

Fall Home & Garden



Planting Bulbs for Spring



Perennials have the amazing ability to return with beautiful blooms each year. Plant these unique bulbs in the fall and you'll be greeted by gorgeous flowers each spring.

Annual flowers are different from perennials, as they only last one blooming season. While they generally provide colors that last from spring all the way into fall, you must replant them each year.

Perennials will typically display their flowers for a shorter time than annuals, but strategic planting of different types of flowers can guarantee beautiful landscaping over the course of an entire season.

PROPER PLANTING

In order to ensure your flower bulbs will thrive underground over the long winter, it is important to follow the directions included. Here are some things you should consider before planting this fall.

- **Planting depth:** Each bulb might require a different planting depth. A general rule of thumb for large bulbs is around 8 inches deep, while smaller bulbs typically need only about 5.

- **Planting location:** Different plants need different elements in order to grow successfully. Pay attention to the instructions to determine whether your bulbs should be planted in full or partial sun, or shade. If your plants don't get the right amount of sunlight, you might not see them

develop blooms next spring.

- **Fertilizing:** Perennial bulbs can benefit from an organic fertilizer spread on top of the soil. This is usually beneficial for bulbs that are returning for the second year.

- **Your location:** Refer to the United States Department of Agriculture's Plant Hardiness Zone Map when choosing bulbs to plant. You also might find it helpful to talk to your local nursery for their advice on when and what to plant.

SPRING-BLOOMING FLOWERS

Make sure to refer to the hardiness map before choosing perennials to plant in your area this fall. These flowers require a period of cold dormancy before they can bloom. Here are a few popular spring-blooming flowers that will add beauty to your outdoor garden:

- **Tulips:** A flower that prefers a full-sun location. They can grow up to 14 inches tall.

- **Daffodils:** These deer-resistant flowers tend to multiply each year. They require little maintenance and come in many different types.

- **Allium:** A species that is available in more than 300 types, they create a colorful and exotic aesthetic in a flower garden.

Halloween Decor Safety

Because Halloween is generally a holiday celebrated by many children, safety is crucial when it comes to your home's decorations. Make sure to give children a pleasant and safe experience when they exclaim, "Trick or treat!" at your door. Don't forget to leave your light on.

INSURANCE CHECK

Be sure to find out about the amount of personal liability coverage you have through your homeowner's insurance policy. An agent can give you advice on adding additional coverage if your current plan is lacking.

This insurance is important all year round but can give you even more peace of mind when the neighborhood children are present on your property.

KEEP WALKWAYS CLEAR

When decorating you should allow plenty of walking space for your guests. Clear your sidewalk or driveway of any obstacles over which people might trip. Any hazards that can't be easily removed, such as tree roots or patio furniture, should be visibly marked.

If you have electronic decorations on your property, it is likely that you will be using several extension cords. These can be dangerous if left in the middle of a walkway, especially if a child becomes frightened and flees in a panic. Try to hang these cords overhead or secure them against a building.

There also should be proper lighting for your visitors. Make sure your outdoor lightbulbs are in good working order. For added visibility, consider add-



ing solar lights along paths, giving people a clear view of their surroundings.

FIRE HAZARDS

Carved pumpkins are popular decorations for front porches across America. Some people choose to add a candle to display their masterpiece.

While it adds a level of flair, an open flame could create a fire hazard to your home or cause burns to guests. Consider using LED lights or battery-operated candles.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International reports that more than 60 percent of people who decorate

for holidays use at least one extension cord. It has listed these important tips to keep your home safe when using them this Halloween:

- Make sure all extension cords and decorations are rated for outdoor use.
- Check cords and lights for damage before plugging any-

thing in.

- Avoid overloading electrical outlets by plugging in too many decorations. A professional electrician can tell you the levels your system can handle.

- Keep all extension cords clear from snow or water exposure.

Pressure Washing Tips

Just as a coat of paint can instantly enhance your home's interior, pressure washing is a quick way to make the exterior more attractive.

Over time, your home's siding will become exposed to mold and other elements created by the weather.

The good news is that pressure washing can make siding look new, revitalize a weathered deck and brighten up a dingy driveway. Take the time to give the outside of your home a deep cleaning this fall.

RENT FROM A LOCAL VENDOR

If you will probably only use a pressure washer once or twice a year, you might benefit from renting rather than purchasing. The experts at your local equipment rental agency can assist you in choosing the perfect machine for the job.

