

Grounds care

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Most bulbs insist on well-drained soil. Bone meal mixed into the area at planting time is a healthy bonus for sturdy spring blooms. Cover bulb beds with a protective straw mulch but remember to remove it in early spring above ground.

Roses require autumn attention and protection against winter storms, but they are well worth this effort since they offer you a long and lovely blooming season in return. Being fall rose care in October, after the last blooms. Trim back rose canes to about 2 1/4 feet and tie to protect them from the wind. Next, mound soil over the base of the plant to a depth of about 10 inch. Top that mound with a straw mulch. In areas where winter temperatures dip below minus 10 degrees top each plant with a plastic cone (available at lawn and garden center) or a box for added protection. Just be sure to weight the top of your cover so the first gust of winter wind doesn't carry it away.

ONCE YOU have completed your fall planting and taken care of watering and protecting new and existing plants, you can complete your garden clean-up. Perhaps the largest chore any gardener faces is raking up the seemingly endless sea of leaves that annually engulf most years. Of course, you may have already used many of the leaves as a mulch for your shrubs and garden beds. Rake up the remainder to layer into your compost pile or better yet, use a mulcher or shredder first. If leaves are a major problem in your yard and garden you may want to buy or rent a power vacuum or use the appropriate attachment on your garden tractor.

Just be sure that you don't leave a bed of leaves on the grass. Winter snow and rain can mat them down and leave you with browned out areas next spring.

While you enjoy the last, crisp days of autumn and finishing the fall garden clean-up, don't neglect all of the faithful garden tools and gadgets that have been making your outdoor life easier all summer.

A little attention and preventive medicine now means they'll be ready to work again with the first warmth of spring. Besides the end-of-the-year cleaning and tuning you give your large tools like lawn and garden tractor, smaller tools also deserve your attention. Both the garden sprayer and lawn spreader need to be completely cleaned of any chemical residue, dried and oiled before storage.

Hand tools also need careful cleaning to rid them of dirt and rust. Oil rubbed on all metal parts will help prevent rusting while the tools are stored.

Don't forget, too, to drain and disconnect your garden hose and store it indoors to prevent freezing or deteriorating. Storing it in a figure eight will also discourage kinks. One last chore should always be to round up any insecticides, fertilizers, seeds and so on. Carefully discard in a sealed container those that are no longer useful and label, seal and store the remainder in a locked cabinet out of the reach of children.

For many gardeners, this flurry of fall activity is a kind of last hurrah before retiring to a crackling fireside to study seed catalogs and plan next year's garden. For more reluctant gardeners, it's simply a necessary evil to prepare for winter.

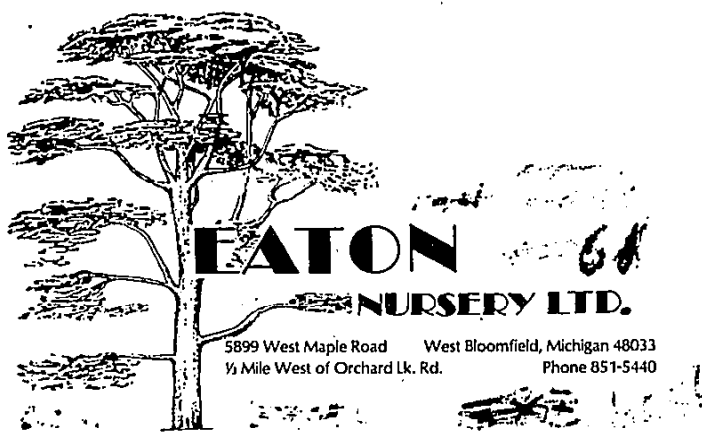


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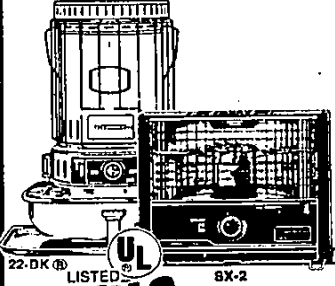


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