

October Garden Calendar

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HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day — for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. — for eight to 10 weeks until redbracts begin to show.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and allow an additional three to four weeks for blooming.
- Houseplants, especially those grown outdoors during the summer, commonly drop some or many of their leaves in response to the lower natural light intensity in the autumn and reduced light intensity indoors.
- Water indoor plants less frequently, and discontinue fertilizer as plants slow down or stop growing for the winter season.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Keep plants, esp. newly planted stock, well watered until ground freezes.
- Have soil ready to mound roses for winter protection. Do not mound or cover roses until after leaves drop and soil is near freezing, usually late November or early December.
- Strawberry plants need protection from winter's extremes, but applying winter mulch too early may cause crowns to rot. Apply winter protection when plants are dormant but before temperatures drop below 20 F, usually late November or early December.
- Rake or shred large, fallen tree leaves such as maple, to prevent them from matting down and smothering grass. Raking smaller leaves, such as honey locust, is optional.
- September and October are good months to apply broadleaf weed killers. Follow all label directions, choose a calm day to prevent spray drift.
- Continue mowing lawn as needed.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.
- Harvest Brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.
- Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.
- Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 F for two to four weeks.
- Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.
- Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snow for insulation and moisture. Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's plantings from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.
- Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.
- Plowing and incorporating organic matter in fall avoids the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Soils prepared in the fall tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.
- Carve a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.
- Dig tender garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Caladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost. Dig

canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location.

- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.