

October in the Garden

Planning

Use your leaves:

Even if composting isn't in your plans for this year, there are other ways you can use this valuable natural resource.

- In the fall, collect leaves in bins or large piles. In spring, dig into the pile to get the matted clumps of partially decomposed leaves. Use these as mulch.
- White, veiny mycorrhizal fungi found in leaf piles will help your plants absorb nutrients and fight disease.
- Fill in the paths between raised beds now, for fewer weeds next spring.
- Chop leaves and cover your beds they will break down by spring.
- Fill bags with leaves and use as insulation around cold frames.

Fall Foliage

It is normal for evergreen trees to lose their needles closest to the trunk, so do not worry about brown pine needles. Rake them up and use them for weed control on paths or use them for mulch.

The foliage is changing so enjoy it! Note the gold, red, bronze and yellow colors of leaves on trees and shrubs and plan which ones to add to your garden next.

Trees that turn red include dogwood, red maple, sweet gum and red or scarlet oak. Birch, smoketree, ginkgo, pear and larch will provide yellow for contrast.

Garden and Plant Maintenance

Check spray schedules to determine if cherry, peach, apricot and nectarine trees require an application.

Grafted Roses - Just before the ground freezes, mound soil about 12 inches in and around canes, making sure the graft is completely covered. Cover with a mulch of fine bark, straw, or pine needles

Own-Root Roses - Cover with a mulch of fine bark, straw, or pine needles.

Geraniums - To store plants over the winter, dig before the first heavy frost. Cut tops back to about six inches, pack close together in deep boxes and cover with light garden soil or sawdust. Potted plants may be pruned to six inches and left in their containers. Store in a dimly lit area where the temperature is 40 to 45°F. Water soil well the first time and check occasionally, watering only to prevent plants from shriveling.

After the first killing frost, leave your dahlias in the ground for a week or two so that the tubers can harden. Dig them up, rinse the dirt off gently.

Critters

Fill your bird feeders with fresh, clean seed. Hang Suet holders for the birds to use to survive our cold winters. Make sure our feathered friends water sources are clean, fresh and if possible kept unfrozen by heating.