

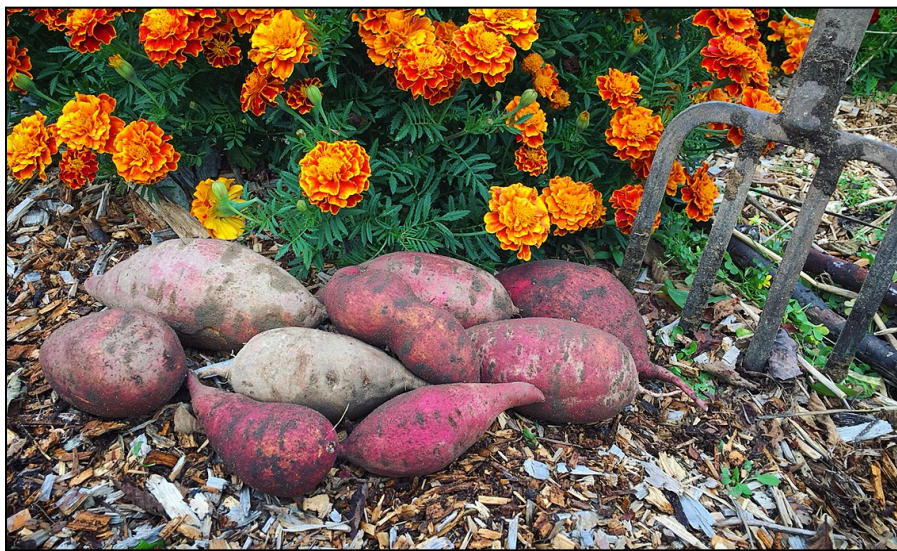


The Autumn Garden

Simple Fall Gardening Tips

by Kent County Master Gardener Beverly Gemmill

The autumn season is the time to clean up the garden; it will save you time and effort next spring. Pull or dig up and remove annual flowers and vegetable plants. Compost them if they are disease and pest free. If plants are not healthy, bag and place them in the trash. Keep the weeds out of your garden by planting a cover crop in the fall. Rye or oats are suggested but they have to be tilled under in the early spring. Mulch keeps the soil temperatures stable and helps prevent weeds in your flower beds and vegetable garden. Purchase mulch, or use ground up leaves from your yard. Leaf mulch is one of the best organic soil amendments for your garden because it promotes healthy soil. Mulch helps to maintain soil temperature. Use warm mulch around newly planted plants to prevent the soil heaving during the winter months.



Rachel Yocum, Kent County Master Gardener photo

Marigolds still in bloom while a variety of sweet potatoes are harvested during the garden fall clean-up.

Clean Garden Tools

Now is the time to clean up gardening tools with a weak solution of bleach and water before storing them for the winter. It is also time to bring in pots that might crack in the freezing weather.

Plan Your Spring Garden

Plan now for your spring garden. Make a map or diagram of this year's garden in order to make sure you rotate your crops in the spring. Crop rotation prevents disease and insects. Insect eggs can remain in the soil to attack the same crops next year.

Soil Test

Now is also the time to do a soil test if you did not get one done in the spring. For more information about taking and submitting a soil sample in Delaware, go to the following: <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/environmental-stewardship/soil-testing/>.

Later in the winter when the catalogs come in you can check your diagram and reflect on your successes and challenges. Diversify some of your plantings and include flowers to bring in pollinators and improve the soil.

In order to have a successful garden in the spring, use these tips to clean up and prepare this autumn.

Check your weather

Autumn is the time to harvest any remaining warm weather vegetables, herbs and flowers before a killing frost. Check the weather for frost warnings. In Kent County, the first frost date is usually between October 24th and the 30th. To extend the gardening season, cold weather crops like lettuce, spinach, bok choy, cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts can be planted and harvested in the fall. Garlic and leeks should be planted now for a harvest next spring.

Now is also the time to plant spring bulbs such as daffodils and tulips. These bulbs can be planted from late September until the ground freezes. Dig up Dahlias, Gladiolas and tender bulbs to protect them from freezing. Stored in peat moss in a cool place, they will be ready to replant in the spring. Seeds for hollyhocks and silver dollar plants must be planted now as well as seeds of some native plants. Season extenders such as cold frames, straw and row covers can be used to protect plants from an extended hard freeze.

Prune out dead limbs and branches from trees and shrubs. Do not trim the branches of spring flowering trees and shrubs. These should be trimmed in the spring after they bloom. Fall is a good time to plant new trees but be sure to keep them watered well before the ground freezes.

House plants should be brought indoors before the temperature sinks below 50 degrees. Pick off any insects or rinse plants with insecticidal soap. Dead and diseased leaves should also be removed at this time. If the houseplant has been too damaged, dispose of it in the trash so that you don't spread insects or diseases to other plants. If there are herbs you would like to overwinter indoors, place them in pots near a sunny window.

Some people have trouble growing outdoor plants inside because their windows have a coating to prevent their furniture from fading. Plants need sunshine so you may need to place them under grow lights.



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For added help and information sign up for upcoming Kent County Master Gardener workshops.

Watering for a Healthy Landscape; Wednesday, August 11, 2021, 1:00 to 2:00pm

Container Gardening; Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 11:00am to 12:00pm

Workshops and More

Register for workshops and information at: <https://cast.desu.edu/cooperative-extension/agriculture-natural-resources/delaware-master-gardeners/kent-county-master>

Master Gardener Information

For more information about Master Gardener workshops, garden helplines, presentations, becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer, or other activities, please visit these websites.

UD Website - <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/environmental-stewardship/master-gardeners/>

DSU Website- <https://cast.desu.edu/cooperative-extension/agriculture-natural-resources/delaware-master-gardeners>