



# Putting Your Garden to Bed

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LARIMER COUNTY  
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 EXTENSION

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CSU CO-Horts Blog  
 CSUHort.BlogSpot.com

Colorado Gardening for Everyone  
 \*\*Advice and Observations from your CSU Extension Horticulture Agents and Specialists\*\*

## CO-Horts Blog

Monday, September 21, 2020

### Turning the page on a successful 2020 grape season in Colorado

Posted by: Miranda Ulmer, CSU Viticulture Extension Specialist

With grape harvest coming to an end, we are reflecting on what a year 2020 has been for us all, even the grapes in Colorado! However, despite many challenges, it has been a successful year. It all started when the 2019 harvest ended abruptly due to a cold front moving

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- CSU Extension Gardening Webinars
- CSU Extension Gardening & Give: A Modern Victory Garden Project

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## Topics we'll cover tonight

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- What is frost?
- Season extension options
- End of season vegetable gardening
- Perennial care
- Tree leaves and tree care
- Lawn care

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## What is "frost"?

- A light frost is 30-32 degrees F
- A hard frost is below 28 degrees F
- Physiologically, as temperatures cool, plant growth will start to slow; damage will not occur until temps are in the low 30s

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# When will we have the first frost?

Greeley 10-day Forecast

Thu 24	91°/48°	 Mostly Sunny	0%	SSW 7 mph	▼
Fri 25	91°/51°	 Partly Cloudy	0%	WSW 10 mph	▼
Sat 26	88°/46°	 Partly Cloudy	0%	W 10 mph	▼
Sun 27	81°/46°	 Partly Cloudy	0%	E 7 mph	▼
Mon 28	87°/48°	 Sunny	0%	WNW 9 mph	▼
Tue 29	73°/41°	 Sunny	0%	NNE 10 mph	▼
Wed 30	72°/40°	 Sunny	0%	NE 6 mph	▼
Thu 01	75°/42°	 Sunny	0%	ENE 6 mph	▼
Fri 02	77°/43°	 Sunny	0%	NE 7 mph	▼
Sat 03	75°/41°	 Partly Cloudy	0%	NE 7 mph	▼
Sun 04	76°/43°	 Sunny	0%	E 7 mph	▼
Mon 05	79°/41°	 Mostly Sunny	10%	NNW 5 mph	▼
Tue 06	73°/39°	 Mostly Sunny	0%	E 6 mph	▼
Wed 07	68°/36°	 Partly Cloudy	0%	ENE 6 mph	▼

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## How to extend the growing season

- Consider covering crops with plastic sheeting, tarps, old blankets, boxes or other close-fitting cover
- Traps radiated heat from the soil at night and keeps the plants warm
- Remember to remove the covers the next morning—or you might do more harm than good



montanahomesteader.com

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## Using holiday lights (not LEDs)

This can help buffer temps +/- 6 degrees F

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## Annuals

- You can use covers or buckets to extend the life of your annuals
- Consider bringing them indoors
  - Careful of insect hitchhikers like fungus gnats and other creepies
  - Monitor water—may not require as much moisture
- Make cuttings!
- Call it quits



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# Annuals to Plant Now



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Veggies:  
When Frost Takes 'em Out

- Some vegetables like the cold
  - Carrots, beets, parsnips, lettuce, broccoli and other cool-season crops thrive when daytime temperatures are below 65 degrees
- Some plants become "sweeter" with cold: Carrots and kale
- Air temperatures may be cold, but the soil is still warm >60 degrees F

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## Can I still plant fall crops?

- You could potentially plant a quick crop\*:
  - Radishes (25 DTH)
  - Arugula (30 DTH)
  - Spinach (42 DTH)
  - Beet greens (30 DTH)
  - Kale (starting at 30 DTH)

\*Be prepared to do season extension!

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**Kale**

Anti-Inflammatory  
Full of Antioxidants  
Low Calorie  
Vitamin A, C, K  
Potassium

Kale contains health-promoting phytochemicals, sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol that appear to protect against prostate and colon cancer

WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR

HEART SKIN BONES EYES

Kale contains lutein, a type of carotenoid (an organic pigment) responsible for the plant's color and nutrients. Lutein helps keep eyes and vision healthy.

Kale belongs to the same family as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and collards.

100g of Kale Contains

Celebrate  
National Kale Day  
October 2!

