

Ask an Expert - October Yard and Garden Tips

JayDee Gunnell

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Autumn is officially here, and there is much to look forward to – pumpkins on the porch, apple cider, cooler temperatures, and walks through crunchy leaves. But before you get too comfortable, don't forget there are yard and garden end-of-season tasks to complete. Here are tips from the Utah State University Extension Gardeners Almanac to help. Included are links to fact sheets and videos for further information.

Tips

- Learn about [average first and last frost dates](#) around the state.
- Consider adding a smaller structure such as a [low tunnel](#) or a larger [high tunnel](#) to [extend your growing season](#).
- Learn how and when to harvest [winter squash](#) and store in a cool (50-55°F), dry location.
- Plant [garlic](#) cloves from mid-October through early November.
- Refer to this list of [fall cleanup chores and good landscape practices](#) to get your yard ready for winter.
- Remove vegetable plants from the garden once harvest is complete to reduce overwintering sites for insect pests.
- Protect [tomatoes](#) from early frost by covering the plants with a blanket or tarp.
- Place mulch over [carrots](#), [beets](#), and [parsnips](#) to prevent the ground around them from freezing.
- Rototill leaves, [compost](#), or manure into the vegetable garden to enhance soil microbe activity.

- Prune roses by heading back excessively long canes to prevent damage from heavy snow loads.
- Cut back ornamental grasses in snow-prone areas once the foliage has died down. Otherwise leave them until spring and enjoy the vertical accent during the winter.
- Plant spring-blooming bulbs through early November.
- [Plant trees](#) and shrubs in the fall to enhance root establishment.
- Dig tender perennials such as gladiolas, dahlias, begonias, and canna lilies after the foliage has died down, and store them in a cool (45-50 °F), dry place.
- Protect trunks of young trees from winter cracking by wrapping them with a white reflective tree wrap.
- Dig and remove annual flowers.
- Plant cold-hardy annuals, including pansies, primrose, [kale](#), and ornamental cabbage.
- [Prune raspberry canes](#) to the ground after they have fruited.
- Control tough perennial weeds such as field bindweed (a.k.a. morning glory). Refer to this list of [weed control options](#).
- Mow grass to a height of 1-to-1½ inches at the end of the season to minimize disease problems.
- Apply a quick-release nitrogen [fertilizer](#) after the last mowing (late October to early November) for early greening next spring.

Pests and Problems:

- Send diseased vegetable plants and leaves to the local landfill.
- Use burlap or other soft materials to [wrap evergreens](#) to prevent snow breakage.
- Treat stone fruits (cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots, and plums) for [coryneum blight](#) at 50% leaf drop.
- Clean up and discard all fallen fruit to reduce overwintering sites for disease and insect pests.
- [See a video of the October Gardener's Almanac tips](#).
- Consider taking a USU Extension [online gardening course](#). Courses cover topics such as container vegetable gardening, creating the perfect soil, planting trees, and controlling pests. Courses are geared toward both beginning and professional gardeners.
- Explore more gardening tips on Extension's [yard and garden website](#).

Contact

JayDee Gunnell

Utah State University Extension horticulturist

jaydee.gunnell@usu.edu

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