



A Long Winter's Rest: Preparing the Garden for the Off-season

By Carl Wilson & Mary Hartman, Extension Agents, Colorado State University Coop. Extension

The annuals have faded and the turf has turned green again after a blistering-hot summer. It's Mother Nature's way of telling us to put the garden to bed for winter.

Take turf, for example. It will survive winter best and come back more vigorously in spring if you fertilize it this fall, when it's still green. Use a lawn fertilizer with a higher first number and lower second and third numbers--25-5-5, for example. This is particularly applicable to bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass. And as long as the lawn remains green, continue to mow it to a 2½ to 3-inch height. Don't scalp it by mowing short while it's still green. It's also a good idea to aerate the lawn and to continue watering until it turns brown. Even then, water once a month throughout winter, especially if the snow cover is scant.



The Vegetable Garden: Pull up old vines and vegetable plants. Insect pests that feed on these plants during summer and fall often lay eggs on the old plants. If the vines are left on the soil surface, insect eggs will survive the winter and hatch in the spring.

If they are not diseased, you can work the old plants back into the garden soil. This adds valuable organic matter to the soil and, at the same time, destroys insects and their eggs.

In addition to garden debris, other organic material may be added to the soil in fall. You can use well-rotted manure, compost, peat or leaves. Soil micro-organisms and beneficial soil insects will help incorporate these materials into the soil before the ground freezes and in the spring after it thaws.

You also can apply a light covering of ammonium sulfate (20-0-0) at the rate of a pound per 1,000 square feet of garden area. Spade or rototill all these materials into the soil, mixing well to a depth of 8 to 12 inches.

You'll want to leave one part of the garden intact. The area where you've planted root crops can be mulched instead of dug up and worked. To extend the digging season by weeks or even months, place a straw mulch over root crops such as carrots, beets, parsnips and Jerusalem artichokes. Parsnips turn sweeter after the ground cools. Jerusalem artichokes don't store well after they've been dug, so leaving them in the ground until you are ready to use them is the best storage method.

After a light frost nips their vines, harvest winter squash and pumpkins. Do this before a heavy frost damages the fruits. Cut from the vines leaving 3 to 4 inches of stem on the fruit.



Annual Flowers: Pull up spent vines and foliage of annual flowers and compost them or dig them into the garden. If the plants are diseased, however, discard them in the trash.

Weeds: It doesn't matter where the weeds are--the vegetable garden, flower beds or the lawn--this is a good time to get rid of them. Consider this: Weeds that are spread by seed produce thousands of seeds. Lambsquarter can bear up to 72,500 seeds per plant, curly dock can bear up to 30,000, purslane 52,000, and redroot pigweed 117,000. If even 50% of the pigweed seedlings germinated next spring, you'd have 58,000 pigweed plants to pull or otherwise get rid of.



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Better to pull them this fall or, if weeds are in the lawn, to spot-spray a selective herbicide on the still-green perennial weeds. Perennial weeds, such as dandelion, thistle and bindweed, are more easily killed by fall sprays than by summer applications.

Tree and Shrubs: Shorter days and falling temperatures are prompting deciduous trees and shrubs to drop leaves and prepare for winter dormancy. Limit fertilization in fall, as nitrogen stimulates useless late-season growth and delays dormancy.

Do continue to water trees and shrubs through fall, sending them into winter with ample moisture. It also will be necessary to apply water every three to four weeks throughout the winter. Dry soil kills roots and puts stress on trees and shrubs. Water when temperatures are above freezing and when the soil is not frozen. Apply water early in the day so plants will have time to absorb moisture before soil might freeze at night.

By the first of November, wrap trunks of your deciduous trees with crepe-paper tree wrap. Begin at the base of the tree and wrap upward, overlapping about a third of the paper with each turn. Stop when you reach the first set of branches. Secure the top turn of the wrap with a piece of stretch tape. Wrapping trees and shrubs prevents sunscald injury, a condition that develops when the warm winter sun is absorbed by the plant's bark. Remove wrap next April.

Raspberries: Cut back canes of fall-bearing raspberries to about ground level. Water the area during extended winter dry spells. Canes will regrow the following season and will bear fruit in August and September. Remove only older, thick canes of summer-bearing types so you can reap a harvest next year.

Perennials: After temperatures hit freezing and the plants die back, cut the stems on most perennials to within an inch or two of the ground. Dispose of the cuttings; they can harbor diseases that could survive the winter and return to the plants in the spring. Some plants, such as Oriental poppies and iris, produce a cluster of green leaves in the fall. Leave these intact. Remove only the older, brown stems that remain from the spent flowers.

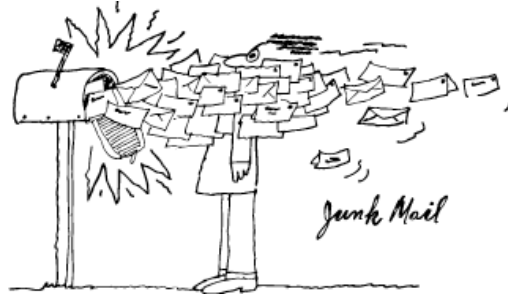
As the season progresses and the weather becomes colder, mulch the soil around the plants. This is generally done in mid-to late November. Mulch keeps roots cold. It doesn't protect them from the cold. A plant can be hardy in more northerly latitudes where winter temperatures are severe but can be injured here, where winter temperatures fluctuate considerably. The alternate freezing and thawing of exposed soil can damage roots and even heave them out of the ground.

