

Put Your Garden to Bed

When Fall crops and flowers have matured, it is time to put your garden to bed.

Get started with these tips for cleaning your garden, setting it right for the winter, and laying the groundwork for next year's garden:

- Plant perennial rhubarb roots October 15 through November 15. Plant Spring flowering bulbs, such as tulips and daffodils, in October. Other perennial flowers, such as peonies, do best when planted in the fall, too.
- Pot up parsley, chives, geraniums and other herbs and flowers. Keep them out of doors for a few weeks in their pots. Then bring them in and place them in a sunny window for production throughout the winter.
- Harvest and preserve fall crops.
- Cover tomatoes and other warm season crops with plastic in the evening to protect them from light frosts. Remove the plastic in the morning so heat does not build up under it and damage the plants.
- Mulch and protect hardy crops, such as greens and root crops, so they will last longer. Pile mulch over and around plants to insulate them.
- Remove old, spent plants from the garden. Any plants that had insects or disease should be put in plastic bags and thrown out with the trash. Others can be composted.
- Make needed structural changes, such as leveling or building raised beds. Turn the soil and leave it rough to expose insects and disease to the cold. It will kill some of them.
- Mow tall grasses around the garden and use them (or other materials) to mulch the ground before it begins to freeze (late November) to prevent erosion.
- Take a soil test and add any needed limestone to the garden so it will break down and do its job by spring.
- Wait until spring to fertilize.
- Make compost from fallen leaves, kitchen vegetable scraps, garden waste, and other organic matter in an enclosed container. Call the Extension Service for directions on making compost.
- Add organic matter (compost, leaves, grass clippings) to improve the condition of the soil.
- Be sure to clean up your garden so it will look neat and clean for the winter.

Now sit back and wait for your seed catalogues to come and start planning for next season!