

That autumn nip in the air can't be denied. Timely lawn and garden tasks listed by Michigan State University Extension specialists have a decidedly fall flavor.

- After frost has killed the tops, dig and store corn, bulbs and tubers of tuberous begonias, cannas, gladioli, dahlias and calladiums. Let them dry for a few days before storing in dry sand, peat or vermiculite. A cool (45-50° F), dry storage place is best.
- Winterize roses after the first killing frost. Pile 8 to 10 inches of soil around the canes. Then cut canes back or tie them so the wind can't whip them, and cover with straw or hay. Top with rose cones or additional soil or chicken wire to hold the mulch in place.
- Remove and destroy all iris foliage and any iris tubers showing signs of iris borer infestation. Borer are plump, pink caterpillars that tunnel in the iris rhizome, which usually becomes soft and mushy with bacterial rot. Eggs are laid on foliage in late summer and early fall, so removing foliage eliminates the eggs that would hatch to become next year's pests.
- Clear dead and dying annuals and the dead tops of perennials from flower beds and borders. They may harbor insects and disease organisms.

## Green thumb wrapup Garden needs autumn TLC

- It's not too late to plant or divide and replant iris, daylilies, peonies and other spring and early summer flowering perennials.
- Reduce next year's rose disease and insect problems by cleaning up fallen rose leaves and pruning and disposing of dead, damaged or diseased canes.
- Repot house plants that outgrew their containers over the summer. Inspect plants that spent the summer outdoors and treat or discard them as necessary to control insect or disease problems.
- Gather and destroy fallen fruits and rake up leaves of apples and crabapples to reduce the carry-over of such insect and disease problems as apple maggot and apple scab.

- Do not prune spring-flowering trees and shrubs now except to remove dead, diseased or damaged branches. The flower buds for next year's display have already formed, and pruning now would remove them.
- Protect young fruit trees and other tender-barked trees and shrubs against damage by gnawing insects and rabbits. Place cylinders of quarter-inch mesh hardware cloth around the trunks so they extend 18 to 24 inches above the usual snow level.
- If the weather has been dry, water trees and shrubs weekly until the soil freezes. Evergreens, particularly, need to go into winter well watered. They will continue to lose moisture from their foliage after

frozen soil limits the ability of their roots to take up water to replace it. Needles or leaves can become severely dried out.

- After leaves fall, plant or transplant deciduous trees and shrubs. Be sure to remove any wire, plastic cord, plastic hurlap or other non-biodegradable materials from trunks or root balls before planting. If left in place, they will eventually girdle and kill a plant. Water new plants thoroughly and mulch. Support tall trees with stakes and guy wires as needed to prevent their being whipped or uprooted by the wind. Shield newly planted evergreens against drying sun and wind with windblown salt spray. Canvas or hurlap screens supported by stakes will do the job.
- Collect cones, dried wood seed pods, meadow grasses, nuts and other dried plant materials for winter crafts projects.
- Take leaves off the lawn at least once a week so they don't mat on the lawn and smother the grass plants.
- Remove and destroy diseased plant materials in the vegetable or flower garden. Remove or plow under other plant materials so the garden doesn't provide winter shelter for insect pests.

## Get out the spreader 1 more time

Before you retire your lawn-care equipment for the winter, one last task remains: a final lawn fertilization.

Turfgrass specialists at Michigan State University advise applying a high nitrogen fertilizer to dormant lawns before the soil freezes. Fertilizing in the late fall helps thicken weak or coarse turf and strengthens the turf to withstand the winter. More important, it promotes root development that will strengthen the lawn in the coming year. It also provides the nu-

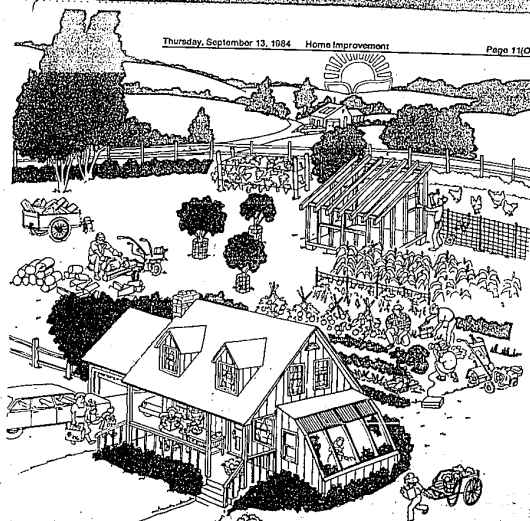
trients that grass plants will use to green up slowly without a lot of top-growth the next spring. This means you aren't running for the lawn mower every couple of days and mowing when the soil is too wet. Because clippings are fewer, you can return them rather than remove them from the lawn.

Growth that occurs after fertilization could leave the turf more susceptible to winter injury. But this is not likely if you apply fertilizer at the recommended rates after the grass

has stopped growing. This is usually about the first or second week of November in most of lower Michigan.

Although the possibility is remote, a heavy rain just after application could result in some water pollution by fertilizer runoff. To avoid this, put on no more than 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. On sandy soils, cut that to ½ pound. If it's available, use fast-release nitrogen — urea or ammonium nitrate. Slow-release forms are more expensive and their nutrients are not available to the

plants during late November and December when roots can still grow and develop. Fertilizing before the ground freezes reduces the potential for runoff. Applying the fertilizer carefully with a spreader is also important. Fertilizer carelessly scattered on pavement and other hard surfaces goes straight into storm sewers or ground water. Turf is a thick mat. Fertilizer that gets through that tangle to the soil in quantities that meet but don't exceed the lawn's needs is not likely to go much farther.



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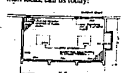
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