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## Potatoes: When Frost Takes 'em Out

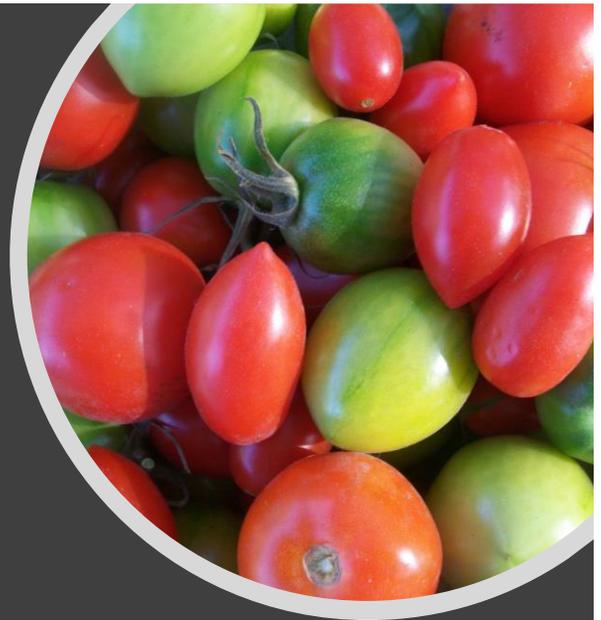
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- If the vines freeze, the tubers should be fine—but harvest ASAP
- Wipe off soil (don't wash) and store in a cool, dry place
- Do not put in the refrigerator

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## What About Tomatoes?

- By early to mid-September, clip off new growth and flowers to allow energy into existing fruit production
- Before frost, pick all mature green fruit from the vines



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## Tomatoes and the Fall

- Store green fruit in well-ventilated, open cardboard boxes to ripen at 55-70 degrees F
- Putting fruit in the fridge will not allow fruit to ripen
- Refrigerate only after ripened—or eat immediately!

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## Frosted Tomatoes

- If frost touches your tomatoes, it's time to bid them adieu
  - It's ok to eat them...if you're willing
  - Do not preserve them, as their acidity level is likely different from fresh tomatoes
- Truthfully, not really good eats



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- Pepper plants turn black with frost and the fruits quickly turn mushy and rot
- If you can't cover the plants, pick the peppers before frost

## What About Peppers?

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## When Do I Harvest My Pumpkins?

- The stems will be dry and the skin resists penetration by a thumbnail
- Winter squash and pumpkins intended for storage should be harvested before a hard frost as it will damage rinds and shorten storage life

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## Storing Pumpkins and Winter Squash

- Pumpkins will store for two to three months in a protected room where temperatures remain between 32 and 65 degrees F (basement, cellar)
- If they do get frosted on the vine, harvest them within a day or two and cook, freeze, or can them immediately



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## Think Garlic!

- Garlic, shallots and some onions can be planted in the fall for harvest next spring and summer
- Buy seed garlic from a garden center or farmers' market—planting garlic purchased at the grocery store may not survive Colorado's winter
- Plant bulbs pointed tip up about 3 times as deep as the length of the bulb; water and mulch



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## Planting Garlic

- Dig a trench
- Push cloves into soil
- Cover with soil
- Water
- Harvest in July



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## Clean Up the Veggie Garden

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- After our wet spring, our vegetables had many fungal and disease problems
- If you had problems, do not allow these diseases to overwinter, so remove all plant material from the garden
- If the plant was diseased, do not compost—throw it in the trash
- Insect eggs, fungal spores and other organisms can overwinter in plant tissue or in the ground



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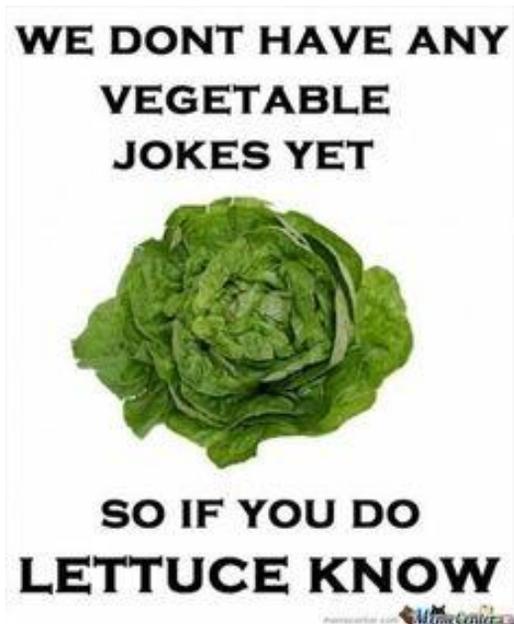


