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Suburban Gardener

**It's Time To Tuck In
The Garden For Winter**

By BETTY FRANKEL

It is soon time to put the garden to bed for the winter. A mild and delightful autumn has kept borders bright with bloom long past all expectations. Roses have been magnificent and in sheltered beds annuals are still blooming. However, most trees have shed their last bright leaf and most garden plants are spent and limp. In the vegetable gardens the leaves on tomatoes, squash and eggplant hang limp and blackened by frost. Unfortunately, the golden days of autumn can't continue indefinitely and it is time to prepare for winter -- and for next spring's gardening. Remove the vegetable and annual plants and if they are not infected with insects, or disease put the plants on the compost pile.

TURN OVER the soil in the bare beds. In the vegetable garden leave the soil in large clods. This spading up serves several purposes. Many insects spend the winter in the soil and if they are exposed to the harsh freezing weather it will kill them. Also, opening and loosening the soil enables moisture to penetrate better and the action of moisture and frost will help condition the soil and improve its texture and make it easier to work next year.

Also, if small weeds are turned under and worked into the soil they will add to the organic material in the soil and enrich it. Perennial plants should be cut back to within a few inches of ground level. Remember, though, that there are some plants such as oriental poppies and the biennials that form a rosette of leaves that will remain green all winter. Do not remove these rosettes. With plants that disappear entirely during the winter it is helpful to put a label or marker to indicate where the plants are. Platycodon, or balloon flower, is one with stalks that detach easily from the roots and the new shoots do not put in an appearance until very late in Spring.

GLADS, cannas, tuberous begonias and dahlias should be dug up and the corms or tubers stored in a frost free place until next Spring when they will be planted again.

Tidy window boxes and planter boxes, too. Evergreen branches stuck into the ground can make these attractive in winter.

Finish planting bulbs. It is late in the season for this, but if you still have any on hand tuck them into the ground as soon as possible. Little bulbs get covered with an inch or two of soil and tulips and other larger bulbs should have about a six inch covering of soil.

All evergreens should have been planted before now, but if there are still some to be transplanted and they can't wait until next Spring, get it done as soon as possible and water them thoroughly every week until the ground freezes hard. Also, plan to use a plastic spray on them, especially in early Spring when they will lose moisture through the needles when the roots can't take up water from the frozen soil.

THERE IS STILL time to plant deciduous trees and shrubs. This can be done as long as the ground can be worked. Roots will still grow until the ground is frozen and trees and shrubs planted this Fall will have a head start on those set out next Spring after the ground can be worked then.

Dormant shrubs and small trees can be moved with bare roots but large trees need a ball of earth around the roots.

Plant a few shrubs or trees with berries that the birds like to eat. The birds will add a lively touch to the garden in winter and the bright berries will be cheerful to see -- until they are eaten.

Give the lawn a final cutting if it looks long and shaggy. This will make it look tidier all through the winter, and may also remove a few insects or diseased grass blades thus making for a healthier lawn next year.

Trimming and edging the beds will make the yard look neater and will also give the gardener a boost next spring when he is sure to be busy with many planting chores.

RAKE LEAVES and put them on the compost pile. If left to mat on the grass all winter they can kill the grass beneath them.

Winter mulches are different than summer mulches. Put straw or salt hay on the strawberry beds. Mound a cone of soil about six inches high around the rose plants. Put a winter mulch on newly planted perennials. This is a layer of straw or other material that will not blow around that is put on after the ground freezes. Its purpose is to prevent alternate freezing and thawing that might push the plants out of the ground, damaging the roots.

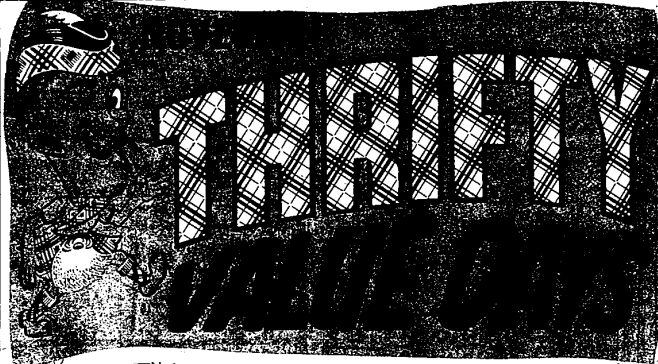
Give trees and shrubs newly planted this year a thorough soaking. Give all evergreens a thorough watering, too. This late watering will do more than anything else to keep the evergreens looking fresh and lively all winter.

When the watering chores have been finished drain the hose, coil it up and store it in the garage or basement.

Drain the gas from the power mower and cover the mower with a sheet of plastic to keep it clean while it is in winter storage. Finally, clean the spreader and the garden tools. Rub them with an oily rag to leave them coated with a light film of oil that will retard rusting.

Put out feeders for the birds, but do this only if you plan to keep them stocked all winter.

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