Recommended mulching materials for perennials include hay or straw, evergreen boughs, pine needles, peat moss and cornstalks. These mulches are light and won't pack or suffocate roots. Apply to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. A few plants, however, such as peonies and bearded iris, don't require winter mulching and, in fact, do better without it. Mulching can cause their thick, fleshy roots to rot. As with other perennials, though, they require watering during dry winter conditions.

How to Stem the Tide of Junk Mail

By Jason Alderman,
Director of Visa's Financial Education Programs

Here's more than you ever wanted to know about junk mail: Each year, direct mail creates 10 billion pounds of solid waste in the U.S. and costs local communities more than \$1 billion in collection and disposal expenses – not to mention putting you at greater risk for identity theft if you don't shred personalized mailings before tossing.



So how can you stop the flood of junk mail you receive? You could try moving or changing your name, but as you've probably noticed, a lot of what's delivered to your mailbox is addressed to "Occupant." In fact, the U.S. Postal Service relies heavily on such deliveries, which now outnumber first-class postage mailings.

Here are a few more practical suggestions for stemming the tide:

A good way to significantly reduce the number of offers you get for new credit accounts and insurance is to register with www.OptOutPrescreen.com, a secure website created by the leading credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, Innovis and TransUnion).

By completing a simple online form, you can request to be removed from marketing lists the bureaus supply to lenders and insurance companies for use in firm (preapproved) credit or insurance offers. The electronic opt-out is valid for five years. If you want to opt out permanently, you must mail the form to the address provided. You can also opt back into such mailings electronically through the website. And, if you prefer, you may opt in or out by phone at 888-567-8688.

Another good method to curb the amount of direct mail you receive is to register with www.DMAchoice.org, a program run by the Direct Marketing Association, the leading trade organization for businesses and non-profits that send direct mail. When you register, your name is put in a "delete" file that is sent to DMA's 3,600-plus members to check against their mailing lists.

It's important to note that not all marketers belong to DMA, so registering won't stop all such mailings. Also, it won't stop mailings from companies you already do business with or to which you've made a donation in the past. To get off their lists you'll have to contact them directly.

You can also register with DMAchoice.org to stop mail from being sent to a deceased individual or if you want to manage mail being sent to a dependent in your care. And, they have an email preference service where you can opt out of receiving unsolicited commercial emails from DMA members for six years.

A third opt-out option to explore is www.CatalogChoice.org, a free service that helps you submit opt-out requests for catalogs, coupons, credit card offers, phonebooks, circulars and more. Catalog Choice also offers several paid where they do more of the legwork to get you off third-party mailing databases.

One last suggestion: If you've got elderly parents, you might want to screen their mail for an overabundance of direct mail – especially catalogs and solicitations for money. If they're on a fixed income and susceptible to strong sales pitches, the combination can be devastating to their bank account. You can help them register with the organizations mentioned above.



Featured MontGuides

MontGuides are self-learning resources available from MSU Extension. Get yours at the Sanders County Extension Office, or online at www.msuextension.org/store



Planning for the End of Life: Approaching End-of-Life Advanced Directives with Family Members

This MontGuide is designed to help family members discuss the topic of end-of-life care and explains potential options about advanced directives and POLST. <http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT201203HR.pdf>

Long-Term Care Partnership Insurance in Montana

Provides basic information about the Montana long-term care partnership insurance program, tax benefits, and shopping tips. <http://msuextension.org/publications/FamilyFinancialManagement/MT201202HR.pdf>

Management of Lice on Livestock

Cattle lice are an important winter time pest of livestock. Sucking and chewing lice can reduce the performance of livestock by lowering weight gains, feed efficiency and overall health of the animal. This guide provides chemical control options for preventing these ectoparasites from becoming established. <http://msuextension.org/publications/AgandNaturalResources/MT201002AG.pdf>



Sanders County Horticultural Society

By Charlotte Beaudry, Master Gardener

The first year of the SCHS comes to a close with our last meeting in October, "Putting Your Yard and Garden to Bed." The monthly meetings began in February with an enthusiastic group of gardeners looking forward to expanding their knowledge and experiences. Our agenda for 2012 included:

- Vegetable Gardening
- Fruit Tree Pruning
- Small Fruits & Berries
- Ornamental Selection & Perennials
- Bird Walk
- Composting
- Plant Propagation
- Putting Your Yard & Garden to Bed

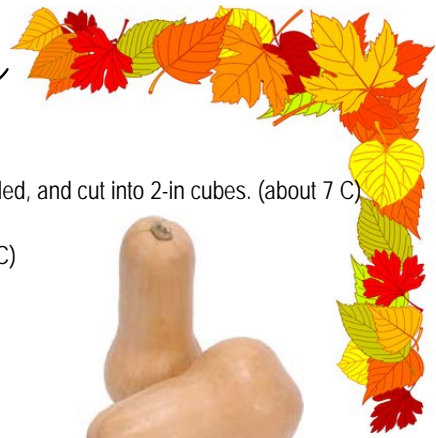


All members completed a questionnaire checking their areas of interest and their responses generated the subjects to be explored during the year. We have many more to keep us busy for the next few years.

