

# Putting the Garden to Bed

- **Discussion of our climate and how plants “harden off” in fall. What the weather has done this summer/fall and the consequences. Did you go dormant early?**
- **Getting Ahead of Spring Projects**
  - Slugs: Protect prone plants from slugs using natural slug control like Sluggo – it won't harm people/pets/wildlife. Clean up debris around prone plants.
  - Weeds: With rainy fall weather comes a new crop of weeds - consider spraying on dry day or pulling them before they go to seed.
  - Cutting back Perennials: “mushers”, “sticks”, and “evergreens”... Learn what to do with perennials as they go dormant for the winter.
  - Cleaning up debris and/or mulching: Try and find the balance between Mother Nature leaving you natural debris to protect soil and cleaning up some areas.
- **Storing Bulbs:** Dahlias, Begonias, Cannas, etc. – lots of options. With good drainage, some can be left in ground - to ensure having them back in 2023 dig and store them. You can see lots of options for this on the internet, or ask an expert.
- **Protecting the Lawn:** Watch for patch diseases fall through winter. Make sure turf has been fed at some point in the fall for happy grass coming out of winter. Also consider an application of Lime to your lawn - rain will soak it in and alter your pH for less moss/better turf down the road.
- **Dormant Spraying:** Try using Horticultural Oil/Liquicop combination for all. Had a problem with an insect or disease the previous season? Then start protecting your plants for next year with these natural products. Be sure to clean up diseased foliage and completely remove from garden.
- **Fruit and Berries:** Preparing for next year – clean them up and mulch, removing foliage from ground and old fruits. Protect your crops and utilize a dormant spray schedule during the fall and winter months. Look at pruning in late winter.
- **Overwintering the Vegetable Garden:** Use lime, compost and consider cover crops. Some cool season veggies (for example carrots, beets, lettuce) may continue to produce well into the fall, but clean up warm season crops. Consider using row cover to extend some frost protection later into the fall. Bed empty for the winter? Try planting cover crop to protect soil, this can be turned over in spring adding nutrients for spring.

- **Preparing Roses for Winter:** Hip high in the fall about Veteran's Day or so! Be sure to clean up fallen foliage and deadhead flowers. At some point over the winter, make it go dormant if it is a mild winter, removing all foliage and cutting back. President's weekend in late winter is when we go back to knee high and begin fertilizing/spraying for the next season.
- **Protecting Tender Specimens:** Houseplant – garage plant – basement plant – consider your options on overwintering tender tropical plants. Also consider – is it really worth it to save? Or just replace in the next spring?
  - Greenhouse? You are the lucky one! You can overwinter it all!
- **Transplanting/Dividing Specimens:** All can be done during dormant season when ground is not frozen! You have until March 1<sup>st</sup> or so in most winters to get these two done. Be sure to take enough root on shrubs/trees – some things cannot be bare rooted. For perennials, try using the Rootslayer shovel and make your life easy. This is a common question at the nursery – utilize the dormant season for near 100% success. Transplanting in the growing season is much tougher!
- **Fall is for Planting:** You need warm soil and wet ground for root systems to establish in the fall – keep on planting and transplanting and use organic transplanter, like Sure Start from EB Stone and compost as planting amendment. With the extended dry summer weather in 2022, be sure regular rain has begun or take some extra time to water them thoroughly.
- **Fall Pruning:** Wait until a hard frost so that plants are dormant and sap has stopped flowing. Do not prune evergreens in the fall or over winter – hit them coming out of winter. On deciduous plants, remove diseased/damaged wood and spent blooms on plants like Hydrangeas for example. Always ask about when and how much when in doubt – keep in mind some plants bloom on old wood and if cut back in winter may not bloom to your liking the next season.
- **Mulching the garden with Bark/Compost:** Fall is good time, or coming out of winter – to mulch the gardens. A good mulch layer 2” to 3“ deep with protect the soil during winter, and aid all soils come spring time. Using bark is fine as well, but keep in mind some additional fertilizer may be needed in spring around plants – Bark decomposition takes Nitrogen out of the soil structure. If not fall then mulch in spring!
- **Mulching Some of the Plants with Compost:** If you are not mulching entire beds, utilize mulch for protecting crowns of perennials including tender ones. This is an easy way to both protect them and add nutrients. Come spring the mulch can be scraped away and spring fertilizer applied, and then mulch can be replaced around these plants.