Whether you choose to rent or purchase, these powerful washing tools will make a huge difference to your home's curb appeal.

GAS OR ELECTRIC?

Pressure washers are typically offered in two types: electric or gas. A model that gets its power from gasoline will usually feature a much higher pressure than their electric counterparts.

Remember that extra pressure might make it easier to cause damage to your home's siding or wood if used improperly. A gas pressure washer should be considered for heavy-duty jobs, deck or pavement cleaning and common jobs.

Electric pressure washers are

quieter but have less power. The lower amount of pressure makes it less likely to cause damage to what you are washing. They are great for car washing, spot cleaning or infrequent jobs, such as light mildew removal. Always use caution when spraying while there are electrical components present.

CLEANING YOUR SIDING

Consumer-grade pressure washers are designed to clean stains rather than strip paint, so cleaning your home's siding is an easy task if done correctly. Follow these steps while pressure washing to avoid damage to your home and its surroundings.

- **Protect yourself and belongings.** When pressure washing, make sure to wear eye and hand protection. You should also cover plants near your home and appliances such as an air conditioning unit.

- **All about angles:** Spraying your wand straight at your home allows dirt to seep deeper into the surface rather than wash away. Instead, hold the wand at a 45-degree angle and at a distance recommended by the manufacturer.

- **Start at the bottom.** Clean from the bottom and make your way up. Once you are ready to rinse, you should start from the top. This will avoid streaks.

- **Watch the windows:** The high pressure may cause them to break.



Your Roof's Integrity

An aging roof can suffer significant winter damage to its integrity. Homes in areas with brutal winters are especially at risk, as they are subjected to moisture and freezing and thawing cycles.

That's why fall is the perfect time to make sure your roof is ready for the long winter.

The American Society of Home Inspectors recommends a professional roof inspection for an aging roof on a semi-annual basis. You can also do your own inspections by looking for curling or cracked shingles and wet spots in your attic. Finding the damage before the cold weather begins can make it easier to get these important repairs completed.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR LOOKS FOR

Hiring a professional to inspect the state of your roof will ensure minimal problems over the winter. They will do a full interior and exterior inspection to give you peace of mind. Here are a few things they will be looking for.

- Interior – Your inspector will head to the attic to check for proper ventilation, any moisture or mold that may be present and the state of your insulation.
- Exterior – For this inspection, they will travel to the roof to get a clear view of any issues.

They'll check for leaks, shingle condition, ice dams and the state of your chimney.

Once they diagnose any imperfections, they will be able to create the plan of action you should take. They will be able to tell you the level of urgency you should take to make repairs.

SNOW ON YOUR ROOF

Roof collapse is a real threat to homes that experience heavy snowfall. The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety warns us that a roof in good standing can only support 20 pounds-per-square-foot of snow before becoming stressed. Roofs in bad shape can be extremely dangerous when under the weight of heavy snow.

If you experience a large amount of snow and you feel that your roof may become compromised, snow removal may be necessary. Calling a professional service to eradicate your roof will be your safest option. If you choose to do this emergency service yourself, the IBHS recommends using a long extension from the ground rather than ascending to the roof.



Your Lawn in Autumn

As the temperatures drop, it's easy to forget about your lawn. You might be surprised to learn how important autumn maintenance is to ensure a beautiful yard when spring arrives. Autumn is the time of year when grass absorbs important nutrients and moisture to prepare itself for the long, dormant winter.

As beautiful as the changing leaves are during the fall season, they can be disastrous to the quality of your lawn. Be sure to remove fallen leaves from your yard as soon as possible.

Allowing them to remain on your lawn can cause them to become wet and stick together. This creates a barrier that may suffocate your grass and cause certain fungal diseases.

If you have a large yard, you may benefit from a riding lawnmower featuring a collection bag. Leaf removal can be effective in smaller areas with a leaf blower or a standard rake. Be sure to dispose of your leaves in a way that is compliant with your city's law.

CONTINUE MOWING

As long as your grass is growing, it is important to continue your mowing and watering rituals. Keeping it well maintained allows sunlight to reach the peak of grass blades, lessening the possibility of browning throughout the winter.

Make sure your mower's blades are sharpened at least twice a year. Dull blades tend to pull at the grass rather than cut it cleanly. This can also add to the risk of grass becoming brown at the tips.

As you prepare for the last few mows of the season, you can allow your grass time to



adjust to its lower height by gradually lowering the blades. Scalping your lawn right away can create stressful conditions on turf grass.

