

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Fall Garden Tips
- How Do Plants Know When It's Fall
- Lawn Care Checklist
- Grants For School & Youth Gardens

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Master Gardener News

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Fall Fiesta of Learning, Laughter & Appreciation

The Fall Fiesta of October 10 will play to a smaller group than anticipated but content, spirit, and fun will not be left behind. Morning sessions will concentrate on emerging issues and afternoon sessions will be devoted to areas not often covered in Master Gardener training - how we convey in-



formation to the public through presentations, demonstrations, and booths. Retiring Extension Educators who have helped us so much will be honored; Master Gardeners reaching milestones will be honored; and strategizing for success with limited resources will fill the rest of the day. A picnic lunch and fabulous snacks will nourish our bodies as we have fun with tongue-in-cheek humor. If you missed the appreciation day, read about it in the next Northern Minnesota Master Gardener Newsletter.

Fall Gardening Tips

By Deborah Brown
Extension Horticulturist

Late September through early October is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs for a beautiful burst of color early next season. If you're not sure which end of a bulb is the top, plant it on its side. New growth will orient itself to gravity; the stem will always grow upright and the roots, downwards. This is called "geotropism".

When temperatures are expected to drop only a little below freezing, you may choose to cover the tomato plants with old sheets or blankets to trap warmer air around them over night. Then uncover them as temperatures warm during the day. But this effort only makes sense if you expect weather conditions to improve enough so ripening may still occur.

Tomatoes need average daily temperatures of 65 degrees or more to ripen well. When daytime temps are consistently below this, pick the fruits that have begun to change color and ripen them indoors, out of direct sunlight.

Studies have shown that bone meal alone is not enough to ensure good tulip growth, particularly if you want the bulbs to produce for several years. Instead, incorporate "bulb food" or a balanced fertilizer such as 10-10-10 in the soil below the bulbs. Fertilize again when plants emerge next spring.

How Do Plants Know That It's Autumn and What Are They Doing?

By *Chris Currey, U of M Graduate Student and Charlie Rohwer, U of M Scientist*



This 'Autumn Blaze' maple is in full color and preparing for the cold weather ahead.

David Zlesak

"The first part of October is still a good time for planting."

Harvest late carrots before the ground freezes.

Nancy Rose



Looking out our windows, April seems like a distant memory. Those maples and poplars seem to think the end of the world is coming, and they want everybody else to know about it, shouting "RED! ORANGE! YELLOW!" For many Minnesotans, the beginning hockey season is certainly not the end of the world. But it is a premonition of the harsh environment to come, especially if you are a plant--rooted in place with very little water in liquid form or shelter from the bracing winter cold. Plants prepare for winter so they can survive and grow again in spring. Preparations include protecting important tissues from being damaged by freezing, and mobilization important nutrients and minerals out of tender tissue and into hardy or protected tissue. But plants don't play hockey, football, or volleyball; how do they know it's autumn?

Well, how do you recognize autumn? You notice your alarm going off in the darkness of the morning hours, unlike in July, when it was

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October Garden Tips

By Nancy Rose

It's getting late for planting herbaceous perennials and woody plants in northern Minnesota but in the rest of the state the first part of October is still a good time for planting.

Short day length and cooler temperatures mean there won't be a lot more ripening for warm-season vegetables, so harvest remaining tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants soon, then compost (if no disease) or throw out the plants.

Harvest winter squash and pumpkins as they ripen and vines begin to brown (but before a hard frost). Cure the fruits in a warm location for a few weeks - this helps toughen the skin which leads to better storage life. After curing, store squash for winter use in a cool, dry location.

Continue to water lawns, trees, shrubs, and other perennial plants as needed until the ground freezes. Remember to disconnect the hose if night temperatures will be below freezing or you risk a burst faucet pipe!

November Gardening Tips

Contributors: Nancy Rose & Bob Mugaas

Rake excess leaves and mow the lawn one last time if needed.

If you haven't made a final lawn fertilizer application get it done in early November. Be sure to sweep up any fertilizer spilled in streets, sidewalks, or driveways, and thoroughly water in fertilizer if rain doesn't do the job.

