Preparing your lawn and garden for the cold weather is incredibly important when it comes to keeping a happy and healthy landscape. There are important tasks to complete in the fall to make sure that all plant materials are ready for that strikingly cold first frost. Here is a 10-point checklist to help you prep your lawn and garden for winter.

- ❑ **Assess your garden.** You want to assess the results of your work from this season. Assess the overall health of your plant materials, check for diseases and damage and address accordingly.
- ❑ **Prepare your garden.** Weed, deadhead and replace any ties with jute twine. Natural fibers are more flexible and break down over time.
- ❑ **Proper pruning.** Lightly prune dead and broken branches from your trees and shrubs but take care when pruning your flowering plants. Some plants flower on old growth so if you're unsure of the pruning methods, it doesn't hurt to look it up.
- ❑ **Divide and transplant.** Take a look to see if any of your plants have outgrown their space in your garden, they might need to be divided. If you have perennials in containers, you can remove them, trim the roots and plant them in the ground.
- ❑ **Remove the annuals.** Remove any annuals or bulbs from your garden that aren't zone hardy – don't forget your containers and window boxes as well. Replace summer annuals with cool weather annuals in your containers such as kale, pansies or garden mums.

- ❑ **Soil and mulch.** Add soil to the areas where plants were removed and where additional soil is needed. You can add compost and peat moss to replace any lost nutrients from the growing season. Add mulch to needed areas in your garden but make sure it isn't sitting on low lying branches or pushed up the stalk of a plant.
- ❑ **Aerate and overseed.** The cooler weather will allow the seed to have a better chance at germinating and developing a strong root system before the freezing temperatures arrive. Aeration will help to break up compact soils and aid in seed germination – the two can go hand in hand.
- ❑ **Selective and non-selective herbicide.** Apply a selective pre-emergent herbicide to deal with weeds that have been deposited during the summer. You can also use a spot treatment of post-emergent herbicide but take care if you have seeded or plan to seed your lawn, as the weed control will prevent grass seed from germinating.
- ❑ **Plant trees and shrubs.** The air might be cool but the ground is still warm, this promotes better root growth and quicker establishment. Plus, nurseries and garden centers have everything on sale to help clear their shelves for the season.

Following this checklist will help you ease your garden into dormancy and allow for happier, healthier plant materials next season, as well as a cleaner garden! As the days grow shorter and the weather grows colder, gardeners everywhere dream of the upcoming growing season – so take advantage of the time you have left this year to make the most of the 2017 growing season. Come springtime, your garden will be thanking you for your love and care during the previous season. So take this list, check it twice and count the days till spring arrives. Happy gardening.