

FALL PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER



Introduction

Below are some tips for things you can do in the fall to prepare for winter including some planting tips.

1 // Soil Testing Soil sampling is recommended every 2-3 years for soils that are heavily used. It is inexpensive, can help you maximize productivity and pinpoint nutrient needs. You can sample anytime. The results can take a few weeks to come back. Some labs will just send results, and some will send results along with recommendations. You can purchase kits from the OSU Extension Allen County for \$20.00/soil sample. Kits allow results and recommendations from the lab.

2 // Cover Crops in the Garden Refer to OSU Extension Fact Sheet HYG-5814 at ohioline.osu.edu.

3 // Tree and Shrub Pruning Fall pruning is not best for most trees. It is best to wait until late winter/early spring. Most evergreens need little pruning at all. Okay to prune trees are birch, maples and dogwoods. Trees like serviceberry, redbud, crabapples and flowering cherry should be pruned right after bloom in the spring. Anytime pruning is ok for diseased, dead or broken branches. Limit pruning on stressed trees.

4 // Composting Refer to OSU Extension Fact Sheet HYG-1189-99 at ohioline.osu.edu.

5 // Preparing Bulbs/Corms for Spring Dig up bulb-like corms when tops die off. Wash off soil and cut foliage 1-2 inches above corms. Allow to dry (outdoors in sun is best if temperatures allow). Discard mother corms, possibly save comets. Store in a mesh bag in a COOL, DRY AND WELL VENTILATED PLACE.

6 // Perennials Divide plants that bloom in the spring/summer in the fall for propagation and plant health reasons. A nursery spade is the tool of choice. Need to know the crown of the plant. Cut back if it is diseased, a prolific seeder or has insect issues. Mulching 2-3 inches prevents quick temperature change. Water 1 inch/week until ground freezes.



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7 // Equipment Maintenance

Drain fuels or use a fuel stabilizer for winter. Check/change oil. Remove/disconnect spark plug and replace it if needed. Clean underside of lawn mower deck and check condition of blades. Disconnect batteries and bring inside to protect from freeze/thaw if needed.

8 // Remove Finished/Dead Plants

Compost these materials to use later as a good nutrient source. Be mindful of diseased plant material.

9 // Lawn Care Last mow of the season should be shorter. September is best for weed control. Fertilizer should be applied before lawn goes dormant. September is a good month for seeding lawns. Leaves should be kept so you can see 80%-90% of the grass afterwards.

10 // Planting in the Fall

Trees: Dig holes 2x-3x the size of root ball. Reuse existing soil with up to 20% peat moss/compost added. Prune circling roots. Mulch 2-3 inches. Don't over fertilize or water. Take caution transplanting oak, hickory, magnolia and sweetgum trees.

Shrubs: If buying in a container, score the roots. Fall is a great time to plant deciduous shrubs. Plant from Mid-August to October. Water them until the ground is frozen. Do not leave the burlap on the root balls. Take off strings and tags or at least loosen them. Do not tamp down the soil too tight. Be hesitant of bare root stock. Wait until spring for most evergreens.

*Prepared by Nic Baumer
Extension Educator
baumer.15@osu.edu*

Useful References

OSU Extension Cover Crops in the Garden Fact Sheet: ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-5814

OSU Extension Composting at Home Fact Sheet: ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1189-99

OSU Turf Team: buckeyeturf.osu.edu

OSU Buckeye Yard and Garden onLine: bygl.osu.edu

OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers: mastergardener.osu.edu

Sources

OSU Extension Fact Sheets ohioline.osu.edu

Fall Roundup and Do's and Don't of Fall Planting Presentations by Ryan McMichael, ANR Educator, OSU Extension Mercer County



Bulbs: Plant daffodils, tulips, crocuses and hyacinths in the fall as they need a cold dormant period. Wait to plant amaryllis and gladiolus until spring. If planting new bulbs, purchase in early September for best quality and variety. Check your plant hardiness zone online. Ohio is either 5b, 6a or 6b. If relocating bulbs, move before the ground freezes but let foliage dieback naturally in the spring. Prepare the soil with a hole 3x-4x the size of the bulb and typically 4 inches or lower in the ground. Fertilize if needed at the depth of planting.

Perennials: Divide and replant overgrown plants 4-6 weeks before the ground freezes. Be mindful of bargain deals. Mulch just prior to December. Do not divide a plant that is flowering or on hot, sunny days. Don't wait too long to plant, October at the latest. Do not over fertilize as they probably do not need any.

Overall Fall Planting Tips: Choose quality plants that do not have large "top growth" and ones that establish roots quickly. Water plants slow and steady until the ground is frozen. Plant in mid-August to early October. Prepare the soil properly and soil test rather than guess.



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Sources

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