Dig remaining root crops like parsnips, fall radishes, and carrots before the ground freezes. Cold-tolerant crops like Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, spinach, and some other greens will tolerate temperatures in the mid to upper 20s, but harvest them when colder temperatures threaten.

Add a winter mulch of straw, hay, or leaves to bulb and perennial beds after the ground starts to freeze. Winter mulch helps moderate soil temperatures and prevent heaving from spring freeze/thaw cycles.

Ripening Tomatoes Indoors

By Deborah Brown
Extension Horticulturist



Tomatoes taste best when allowed to ripen on the vine, but this year's unusual weather has left gardeners with lots of tomatoes that have been slow to mature.

Your other option is to pick the tomatoes. Any that have already turned light green (on their way to pink, and finally red) can be expected to ripen satisfactorily indoors. Of course, they'll never taste as wonderful as vine-ripened, but they won't be bad.

Indoors, tomatoes ripen best when kept out of direct sunlight, at temperatures that range from 60 to 70 degrees. You can keep them in the basement, but if it drops below 55 degrees, flavor will suffer. Wrap fruit individually in tissue paper;

then if one begins to decay, it won't take its neighbors with it.

Another way to ripen tomatoes is to pull entire plants out by the roots, then hang them up indoors out of direct sunlight under moderate temperatures. Check them every few days and remove any fruit that looks ripe. Be sure to cull out any that have soft spots or are rotting, so as not to attract fruit flies.

When you plan your garden next year, remember to include some early-ripening tomato varieties

along with your mid and late-season favorites.

(Note: Tomatoes stored stem end down will last longer than those stored stem end up.)

“now is a good time to start getting your lawn in tip top shape for the active fall growing period.”

Lawn care checklist: late summer - early fall

Bob Mugaas, University of Minnesota Extension Educator

Overseeding and sodding

If the lawn did suffer some permanent injury during the dry conditions of late spring and early summer, now is a good time to do some overseeding or resodding to repair those areas.

Watering

As days get shorter, temperatures become cooler, and rainfall occurs on a somewhat regular basis, the need for additional or supplemental watering usually diminishes during the fall period.

Manage mowing height

Maintain mowing heights between 2.5 and 3.0 inches throughout most of the fall period.

Lawn aeration

If your lawn has significant compaction problems, the period right around Labor Day and through the early fall is an excellent time to do some core aeration.

Thatch control

If thatch develops at a faster rate than can be broken down by microorganisms, it can accumulate to

undesirable levels. Generally, thatch greater than half-inch is undesirable.

Broadleaf weed control

The month of September into early October is an excellent time for controlling those pesky broadleaf perennial weeds such as dandelion and creeping Charlie. For more info go to: http://blog.lib.umn.edu/efans/ygnews/2009/09/checklist_for_late_summer_-_ea.html

Peanut Butter Pine Cones

1 Jar smooth [peanut butter](#)

Wild bird seed mix

Pine Cones

Coat each cone with peanut butter. Roll in bird seed. This is great nutri-

tion for birds in the winter. The trick is keeping them out of the reach of squirrels. Remember, bread fills up birds and will keep them from eating food with nutrients and can lead to death for

them.

Recipe from www.BigOven.com

(this would be a great project for you and your kids or grandkids.)



Coat with peanut butter and roll in bird seed for the birds.



Trees

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the sweet earth's flowing
breast;

Joyce Kilmer, 1886-1918

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain,
Who intimately lives with rain;

“engage kids
in the garden
and improve the
quality of life
for their
communities.”

Grants for School and Youth Gardens

The National Gardening Association works with sponsoring companies and organizations to provide in-kind grants to projects that actively engage kids in the garden and improve the quality of life for their communities.

organization must plan to garden with at least 15 kids between the ages of 3 and 18. (Mantis Awards are also open to non-youth organizations.)

tion on each grant program.

To be eligible for these awards your school or or-

Please note that all grant winners are required to complete a year-end impact report (see individual grants for details). Click on this [link](#) for informa-



“ corn gluten
meal,
a natural
“weed
and feed”
product

Corn Gluten Meal -- Byproduct to Wonder Product

Does corn gluten meal kills weeds? Yes. This natural byproduct of the wet milling process of corn represents a big step in the continuing effort by scientists to find alternatives to synthetic pesticides.

