



Put Your Garden to Bed

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Realize benefits in your garden next spring by investing some TLC this fall. Nature gives gardeners autumn downtime as wetter conditions and cooler temperatures cause many plants to die back. Use this time to clean up and plan ahead for next year's garden, and you'll reduce spring workload and get rid of unwanted pests and disease.

Enjoy the crisp fall air and color as you tackle clean up outside. Pick up rotted fruit from around trees and diseased leaves from tomato, potato, and squash plants and roses; undesirable pests and disease such as powdery mildew can survive the winter. Cut out diseased or dead branches - - do not perform major pruning yet, and do not throw diseased items into a compost bin. Cut back spent perennials to prevent slugs and other insects from hiding in the leaves over winter. Fall is a good time to divide over-crowded plants such as iris, Hosta, Day and Canna lilies, and Shasta daisy.

Remove annuals before flower head seeds dry and drop. Or, encourage self-seeding flowers to voluntarily come back next year by scattering their dried seeds directly on the soil. Poppies, violas, Johnnie Jump Ups, alyssum, and larkspur are a few varieties whose seeds can survive our milder winters. Get prized potted plants like geraniums indoors before a killing frost. Cleaning up all annual and perennial blooms isn't necessary: leave some dry seed heads and ornamental grasses for wildlife food and shelter over the winter.

Leaves, leaves everywhere! First beautiful to behold, but later when leaves scatter the ground everywhere, it gets overwhelming. Let leaves stay on the ground in the natural areas of your yard to suppress weeds as Mother Nature intended. If you rake up leaves, turn them into beneficial leaf mold. Leaf mold is easy to make: Pile up leaves in an unused area of your yard, keep them

moist and give them up to two years to fully decompose. Accelerate decomposition by chopping up dry leaves with a lawn mower and capturing the pile in an enclosed space (a large leaf bag, or a three by three foot wire cage), turning the pile occasionally. Once leaves are fully decomposed, use the resulting nutrient-rich leaf mold to mulch around plants or in veggie garden beds. Leaf mold lowers soil density and helps soil hold more water... it doesn't get better than that for your deserving plants!

Before kicking back to read a good book, make plans to improve next year's garden and landscape. Sketch a veggie garden layout considering what worked (and didn't) this year, and rotate plant locations to fight disease. Plant a cover crop in the garden bed to refresh soil nutrients. Grow winter vegetables like Brussels sprouts, kale, turnips, beets and spinach. Plant spring bulbs, daffodils and more, for early blooms next year. What about adding or starting some fruit trees? Nurseries offer bare root trees in early winter, so research what works best for your climate and be an early bird to shop or order your favorite varieties. Last, don't forget to clean and sharpen garden tools for their winter's rest.

Whew - - fall can get a little busy for gardening, after all! When everything bursts out beautifully next spring, you'll thank yourself for the great job you did this fall to clean up, plant and plan.

Learn more about fall gardening activities such as clean up, making leaf mold, and cool weather planting with Master Gardeners at this Saturday's public education class: Putting Your Garden to Bed. The free class is taught on October 19, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to noon in the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville, California.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane, Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDCMasterGardeners/>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find Master Gardeners on Facebook.