

FALL HOME & GARDEN



Eating Seasonally

As the leaves change and the air turns crisp, many people mark the fall season by transforming their diet to accommodate seasonal selections. Eating with the seasons is a great way to enjoy produce at its best.

Depending on your location, eating seasonally could be as easy as checking out your local farmers market and downtown grocer, or growing fruits and vegetables in your own garden. Each region throughout the country — and your specific part of the state, for that matter — has different growing zones that are determined by many factors, including climate, soil type and regular precipitation expectancy.

Chat with your local university's agricultural center or farmers group to find out more about the freshest foods available to you this fall. Then dig in with a seasonal menu every night of the week.

WHY EAT SEASONALLY?

Many fruits and vegetables are ripe for the picking in the fall, which across the country is the traditional harvest season. When picked at its peak, fresh produce is packed with nutrients, flavors and crispness that may not be as evident even a few weeks into the harvest season.

It's important to learn about your growing zone so you can perfectly time your entry into seasonal eating. Vegetables such as arugula and artichokes are ready in the cool weather and can make unique additions to a fresh fall salad. Traditional and sweet potatoes also are prevalent in the fall and can be diced for homemade baked fries.

Another cool-weather staple is broccoli, which generally can be grown year-round in moderate climates but is at its peak in the fall season.



BUY NOW, EAT LATER

Many fresh produce options make for great ingredients for meals you can freeze for later. This can include tomatoes for pasta sauces and potatoes for frozen casseroles. Choose fresh fruits such as apples and blackberries, which

are best in the fall and can be incorporated into pies or jams that you can preserve for later.

Carrots and celery also are fall-season vegetables that can be sliced or grated into homemade comfort soups. Don't forget the garlic, which generally is at its

most plump and tasty in the fall.

Not sure where to start when it comes to eating seasonally? Talk with your local growers about joining food-sharing programs that can help you gain access to fresh baskets of food on a weekly basis.

Prepare Your Home for Winter

It's easy to remember to update your exterior paint job, refinish your deck or prepare your garden for the winter season. That's because we see those parts of our homes and yards on a daily basis. Not so for our hidden basements and crawlspaces.

Making some winter preparation updates to these under-appreciated portions of your home before cold weather hits can be one of the smartest moves you make this fall.

WHY PREP?

It's easy to overlook your basement and crawlspace, but doing so can put some of the most vital parts of your home's infrastructure at risk. Even if your basement is unfinished, it deserves your attention this fall to make sure everything is up to speed for the cold air that will soon be trying to infiltrate your home through any cracks in the foundation or drafty airways in your crawlspace.

VULNERABLE SYSTEMS

Basements and crawlspaces contain parts of the plumbing, electrical, heating and drainage systems. These systems are the life force of your home, and lack of proper maintenance could make for a miserable winter season.

All of them are vulnerable to winter's wrath, so giving them some preventive attention could pay off in the long run. Cold and moisture can cause havoc in your heating systems.

Moisture can wreck the integrity of electrical wires and cords.

Your plumbing pipes should be wrapped to prevent freezing, and any outside pipes should be drained of water and shut off for the winter. Hopefully, the walls of your basement are insulated. Caulk and seal your basement windows and doors for added pipe protection.

DIY TIPS & EXPERT HELP

Once a season, it's a good idea to survey your crawlspace for any leaks or compromised sections. Look at the small window airways to make sure they are closed and ready to take on the blustery winds of winter. Fix any leaking pipes to avoid them freezing in the cold.

Of course, it's always a good idea to get your local experts involved in preparing your home for the winter. Sign up for your local heating and air company's inspection program to get your systems checked at reduced costs. Your local professional can inspect, clean and replace any problem elements in your heating system, leaving you feeling warm and toasty as winter approaches.

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Pumpkin Pie Recipe

Nothing smells like fall more than a traditional holiday pumpkin pie, and it doesn't have to be a holiday to enjoy one.

