

# Gardening tips for November

## Trees and shrubs

- Now is a good time to collect evergreen cones. Cover the cones with peanut butter and then roll them in bird seed. Tie string around the cones and suspend them from tree branches.
- Young trees should be wrapped to prevent their bark from cracking during winter. Smooth, thin-barked trees such as maple, mountain ash, ash, crabapple, and other fruits are especially sensitive. A tree is leafless during winter and its bark is fully exposed to the sun. A warm day in winter can cause the cells beneath the bark to become active. Later when temps suddenly drop at night, the water in the activated cells freeze and expand, causing them to burst out. The damage appears as a vertical crack on the sunny west- or south-facing side of the tree. Wrap the tree with Kraft paper or install a white plastic tree guard around the trunk. The protection typically goes up to the lowest branch. This wrapping will reflect the sun's rays off the tree. This wrapping will also prevent damage from deer, rabbits, and voles during winter. Commercial orchardists often paint the trunks of their fruit trees with diluted (50%) white outdoor latex paint to reflect the sun's rays.
- Do not prune lilacs, magnolias, forsythia and other spring-flowering plants now. Pruning now will remove flower buds from the branches. If possible, wait until after these shrubs are done blooming in spring.
- Keep raking your leaves as they fall.
- It is usually best to allow fallen pine needles to remain below the tree. These needles will nourish and mulch the tree. If you wish, add pine needles to beds of acid-loving plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons and blueberries.



- Deeply water newly planted trees and shrubs before the ground freezes.
- After autumn rains, look for standing water in your perennial flower beds. Water that collects on the surface during winter will freeze and may damage your plants. Dig shallow trenches to clear this excess water away. Make a note to raise this area of your flower bed next spring.
- Some trees and shrubs need protection from heavy snow loads. The stems of arborvitae, upright juniper, and young clump birch trees may be loosely tied together with cloth strips or nylon stockings to prevent splitting.
- Nuts collected from the wild can be planted in the garden or into containers sunk into the ground. Plant the nuts a couple inches deep. Place wire meshing over the soil bed to protect against squirrels.

## Flowers and houseplants

- Spider plants are having their babies now. The flower stalks and baby plants are caused by the short days (8 hours). The babies can be rooted in water.
- Mums have a hard time surviving our winters. Mound 8 inches of soil over the crown after the foliage dies back. Don't cut back foliage, which will allow the plant to collect snow. Mulch after the ground freezes.
- Mulch should not be applied over roses or perennial flowers until after the ground has frozen. Mulching before this time can attract rodents, prevent natural hardening of plants, and cause the soil to heave during winter. The heaving of soil can damage plant roots.


## Fruits

- ☞ A 2- to 4-foot high cylinder of hardware cloth around the trunk of new trees will protect them from rabbits and voles. Insert the cloth a couple inches into the soil.
- ☞ Mulch strawberries after the ground freezes in mid to late November. Add a 4- to 6-inch layer of straw or hay. Avoid using leaves since they can mat down upon the plants and create diseases.

## Vegetables

- ☞ Leftover garden seed can be stored over winter. Most vegetable seed will germinate for three years. Store the seed in a cool place. Sweet corn, onion, okra, parsley, and parsnip seed are short-lived, so use fresh seed of these vegetables every year.
- ☞ Clean up the garden. Remove any debris that was infested with diseases or pests. This cleaning will prevent infestations next year.
- ☞ Plastic garden hose may crack if left outside over winter. Allow it to warm to room temperature before coiling for winter storage.
- ☞ Do you still have pumpkins left over from Halloween? The pumpkins can be composted or used in your Thanksgiving dinner celebration. Pumpkins were a critical part of the Pilgrims' diet. A poet among the Pilgrims once wrote: "Instead of pottage and puddings and custards and pies; Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies; We have pumpkin at morning and pumpkin at noon; If it was not for pumpkin we should be undone."
- ☞ If possible, wait to trim your asparagus ferns until next spring. The ferns will collect snow. Snow is an excellent insulator of plants.
- ☞ Now is a good time to take a soil test. The lab is very busy in spring and results can be delayed. Soil testing materials are available at your local county Extension office.

## Lawns

- ☞ Mow your lawn a little bit shorter than normal when mowing for the last time. This prevents damage from diseases and rodents during winter.
- ☞ Drain the fuel tank and run the lawn mower engine dry before putting the machine away for winter.
- ☞ Bare spots can be filled by dormant seeding. Scratch the soil, sow the seed, and rake it in. This seed will germinate in early spring before the weeds arrive. If sowing a large area or a sloped area subject to erosion, it's safer to wait and sow next spring.
- ☞ Shred fallen leaves into the lawn with your mulching mower. The lawn will be okay as long as you can see the grass blades within the shredded leaves after mowing. 

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