

Gardening Tips for October 2011



Play in the dirt!

Gardening is part science and part art. That's why it's so much fun! You can't know too much about gardening and you can never stop searching for ideas. This month will be a busy one with what is needed to prepare for next spring's gardens and for the cold, harsh winter ahead. Getting started is the hard part for me, how about you? And with all our construction and improvements Jim and I have been doing around here, I'm already behind in my gardening.

Here are the things we need to be doing now.

FIRST let's begin with:

...Fall fescue planting season officially begins! Make sure you have good soil contact. Aerate before seeding, roll afterwards. Water when you can.

...This is the last chance to apply a weed preventer to Bermuda, soysia, and centipede grass lawns to thwart winter weeds like chickweed and annual bluegrass. You can still get 75% control at this point in the season.

...If you want your leftover poinsettia to turn color by Christmas, now's the time to begin giving it 14 hours of darkness and 10 hours of bright light each day to force it to change.

...You'll need to trim one fourth any woody plants you've kept outdoors during the summer, to help them fit inside your home for the winter. (Hibiscus, houseplants, etc.)

Second:

...The pansy planting season begins now! Plant six-pack pansies eight inches apart, larger plants can be spaced ten inches apart. Drench newly-planted pansies with water-soluble houseplant fertilizer at the rate shown on the label to push them off to a fast start.

...Cut brown flower stems of purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, daylily and hosta back to ground level. Bring patio plants into shade for two weeks before bringing inside. This will help prevent leaf drop.

...Apply a weed preventer to beds of already-planted cool-season flowers to prevent seeds from sprouting.

Third:

...Clean fallen fruit from the ground under pear and apple trees and remove any fruit from the tree that you don't intend to harvest.

...Plant spring flowering bulbs, like tulip, daffodil and hyacinth. If you have old, crowded beds, loosen and the bulbs divided and replanted now.

...Divide daylily clumps, iris rhizomes and peony roots. Plant them into a well-dug bed immediately.

...Raise your mower height one-half inch and enjoy a last mowing of your lawn. Clean mower, drain gas, give it a winter rest!

...Remove faded rose blooms. Clip wayward stems back so the plant has a compact form, ready for winter, wind and ice.

Fourth:

...As chrysanthemum and aster flowers fade, cut the plants back to six inches tall.

...Rake out and replace all the mulch and dead leaves under roses, red tip photinia and crabapples.

...Root cuttings of geranium, impatiens, begonia and other outside plants to bring indoors for the winter.

...Fertilize pansies again with water-soluble houseplant fertilizer. Switch to a product that contains nitrate nitrogen (Osmocote, Pansy Booster, etc.) when you feed in another two weeks.

...Check all pesticides for storage procedures and label them, lock up, and place in area where they will not freeze over the winter.

Whew! I'm tired now. But wait.....all this is not to be done in one day or even one week..... This is all to be done during the month. That's good news, huh. Now we can get started with the first things first.....now

Won't you join me playing in the dirt?

Your garden buddy,

Ann Taylor