Use the following recipe from Betty Crocker to enjoy this fall classic any time.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/3 cups Gold Medal all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons cold water

FILLING

2 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1 can (15 oz.) pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix)
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk

SWEETENED WHIPPED CREAM

3/4 cup whipping cream
2 tablespoons sugar

DIRECTIONS

Heat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. In medium bowl, mix flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt and the oil with fork until all flour is moistened. Sprinkle with cold water, 1 tablespoon at a time, tossing with fork until all water is absorbed. Shape pastry into a ball. Press into bottom and up side of 9-inch glass pie plate.

In large bowl, beat eggs slightly with wire whisk or hand beater. Beat in 1/2 cup sugar, the cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon salt, ginger, cloves, pumpkin and milk.

To prevent spilling, place pastry-lined pie plate on oven rack before adding filling. Carefully pour pumpkin filling into pie plate. Bake 15 minutes.

Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Bake about 45 minutes longer or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Place pie on cooling rack. Cool completely, about 2 hours.

In chilled medium bowl, beat whipping cream and 2 tablespoons sugar with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. Serve pie with whipped cream.

Store in refrigerator.

Preparing Flower Beds for Winter

Spring brings warmth and an abundance of beautiful flowers, but this gorgeous transformation doesn't happen on its own.

The preparation for that season really starts in the fall, as we protect our flower beds from winter.

Many of our flowers don't die but go into a dormancy period. The promise of life and beauty still remains unseen. All the while, those plants are growing new roots and absorbing nutrients and moisture from the soil.

While the plants do their jobs, it's up to us to prepare the environment around them to make sure everything blooms beautifully in the spring.

BASIC STEPS

The most basic tasks for preparing a flower bed for winter are cleaning up and covering the soil. Depending on the size of your area, this can be a simple task. For those of us with supersized flower beds, this can be quite the challenge.

Sometimes the professionals need to make an appearance. Your local lawn and garden care specialist will be able to help you plan your preparation activities as you work together to protect your hard-earned landscape beauty.

They also will be able to guide you through various techniques and treat-

ments that can help your plants come back even stronger next year.

CLEAN UP

When taking on your flower bed preparations yourself, the first step is to clear out dead foliage. Put on your gardening gloves and remove any weeds or dead flowers. These materials can be composted and re-used as fertilizer for next year's plants. Removing this foliage also can keep pesky bugs and eggs from setting up camp this fall.

Always make sure you know which plants are perennials (your flowers that come back year after year). Pulling them is a mistake that can lead to sparse spots in next year's bed.

COVER UP

After cleaning up your area, it's time to cover the soil. Use mulch or even cover crops to achieve this goal. Leaves can make for great mulch, so collect them and add them to your compost pile.

There are lots of plants that can be used as cover crops; just ask your local home improvement store or nursery for the best options for you area.



Paint Like A Pro

If you're like most Americans, the spring rains and beating summer sun have impacted the paint on your home, barn or shed. Even the strongest exterior paints can fade after time, which means fall is the best time for getting out the brushes, rollers and cans.

The same holds true for your home's interior, which is generally due for a few touch-up projects once per year. Or maybe you're renovating this fall and looking to completely overhaul your space.

Fall's cool temperatures mean you won't become overheated on bigger paint projects. It's also the perfect climate for your paint to dry, unlike summer's humid, sticky air. Head to your local hardware store for the latest and greatest selection in paints and materials. It's time to get to work!

COLORS

What are some of the first colors that pop into your mind when thinking about fall? Red, green, brown and burnt orange are great options to mimic the natural environment around you.

Fall painting projects can incorporate these trendy colors if you're looking to build an aesthetic connection with nature. Of course, if you're simply touching up an area around your home, work with your local hardware store or paint specialty shop to match your color.

Bring in a high-resolution photo of the color you're seeking to help your paint dealer mix the correct hue. It's always a good idea to keep



good records of the color, brand and manufacturer of the paints you've used in the past. This ensures you will be able to find the right color when it's time for a touchup.

PAINTING TIPS

Many people decide to enlist the services of local painting professionals to take

care of their projects. You likely can find affordable help by checking out your local newspaper for ads or relying on your friends and family members for referrals.