## Clean Up the Veggie Garden

- Make notes of where plants were located to practice crop rotation the following season
- Remove all trellises and tomato cages and clean them up and store for the winter
- Next summer, consider planting a cover crop, like rye or vetch, to till into the garden in late fall or spring for added organic matter and nutrients

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Questions on  
vegetables?



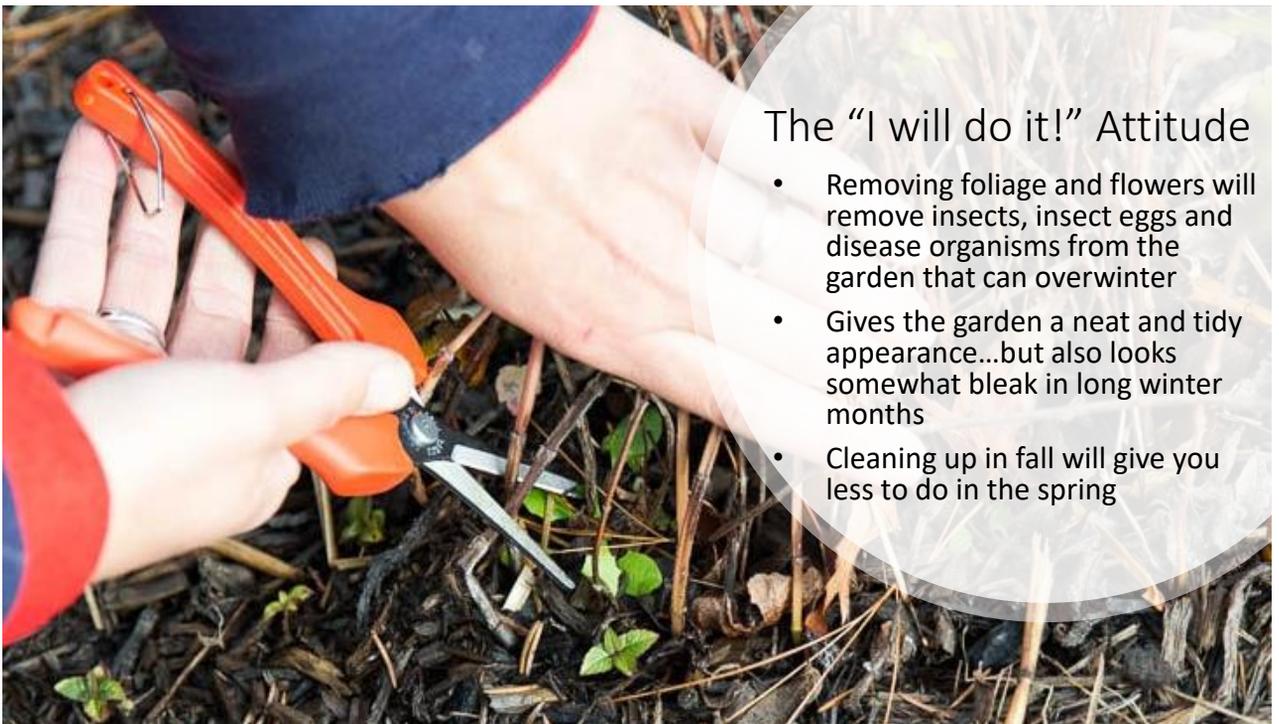
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## Fall Perennial Care

- Perennials are touted as “low maintenance” but often need some TLC in the fall
- Should I clean up?  
Should I wait?



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### The “I will do it!” Attitude

- Removing foliage and flowers will remove insects, insect eggs and disease organisms from the garden that can overwinter
- Gives the garden a neat and tidy appearance...but also looks somewhat bleak in long winter months
- Cleaning up in fall will give you less to do in the spring

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## “I need a break from gardening!”