FERTILIZING

Don't forget to fertilize this autumn! This season is a great

time because grass blades grow much slower in cooler temperatures. However, beneath the soil, roots and stems continue to grow rapidly. Applying fertilizer assists in the action underground to grow deeper, keeping a supply of nutrients available until spring arrives.

Talk to the experts to find the perfect lawn fertilizer for your area's needs. Most lawn-care professionals prefer a slow-release type that contains nitrogen.

SEED IN BARE AREAS

Give special attention to

areas in your yard that are lacking a full amount of grass. You can use an all-in-one mixture to quickly see results. These special mixtures contain grass seeds as well as a beneficial fertilizer to give your new grass a healthy start.

Benefits of a Leaf Blower



Depending on where you live and the number of trees near your home, leaves could be a big problem each fall.

Leave behind the sore arms and hips that using a rake creates and consider investing in a leaf blower. These powerful tools speed up the leaf-cleaning process and allow you to perform it comfortably.

A leaf blower is useful for more than just clearing areas of leaves. You can also gain big benefits in the winter by blowing vehicles and pathways free from freshly fallen snow and ridding areas of your property of dirt and light debris. You should know what to look for when choosing your blower and the benefits you can receive.

CHOOSING A MODEL

When you begin researching leaf blowers, you may be overwhelmed with the numerous available options. You must choose from gas or electric, cord or cordless and power. The perfect model depends on how much you will rely on the tool.

Take a look at some of the pros and cons of these different types according to Consumer Reports:

- **Gas:** Great benefits a gas leaf blower offer are power and portability. Using fuel as a power source will generate more blowing force than blowers that use electricity. However, they are usually heavier than electric models,

require more maintenance and are much noisier. If you will rely on a blower to perform big jobs often, then a gas model may be the way to go.

- **Battery powered:** Great for smaller, less frequent jobs. A battery-powered blower will be less powerful than a gas engine but can be considerably lighter. These can make safe companions when using to clean gutters. Make sure you have a spare battery on hand as your operating time will be limited.

- **Corded:** Powerful corded blowers are available but lack the convenience of gas- or battery-operated models. If you choose to invest in a corded unit, be sure you have long extension cords and the time to properly store them before and after each job.

OTHER USES

Don't let the name fool you, a leaf blower has more useful functions than just cleaning up leaves.

Use a leaf blower to quickly dry your car after washing.

Prevent fire hazards in your home by using a blower to rid your dryer's exhaust of lint.

With a little bubble solution and a leaf blower, create the most incredible bubble machine your children have ever seen.

Prep Your Plants for Winter

As the year draws to a close, so does the responsibility of weed pulling and maintaining your garden. However, there is still plenty of work to do before your garden is ready for winter's harsh conditions. Do your part this autumn to protect your hard work and promote a healthy return next spring.

Even though it appears your garden has stopped growing, there is a lot of activity occurring underground. Your spring-blooming bulbs, perennials and even new trees are developing the roots they will rely on when the warm weather returns.

What you do in the fall to provide protection will have a big impact on your garden next year.

Once you begin experiencing frost, you should plan to lay down a fresh layer of mulch to your flower garden. It should be considerably thick as it will be the protective barrier for your plants over the winter months.

PREPARING PERENNIALS

Once your perennial flowers begin showing signs of frost damage, cut the stems to frost level. This is an effective way to remove eggs from pests and diseases on your plants. It's important to wait until a few frost cycles before applying mulch to perennials.

Your goal is not to warm the soil but to regulate the temperature. A good layer of mulch will keep the ground frozen, keeping a consistent temperature that your perennials will thrive under.

ROSE GARDEN TIPS

Roses are incredibly popu-



lar in American yards. They also require a good level of maintenance before winter.

It's important to remove all existing mulch from beneath your rose bushes. Watch your local weather to determine when the first hard frost is expected. Before this occurs, spread fresh mulch around

the base of your plants. Make sure to water your rose bush thoroughly after mulching.

After the freeze, add more mulch! The experts at Better Homes and Gardens recommend creating a cylinder around your bush and covering it with mulch for ultimate protection in harsh winter

conditions.

PROTECTING TREES

Newly planted trees are especially at risk during the winter. You may choose to wrap the trunks of new trees to prevent frost cracks caused by fluctuating temperatures.

You should also cover the

root system with two to four inches of mulch. This will increase a tree's ability to absorb water and insulate against the weather.

During the winter, water your tree if you experience a few weeks without a natural water supply like rain or snow.