

# Fall Garden Care

Even though the shorter days and cooler nights of autumn are approaching, there is still plenty to do in the yard and garden. In fact, fall is the perfect time for aerating your lawn, testing your soil and planting trees, shrubs or bulbs.

Remember that roses require special care in the fall. In early fall, suspend fertilization. Continuing to fertilize causes new growth that could be killed by winter's cold. After foliage drops, spray with fungicide, and then cover plants with a minimum of 8" of loose, well-drained soil, mulch or compost. Prune canes back to 36" to prevent damage from winter winds.

Do not give up on your perennial garden after Labor Day. Early fall is the time to do some sprucing up so you can still enjoy your garden through October. Prune overgrown plants to make them stand up again and give you additional blooms. Remove dead stems and spent flower heads to encourage additional blooms through the fall on such plants as echinacea, salvia, Shasta daisies, monarda, and veronica.

Add fall garden color by planting mums, asters, pansies, ornamental kale and cabbage, Russian sage, dianthus, black-eyed Susan, anemones and blue mist spirea. A hay bale or two and some pumpkins and gourds will round out a beautiful fall garden.

The perfect time for renovating that perennial garden is in October after the first frost of the year. As the foliage dies and dries up, you can dig and divide most perennial plants that have overgrown an area or have started to decline from being overcrowded.

The foliage can be cut back and the roots can be dug up and cut into sections for replanting in a bigger area or giving to friends.

Spring and early-summer blooming perennials, such as peonies and poppies, are usually divided in the fall or when foliage dies (mid-September through mid-October). Plants that flower in mid to late summer and fall, such as chrysanthemums and asters, should be divided in the spring before growth begins. Iris and daylilies usually are divided immediately after flowering.

Cut ornamental grasses back to within 3 inches of the crown in late November or leave them standing until spring to create winter interest. Many gardeners love to see the snow on their tall grasses through the winter months. Leaving some of the skeletonized plants in the garden over winter may be beneficial. Not only are all those seed heads lovely to look at, but they're even more attractive when overwintering birds descend to feed on them or to seek shelter in the dead foliage. Scores of perennials provide protein and oil-rich seeds for birds. The giant perennial sunflower (which blooms in October and November), willowleaf sunflower, coreopsis, asters, liatris, blackberry lily, coneflowers of all kinds, and many others provide a natural (and free) feast for your avian friends.

Compost can be added in the fall, especially if you cut back perennials. Fall compost application saves you one spring chore. Although compost will add some nutrients, it has many other beneficial effects, such as adding organic matter and microorganisms.

Tender summer bulbs (gladiolus, caladiums, cannas, crocosmias, dahlias, and tuberous begonias) need to be dug in the fall and stored in a cool place where temperatures are above freezing.

Spring bulbs (daffodils, tulips, and crocus) should be planted before the end of November to allow them time to get established. Do not plant them too early, or they may start growing above ground. And, if you have rodents and similar pests, avoid tulips (which they love) or plant them with ground oyster shells (which they supposedly hate).

Water all perennials and grasses planted this year at least twice a month during the winter. Because its roots have not yet adhered to the soil, a new perennial will not survive its first winter without water.

### ***2009 Day of Caring***

This year's annual "Day of Caring" will kick off the United Way's funding campaign on September 15th this year. As in the past, PVAS will have lots of volunteer opportunities at the Yankauer preserve. This year's projects include pulling Japanese Stilt Grass, pulling weeds in the Butterfly Garden, weed control in the parking lot, mulching trails, and other tasks. The day will begin with a breakfast "Kick Off" for all volunteers at 7:30am at War Memorial Park in Martinsburg. Volunteers start coming to the preserve around 8:30 or 9 am for an orientation and to start working. Lunch will be provided by PVAS at Yankauer for volunteers working there, and there will be a dinner celebrating all of the participating volunteers' labors and assistance from 4:30 - 6pm at the Clarion Hotel in Shepherdstown. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Tim Murphy at 304-876-8133 or [timurf@comcast.net](mailto:timurf@comcast.net) or Kristin Alexander at 304-676-3397 or [PVASmail@aol.com](mailto:PVASmail@aol.com). This is our opportunity to give the preserve its annual "facelift" so please come spend the day with us!

### ***Topiary Garden Video Showing***

The Berkeley/Jefferson County Master Gardeners will be showing a video on Topiary Gardens called *A Man Named Pearl* on Tuesday, September 15 at 7 pm at the WVU Tree Fruit Research and Education Center in Kearneysville. *A Man Named Pearl* tells the story of Pearl Fryer who turned his ordinary suburban yard into a magical topiary garden that has thousands of visitors each year. The film also traces the story of his extraordinary life from being a small town sharecropper's son to an internationally acclaimed artist. Sponsored by the Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association, the film will be shown on Tuesday, September 15th at 7 pm at the WVU Experimental Farm in Kearneysville. The public is invited to share this film with the Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association. For more information contact Melanie Files [sfubar@verizon.net](mailto:sfubar@verizon.net) or telephone 304- 263-1956.

### ***Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Tour***

The Forum for Rural Innovation is sponsoring a bus trip to the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center on Thursday, November 4, 2009. The tour of the 7000 acre Beltsville Agriculture Research Center will cover a variety of agricultural topics (composting, honey bees, alternative fuels, food safety, parasitic disease, specialty crops & marketing). Registration forms available at [www.loudounfarms.org](http://www.loudounfarms.org) under "Save the Date!" November 4. \$35 registration fee includes transportation, snack and lunch. Pre-registration by October 21 required (space is limited). All participants must ride the bus. Bus leaves Purcellville at 7:30 a.m. and will return by 5:30 p.m. To register or for more information call 703-777-0426 or visit [www.loudounfarms.org](http://www.loudounfarms.org) Sponsored by the Offices of Agricultural Economic Development and Cooperative Extension, Loudoun, Fauquier, Clarke, Frederick (VA), Jefferson & Berkeley (WV), Shenandoah & Potomac Headwaters RC&D.

## **Garden Tips**

- Build a cold frame
- Harvest early pumpkins
- Plant hardy evergreens
- Don't let weeds go to seed
- Control broadleaf weeds in lawn

***Until next time ...Happy Gardening and Farming!***