- Leaving perennials standing gives structure and winter texture to the garden
- Provides food for the birds (grass heads and coneflowers)
- Plants may collect more snow, increasing water to the plant and provides more protection to the plant crown from cold temperatures

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## Reasons to Clean up in the Fall

- Eliminate any overwintering organisms
- Remove most perennial foliage as it dies down, except for those with winter texture
  - Coneflowers
  - Ornamental grasses
  - Poppies
  - Black-eyed Susan



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## It's Important to Mulch

- Mulching plants (including perennials) will give plants added protection from wind
  - Especially important for newly planted plants
- Helps stabilize soil temperatures during freeze/thaw
- Prevents plant heaving, which can lift crowns above the soil, exposing them to freezing temperatures

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Questions on  
perennial  
care?



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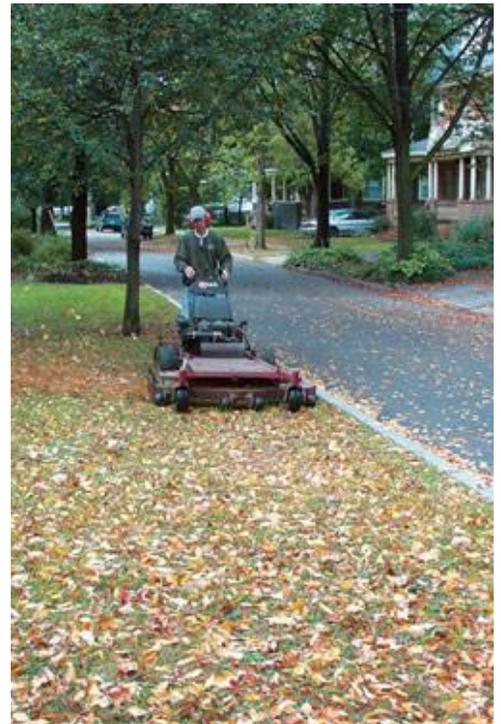
## What About All Those Leaves?!

- Fall weather gives us piles of leaves on the ground
- Leaves can be beneficial for the garden
- Instead of sending them to the landfill, consider using them all over the yard

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## Leaf Use #1: The Lawn

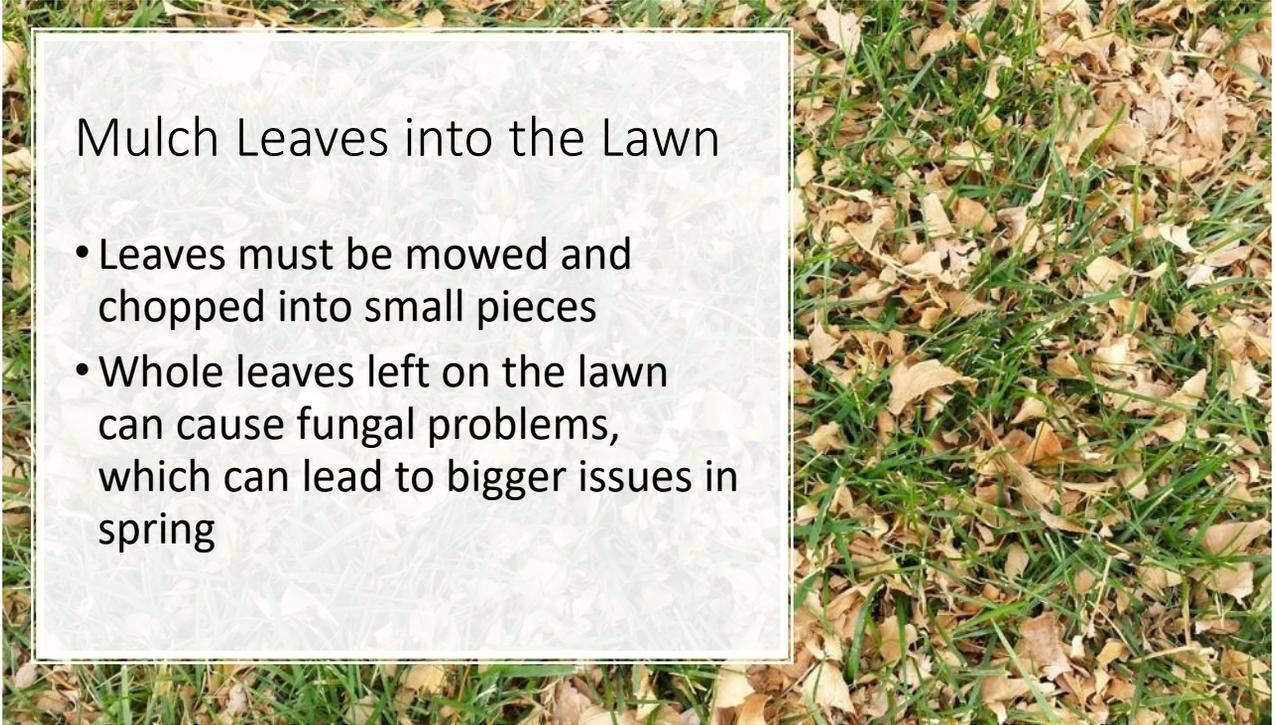
- Using your lawn mower, remove the bag and make at least two passes over the lawn
- Research has found that chopped leaves left on the lawn will:
  - Return nutrients to the soil
  - Provide food for earthworms
  - Hold moisture for grass roots
  - Reduce weeds!!!!