Our meetings will begin again in February, 2013. We certainly welcome all new members and encourage active participation in any areas of expertise.

Contact the Extension Office or visit www.msuextension.org/sanders for a membership application.

Recipe Corner



Butternut Squash Soup

- 2 ½ lbs butternut squash, peeled, and cut into 2-in cubes. (about 7 C)
- 2 T unsalted butter
- 1 leek, sliced thin (about 1 ½ C)
- Salt and Pepper
- 4 C vegetable broth
- 1-2 C water
- 2 springs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Sour cream



Microwave squash in a bowl until tender (about 15 minutes), stopping half-way through to stir. Drain for 5 minutes in a colander, saving the liquid.

Melt butter in a pot over medium-high heat and add the squash, leek and 1 t. salt. Cook about 12 minutes until the squash really starts to break down and brown the bottom of the pot.

Add 2 C. broth and scrape the bottom of the pot to loosen and dissolve the browned layer. Add 2 C. more of broth, and all of the saved squash liquid, plus 1 C. water, the thyme springs, bay leaf, and cayenne pepper. Increase the temperature to high and simmer until the leeks are soft (7 minutes).

Remove and discard the bay leaf and thyme sprigs. Now you can puree the soup. This can either be done in batches in a blender, or with an immersion blender right in the pot. You can add more water to make it the desired consistency and season with salt and pepper. Serve with a dollop of sour cream.

- Adapted from *Cooks Illustrated* recipe

Pumpkin Bread

Topping

- 5 T brown sugar
- 1 T flour

- 1 T butter
- 1 t cinnamon

Bread

- 2 C flour
- 1 ½ t baking powder
- ½ t baking soda
- 1 15oz can unsweetened pumpkin puree
- 1 t salt
- 1 ½ t cinnamon
- ¼ t nutmeg

- 1/8 t cloves
- 1 C sugar
- 1 C brown sugar
- ½ C vegetable oil
- 4 oz cream cheese cut into pieces
- 4 eggs
- ¼ C buttermilk
- 1 C walnuts, chopped fine

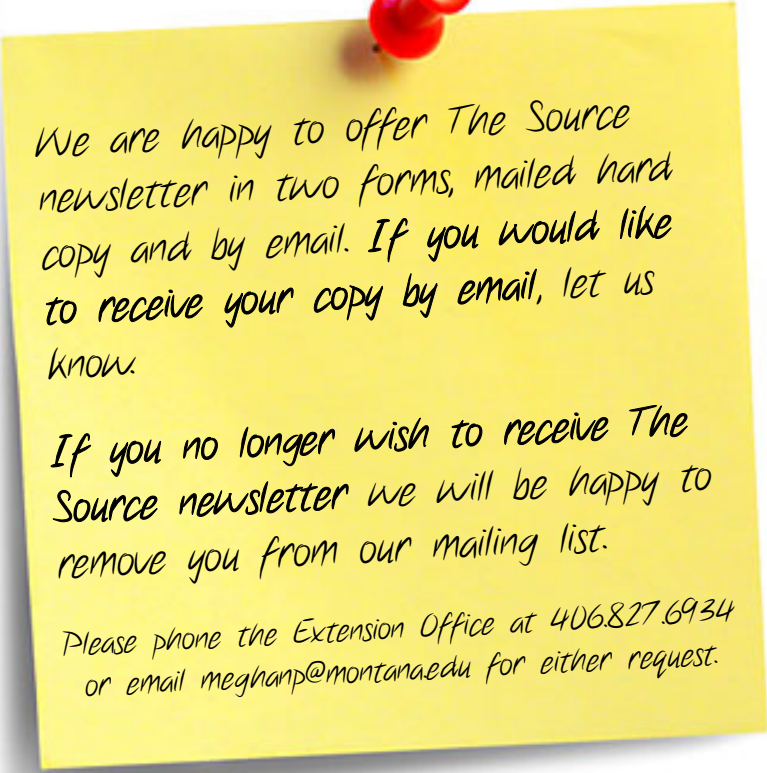


For the topping: using fingers mix all ingredients together in a bowl until well combined and topping resembles wet sand. Set aside.

For the bread: Heat oven to 350 degrees and grease 2 loaf pans. Wisk flour, baking soda and baking powder in a bowl.

Combine pumpkin, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook until reduced to 1 ½ C (about 6-8 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in sugars, oil and cream cheese. Let cool for 5 minutes.

Wisk together eggs and buttermilk and add them to the pumpkin mixture. Fold in flour and walnuts. Scrape into prepared pans. Sprinkle topping evenly over each loaf. Bake until an inserted skewer comes out clean (45-50 minutes). Remove from oven and let them set on a wire rack for 20 minutes before removing them from their pans and letting them cool the rest of the way. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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