

LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE OCTOBER TIPS

Plant Tips

Summer is over and cooler weather gives us a chance to plant hardy chrysanthemums, Shasta daisies, pansies, and violas. Most flowering plants need at least 6 hours of sun.

With cooler weather it's time to do some clean-up before cold weather starts. Cut down stalks of spent perennials. After a hard frost kills your annuals, cut off the tops leaving the roots in the soil to decompose, adding organic matter to the soil. Those with cellar window wells need to clean out the debris to allow proper drainage.

October is a great time to plant daffodil bulbs (deer and squirrels leave them alone). Dig a hole 4-5 inches deep; put some bulb food at the base; mix with soil; place the daffodil bulb, pointed end up, and back fill with soil. Plant at least 3-5 bulbs close together for a pleasing effect. Those with extremely hard soil may want to dig a trench into which the bulbs are planted. Next spring and many years afterward you will be cheered by your daffodils. When you plant several different varieties that flower at different times, you will have a longer season of bloom.

If bringing summering plants back inside, use an Insecticidal soap to rid the plant and soil of insects. If your plants should develop fungus gnats, place Bounce dryer sheets (Outdoor Fresh Scent) near the plant to repel adult fungus gnats. If you don't have the room or energy to move big pots indoors to protect them from frost cracks, empty out the soil, turn the pots over and prop them on the emptied soil.

If you are able, working in your yard is great exercise. You burn about 371 calories an hour when weeding.

Garden Tips

While the garden plot soil is still workable, plant garlic and shallots for harvesting next August. October is the month to harvest late maturing potatoes. Lift them from the soil on a dry, sunny day. Allow the potatoes to lay on the soil surface long enough for the skins to become dry. Place the potatoes, unwashed, in baskets lined with newspaper and cover the top of the pile with more newspapers in order to keep them in the dark so that they don't develop inedible green skins. Harvest any remaining tomatoes, red or green, before the first frost. To ripen green tomatoes, put them in a basket or tub; place a ripe apple with the green tomatoes and cover with newspaper. If you have a rhubarb plant, sprinkle some slow-release fertilizer around the plant. Store unused vegetable and flower seeds in a tight-fitting container. Most seeds, if stored correctly, are viable for three years.

Keep a list of which vegetable varieties did well this year, and sketch where you planted this year's vegetables so that you rotate your plants the following year.