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## Mulch Leaves into the Lawn

- Leaves must be mowed and chopped into small pieces
- Whole leaves left on the lawn can cause fungal problems, which can lead to bigger issues in spring



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## Leaf Use #2: Your Plants

- Leaves make an excellent blanket for protecting perennials (and trees and shrubs) in winter
- If leaves aren't diseased, pile them around plants and let ones that blow into the garden settle there
- In spring, rake the leaves out and put them in your compost



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## Leaf Use #3: Your Veggie Garden

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- Consider adding shredded leaves to the vegetable garden
- Whole leaves can harbor insects and disease, so mulch them before placing them in the veggie bed
- Water regularly and fertilize to keep the microorganisms active
- Turn the leaves in the ground in spring for added nutrients



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## Leaf Use #4: Composting

- Rotting and dead plants can be converted to “gardener’s gold” and used as a soil amendment to improve our hard, clay soils
- It’s one of the best forms of recycling and relatively easy to do

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## Fall tree care: Water

- Keeping watering trees and shrubs as long as you're able
- Once you've blown out the sprinklers, switch to a hose and sprinkler
- Water acts like an insulator—soil that stays moist will be warmer
- Plant cells that are plump with water will be less susceptible to damage from the cold

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## Fall and winter watering

- If 30 days elapse without significant precipitation (1" or more), then you should water trees and shrubs
- Water on days above 40 degrees, as early in the day as possible
- For trees, aim to apply about 5-10 gallons of water per trunk inch
  - It's not an exact science; *some water is better than no water*
- Use a hose and sprinkler—don't fire up the sprinkler system
- CSU Fact Sheet #7.211



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## It's Important to Mulch

- Mulching trees helps stabilize soil temperatures during freeze/thaw
- Prevents water loss from the soil
- Adds organic matter to the soil

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# Wrap trees

- If you have young or newly planted trees, you should wrap them mid-November to mid-April
- Focus on thin barked trees such as linden, maples, ginkgo, fruit trees, buckeyes, etc.
- Tree wrap will help moderate freeze/thaw and prevent sunscald or frost cracks



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# Sunscald

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## Frost cracks



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## Tree Wrap

- Use crepe-paper wrap and start at the base
- Overlap each turn by 1/3
- End the wrap at the first branch

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Any tree questions?



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## Fall Lawn Care

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Should I Mow Shorter in Fall?

- One big myth in landscaping is to mow your lawn shorter in fall to prevent spring disease/fungal problems
  - This is not necessary
- Keep your mower set at the same height year-round (2.5-3" tall)
- Obey the 1/3 rule when mowing

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## Fall Lawn Fertilization

- Fertilizer companies will push "winterizer" for your turfgrass

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## TurfBuilder vs. WinterGuard

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Essentially the EXACT same product!