If you're looking to go the do-it-yourself route, there are many tips that can help you successfully and safely take on your painting project this

fall. Here are a few:

- For the best application and highest quality results, always clean the walls, ceilings and other surfaces you will be painting. This helps get rid of any dirt or debris.
- Avoid using slippery plastic to protect your floors from drips. Use drop cloths or old sheets instead to prevent

falls.

- If you have holes or other imperfections, use spackle to fill them. Don't forget to sand them smooth when dry.
- Have a bigger project? Consider using a five-gallon bucket with a roller screen inside. This can help save you the time and mess of refilling paint trays over and again.

Fall Makeover: The Garden

The start of cool weather is a good time to start planning next year's garden layout while making needed repairs. Depending on your ideas for either growing or scaling back your garden next spring, there are some simple steps to make sure your harvest is as bountiful as ever.

Before you get busy fixing fencing and laying down ground cover, it's best to take a minute to make an overall assessment of your garden's performance this fall. Did it produce all the fruits, vegetables and flowers you expected?

Were there plants that didn't come up or that weren't as vibrant as years past? Are there signs of damage caused by insects or rabbits? The answers to these type of questions can help you know where to start in preparing your garden for next year.

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

The first thing to do when readying your garden area is to make general repairs. Fencing, landscape timbers and other areas may need to be replaced or maintained. Especially if you live in an area with a temperamental wintertime climate, it's best to take care of these issues now ahead of the biting, snowy cold season.

Part of the plan for your preparation may be expanding your garden with new raised beds or a larger overall area. Again, it's best to make these adjustments in the fall to

reduce your workload in the winter or spring, which is when you'd like to be focused on growing your next round of produce.

ADD SOME SPRING FLOWERS

Your garden doesn't have to be solely dedicated to fresh vegetables and fruits. Many traditional gardeners also like to fill their space with flowers for children to pick and enjoy.

According to Consumer Reports, fall is the time to plant those spring-flower bulbs, such as crocus, daffodils, hyacinths and tulips. Always remember to follow the planting instructions and your climate zone recommendations to make sure your flowers come up strong.

In regions with milder winters, cool-season annuals such as forget-me-nots and sweet alyssum make for great options. Northern gardeners should dig and store tender bulbs such as tuberous begonia and gladiolus. Again, your climate has a big impact on what grows and what doesn't, so check with your nursery specialists for expert, localized advice.



Fall-Inspired Decor

Fall is a great time to redo or update decorations because the season's elements lend themselves to becoming perfect additions to your overall interior design scheme. Consider fall's gorgeous colors and many textures when choosing how to incorporate the season into your decorations.

Your local interior design specialist keeps track of what's hot in fall design. Integrating some of these trends can help you create stunning decorations for your fall harvest party or holiday get-togethers.

DESIGNING YOUR DOOR

The front door is the gateway into a home. Because of this, any fall wreaths bought or made should reflect your personal style.

Some people may prefer something simple. A wreath made with fall greenery or branches will do just that. Others want a more elaborate design. For these more complex projects, consider the wide variety of materials available. Your local craft or hobby store has the ribbon, bells and spray paint needed for the most creative of efforts.

TAKE IT TO THE TABLE

Table decor is easy to change for the seasons, but it can really transform a dining room area. It doesn't have to cost a lot and can be pulled off with a little creativity and attention to detail.

Consider recycling things from around the house. Use different-sized glass jars and fill them with colorful leaves



or seasonal flowers. Gourds make for the perfect fall decoration on your tabletop. Or you can mix and match fall candles with flowers picked from your garden.

NATURAL ELEMENTS

The outdoors contain a vast assortment of potential decorating material in the fall for free. Take a hike or walk to explore and pick out your

pieces.

Look for pine cones, beautiful fall leaves and branches. Pick some in-season fall flowers and put them in a vase for instant beauty. Your local

farmers and farmers markets will have an abundant supply of decorative pumpkins that you can easily incorporate into any design that needs a burst of vibrant orange color.