



Fall Gardening Checklist

And

Planting vegetables in the fall

Fall in Madison County

- ▶ Fall starts September 22, 2018
- ▶ Our plant hardiness zone is 5b - this is the ability of a plant to survive adverse conditions. Each zone has a 10 degree differential.
- ▶ Our first freeze date is October 12, 2018 - per the Old Farmer's Almanac
 - ▶ **Light freeze:** 29° to 32° F—tender plants are killed.
 - ▶ **Moderate freeze:** 25° to 28° F—widely destructive to most vegetation.
 - ▶ **Severe freeze:** 24° F and colder—heavy damage to most plants



Prepare yourself

Walk around your lawn and garden. Look for bald patches of soil requiring amendments, over grown plants that need division, bulbs needing to be removed before winter and herbs to go indoors.

Fall is the best time to add soil amendments as the slow releasing fertilizer will enhance soil quality throughout the winter months.

Weed killer should be applied twice each year. In the fall you need to apply weed killer to get rid of the seeds that have landed in the summer.

If you collect seeds from flowers and vegetables for next year, soak the fruits in water and remove the pulp. The weaker seeds will float to the top and can be discarded. The heavier seeds on the bottom should be dried , labeled and stored in a cool, dry environment.

Early fall planting gives new plants enough time to get their roots established before winter.

Think about growing cover crops: seeds of ryegrass, vetch or crimson clover suppress weeds and prevent erosion. Cover crops should be planted about four weeks before the first frost. Crops will grow all winter absorbing nutrients from the ground and will give your garden a nice boost in organic matter in the spring.

When adding mulch aim for a layer 3 to 5 inches deep. Any material that will not compact can be used. Roses or newly planted perennials need a deeper layer after the ground freezes. Always wait until the ground freezes or you risk creating a hibernation haven for rodents.

Try the Mother Earth News Garden Planner on their website. You lay out your garden and plug in what was in each garden bed. The planner will tell you which beds are best and the beds you should avoid for each specific crop as you plan for next year.

Checklist for fall gardening

Dig up and store tender roots, bulbs, and plants. The ideal time is after the first frost.

Bring indoor plants in from outside. Potted herbs may be brought indoors and set in a sunny spot.

Organize your garden shed. Make shovels and supplies easy to access. Clean, sharpen and oil tools. You can use WD-40 to oil. Use Linseed oil on wooden handles. Review labels of weed killers, pest controllers and other liquids. These have a short shelf life and should be disposed of appropriately.

Prune out and destroy raspberry and blackberry canes that bore fruits this year. This will prevent spread of diseased portions on next years plants.

Don't fertilize woody plants now. It stimulates late growth that will not have time to harden off properly before winter.

Keep the garden well-watered during dry weather. New plants should receive 1 to 1.5 inches of water every week to 10 days.

Drain gas from power equipment engines to keep them from gumming up and causing problems when cranking the first time next year.

Check trees and shrubs that have planted in recent years for damage.

Pull up all annuals that have died back, cut back your perennials and remove all fallen leaves from the area to use as mulch. Too many leaves can retain water that could lead to root rot in your perennials and also attract pests.

Take a soil sample to your local extension office to check if soil is acidic or alkaline. Correct when necessary. Look for nutrient deficiencies and make plans to fertilize in spring.

Hand prune and destroy bagworms, fall webworms and tent caterpillars.

Using a sharp pair of pruning shears, cut back any vines (grapes, blackberries, raspberries, etc) leaving roughly six of the strongest brown canes for every foot of your row. New canes will come up in the spring. Mound up the soil around the canes to prevent hard frosts from heaving them out of the ground. Thin your strawberry beds and cover them with straw to keep them protected during the winter months.

Concrete ornaments - the constant freezing and thawing is likely to crack them. Birdbaths can usually be kept outside, but make sure to empty them and stand the bowl on its side leaned against the base.

Any stakes, tomato cages and trellises should be brought into your garage for the winter. Give them a good spray with the garden hose to clean them off, and allow them to dry thoroughly in the sun. Then, give them a quick cleansing using a 10% bleach solution to ensure there are no bacteria left on them to culture.

Do an over seeding where lawns are sparse. Fall is nature's seeding time so a little help now will help eliminate bare or thin spots later.

Empty and clean rain barrels. Store hoses, outdoor artwork, furniture and winterize pond equipment. Shut off outdoor faucets.

Before the first hard frost

Plant spring bulbs, garlic, rhubarb

Collect seeds for next spring's planting

Weed garden beds

Cut grass

Use mulched leaves to improve soil. Plan now to mow leaves as long as you can, as a healthy way to “feed” the worms that take the leaf matter down deep into the lawn and tree roots. Rake leaves when they get too thick and use to cover garden beds. Save leftover leaves in a compost bed. Water and put new leaves on top. Turn compost from bottom to top to aerate.

Winter preparation

Install burlap or plywood wind barriers for plants, shrubs or trees susceptible to harsh winds and ice.

Wash and repair bird feeders, suet cages and wildlife water sources

Protect any vulnerable perennials from severe weather by applying a layer of straw or mulch over them. Mulch helps insulate soil and prevent frost heave, a condition that occurs when soil repeatedly freezes and thaws and pushes plants out of soil.

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Get Your Fall Garden Going

These 11 vegetables love cold weather and can be started in August/September



Brussels Sprouts

Asparagus

Kale

Broccoli

Spinach

Beets

Cauliflower

Chard

Carrots

Cabbage

Turnips

Collards

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Fall/early winter plants

Don't forget to thin seedlings of new plants to appropriate spacing as needed. Do not pull up extra seedlings. Use scissors and snip them off.

The following are excellent choices for a fall veggie harvest.

beets, beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, celery root, collards, kale and mustards, green onions, lettuce, spinach, carrots, swiss chard, kohlrabi, radishes, turnips

To know when to plant, take your first frost date and count back from the number of days it takes for each crop to mature (check back of package)

The window for fall planting usually ends about six weeks before a hard frost but you can push this out using a cold frame or other plant covering.

Fall is great time to grow veggies. The soil is still warm allowing roots to grow until the ground freezes. You should deep water plants if it doesn't rain at least an inch per week.

The estimated harvest day simply marks a point where growth is at a maximum. Many of these veggies are “cut and come again”, meaning you can trim off leaves for your dinner salad, leaving an inch at a base and new leaves will grow - sometimes several times over.

Garden Extenders