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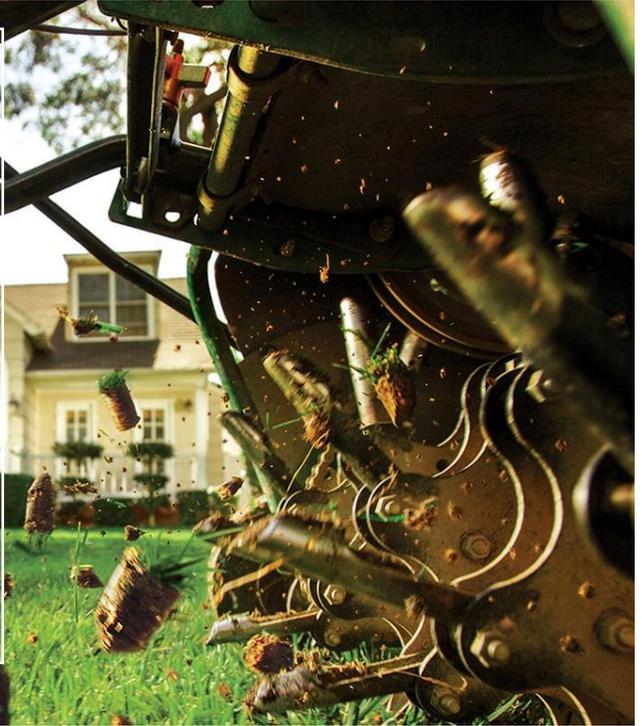
### Should I Winterize My Lawn?

- “Winterizer” is a great marketing tool
- Fall is a **great** time to fertilize
  - 1 lb/N/1000 sq feet in early September
  - 1 lb/N/1000 sq feet in early-to-mid-October
- Good spring green-up, better weed competition and healthier roots
- Try to get your final fall application down by October 15

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## Fall Lawn Care Tips

- Early fall is a great time to aerate the lawn
- Remember to blow out your sprinkler system (if you have one)
- Go after those perennial broadleaf weeds
  - Dandelion, plantain, white clover, mallow, bindweed and yarrow
  - Well-watered perennial weeds will absorb chemicals more quickly and lead to an earlier demise



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Any lawn care questions?

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## Don't Forget Your Garden Tools!

- Clean up your tools in the fall...if you don't during the year
- Like most everything, taking the time to maintain and clean your tools can ensure a longer shelf life
- Remove all soil by rinsing the tools with water and use a steel brush to remove stubborn crust
  - Allow the tools to fully dry to prevent rust
- Wipe pruners, shears and loppers with an oily rag to prevent stiffening
- Sharpen pruners, shovels and loppers



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## Add Bling to your Spring with Bulbs

- Plant spring-blooming bulbs
- September and October are best planting months
  - Bulbs can root before the ground freezes
  - If planted after October, flowering can be irregular
- Bulbs grow best in full sun or part shade
- Flowers last longer if they do not receive mid-day sun
- Utilize spots under deciduous trees
  - Squill, crocus, daffodils, snowdrops



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*Allium* sp. (Ornamental Onion)

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*Crocus vernus* (Crocus)



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*Narcissus* sp. (Daffodils)

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*Scilla* sp. (Squill)

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*Frittilaria* sp.  
(Checked Lily, Turk's Cap)

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## To Wrap it Up:

- Blow out your irrigation systems
- Get on mailing lists to receive seed and plant catalogs in winter
- Make notes of what went well during the garden season and what you need to improve
- Look at your yard and make plans to prune trees or shrubs in the dormant season (just before bud break)
- Plant pansies, mums, and spring bulbs for color



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### CSU Extension FREE Garden Webinars

8/21 Bulbs for Fall Planting - Carol O'Meara  
8/28 Edible Native Plants - Irene Shonle  
9/4 Great Plants for Fall Color - Alison O'Connor  
9/11 Edible Landscaping - Cassey Anderson  
9/18 Fall Lawn Care Tips - Tony Koski  
9/25 Ornamental Grasses - Amy Lentz  
10/2 Season Extension - Eric Hammond  
10/9 Where Do Insects Go in the Winter Time?  
- Lisa Mason  
10/16 Seed Saving - Sarah Schweig  
10/23 Basic Landscape Design/Planning  
for 2021 - Deryn Davidson

Classes held Fridays at noon.  
Registration Required: [csuhort.blogspot.com](http://csuhort.blogspot.com)  
Click on "Gardening Webinars"

More fall gardening classes!

Register at:

[CSUHort.BlogSpot.com](http://CSUHort.BlogSpot.com)

Click on "Gardening Webinars"

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# Gardening Questions? Contact Extension.

Weld County Extension

525 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Greeley, CO

970-400-2066

Email: [weldmastergardeners@outlook.com](mailto:weldmastergardeners@outlook.com)

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