Research into the use of cornmeal began in earnest. All parts of the processed corn grain were tested. The results of the tests confirmed that corn gluten meal has the ability to stop root formation. With no roots, the plants died. The key to this was timing. The meal stopped root formation at the time of germination. After germination, it had no effect. However, the nitrogen contained in the material continued to spur growth. Dr. Christians had discovered a natural "weed-and-feed" product. Further field trials demonstrated the merits of this material. It was granted a patent in 1991.

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Corn Gluten Meal -- Byproduct to Wonder Product

(continued from page 4)



Though produced as a fine, yellow powder, it can be pelletized for easier application to the soil. It offers pre-emergent control of weeds like dandelions, pigweed, crabgrass, plantain, lambs quarters, and curly dock. Timing, as mentioned previously, is important. The corn gluten meal must be applied before the seed of the target weeds emerges above the soil.

"The application should be made close to the time of weed germination. Moisture is necessary to activate the material, but extended wet periods can reduce its effectiveness," warns Dr. Christians. While the lawn is the prime site for many weeds, corn gluten meal can be used in flowerbeds and vegetable plots.

Because the product contains nitrogen, it also acts as an excellent fertilizer to plants that have gone beyond the germination stage. "Later work has repeatedly shown that corn gluten meal compares to the best commercially available natural fertilizers," says Dr. Christians. Always read and follow application rates provided on the package labels. (by Viveka Ransom, Reporter for *The Iowa Horticulturist* and Student in the Department of Horticulture, Iowa State University) to read full article go to

<http://www.hort.iastate.edu/gluten/pdf/iowahort.pdf>

"these chemicals are health hazards for humans and the environment."

Hazards Of Rubber Mulch

Linda Chalker-Scott, Washington State University Puyallup

It's flammable

A research study comparing several different mulches found that when rubber mulch, which contains petroleum products, is ignited, it is more difficult to extinguish than any other mulch--including wood chips.

It's Toxic

Like any other material, tires and rubber mulches are eventually broken down by environmental factors, such as sunlight, or by bacteria and fungi. The chemicals that leach from tires are anything but benign. They include heavy metals, such as aluminum, cadmium, chromium, molybdenum, selenium, and zinc. Two other common rubber leachates are 2-Mercaptobenzothiazole (MBT) and poly-aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs); these chemicals are health hazards for humans and the environment.

It's Destructive

Many vegetables and ornamentals mulched with rubber can accumulate high levels of zinc, sometimes to the point of death. Other metals found in decomposing rubber can also accumulate in plant roots, leaves, or fruit, depending on the species. Acidic soils are particularly sensitive because heavy metals are more available for plant uptake. Decomposing rubber mulches provide a constant stream of toxic leachates into adjacent aquatic systems. Research has also shown that entire aquatic communities are injured or killed when exposed to these chemicals.

How do Plants Know it's Autumn, and what are they doing?

light enough to eat breakfast outside. You can't grill outside at 9 PM anymore, and daylight savings is only partially to blame. The earth is getting closer to the sun, but the sun is moving further and further south in the sky and becoming increasingly rare. The Autumnal equinox was Sept. 22, when the

sun was directly over the equator. It will make a trip to the Tropic of Capricorn in the Southern Hemisphere, then return to the northern Tropic of Cancer next summer. The seasonal changing of day length is a signal for us to carve pumpkins, and a signal

for plants to prepare for winter. Shortening day length (perceived by plants as lengthening night length) is a reliable predictor of lower temperatures, so shorter days serve as a good signal to begin preparing for winter.





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NW MN Reg MG News

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Master Gardeners are University of Minnesota-trained volunteers whose job is to educate the public about a variety of horticulture subjects using readily-available, up-to-date research-based information. This educational effort is designed to enhance the public's quality of life and to promote good stewardship of the environment.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.



Hydrangea arborescens 'abetwo'

Incrediball™ Hydrangea, a new and improved 'Annabelle' Hydrangea, Incrediball has beefy stems and massive blooms on both new and old wood. The breeding goal was stronger stems to eliminate flop, but we got incredibly large blooms too! Each bloom has roughly 4 times as many flowers as 'Annabelle'!



Hydrangea arborescens 'abetwo'