

Flora & Fauna

The Top "Must-Do" Tasks for Fall Clean Up in the Garden

November may seem like a month when there is very little to do in the garden. After all, it's getting colder, most of your vegetables have been harvested and your herbs have been dried; it's time now to relax, right? Wrong! Here's a list of the most important tasks you should do to ensure that your garden is ready to thrive again when spring comes:

1. **Plant Bulbs and Perennials.** Fall is the time to place spring bulbs in the ground and plant bare-root roses, deciduous trees and shrubs, and evergreens.
2. **Tidy Beds.** Cut back spent perennials after the first frost and pull up annuals. Leave some plants with beautiful seed heads, such as grasses and sedums, for winter interest and to help feed the birds.
3. **Weed.** Get a head start on spring, when weeds are potentially most harmful, by ridding beds of weeds in the fall. Be certain to pull the entire root out of the ground. Avoid using harmful pesticides.
4. **Mow the Lawn.** Give your lawn a final cut before winter. Apply corn gluten, which inhibits weeds and fertilizes lightly.
5. **Add Mulch.** Give perennials an extra layer of protection in winter by mulching. Wait to apply mulch until after the first frost to help prevent rodents from nesting in it.
6. **Apply Organic Fertilizer and Compost.** Feed plants in late fall so they will be well-nourished in early spring after the winter thaw.
7. **Protect Tender Plants.** Wrap tender plants, such as fig trees or boxwood, to protect them from harsh winter conditions. Bring any potted plants indoors to protect them from the coming cold weather.
8. **Collect Seeds.** Seed saving is a thrifty and easy way to get a head start on next year's garden. It is also important in preserving treasured heirloom varieties.
9. **Disinfect Pots.** Clean pots with a coarse brush to remove all traces of soil that could harbor harmful bacteria and disease. Let terra-cotta pots dry out completely before storing them.
10. **Clean and Sharpen Tools.** Prevent rust and other damage by keeping tools cleaned and sharpened. Rinse off all dirt and rub a bit of camellia oil on shears and pruners.
11. **Rake the Leaves.** Autumn leaves left matted on the lawn can suffocate it. Rake them up and add them to the compost pile, or place them in biodegradable leaf bags.

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Cleaning Corner: Cool Uses for Coffee Filters

Coffee filters are not just for making coffee anymore. They're actually handy little tools that you can use for a multitude of tasks. For example:

- Cover bowls or dishes when cooking in the microwave. Coffee filters make excellent covers that prevent food splattering.
- Protect your china by placing a coffee filter in between stacked dishes.
- If you break the cork when opening a bottle of wine, filter the wine through a coffee filter.
- Stop the soil from leaking out of a plant pot. Line a plant pot with a coffee filter to prevent the soil from going through the drainage holes.
- Recycle frying oil by straining it through a coffee filter to remove food bits.

November

- 79 AD The city of Pompei is buried by an erupting Mount Vesuvius
- 1512 The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo, is exhibited to the public for the first time
- 1572 Supernova is observed in the constellation known as Cassiopeia
- 1800 US President John Adams becomes the first President of the United States to live in the Executive Mansion (later renamed the White House)
- 1860 Abraham Lincoln elected 16th President
- 1867 Alfred Nobel invents dynamite
- 1940 Lucille Ball marries Desi Arnaz in Greenwich, Connecticut
- 1995 Official end of Operation Desert Storm

Health Advice: How to Quit Smoking – For Good!

Smoking cigarettes is the most preventable major risk factor of heart and blood vessel diseases. No matter how much or how long you've smoked, it's never too late to quit. In fact, when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop immediately. In time, your risk will be about the same as if you'd never smoked. Here's a method recommended by the American Heart Association on how you can kick this habit for good!

Step One

- List your reasons to quit and read them several times a day.
- Wrap your cigarette pack with paper and rubber bands. Each time you smoke, write down the time of day, how you feel, and how important that cigarette is to you on a scale of 1 to 5.
- Rewrap the pack.

Step Two

- Keep reading your list of reasons and add to it if you can.
- Don't carry matches or a lighter, and keep your cigarettes out of easy reach.
- Each day, try to smoke fewer cigarettes. Only smoke when you really, really want to.

Step Three

- Continue with step two. Set a target date to quit.
- Don't buy a new pack until you finish the one you're smoking.
- During the week, change twice to brands you don't like to make smoking less pleasant.
- Try to stop for 48 hours at a time.

Step Four

- Quit smoking completely. Throw out all cigarettes and matches. Hide lighters and ashtrays.
- Stay busy! Go to the movies, exercise, take long walks, go bike riding.
- Avoid situations and triggers you relate with smoke.
- Try doing crafts or other things with your hands.
- Do deep breathing exercises when you get the urge to smoke.

When you quit smoking, you'll notice a lot of benefits right away. Your senses of taste and smell will return, and if you have a smoker's cough, it will go away. You may notice your digestion improving, as well as your breathing. Not only will you feel alive and full of energy, but you'll be free from the mess, smell and burns in your clothing, too!

Kid Corner: Simple Ways for Your Family to Save Money

Most of us are feeling the pinch in today's economy and, unfortunately, it's going to take a while before things can really turn around. In the meantime, however, there are plenty of things you and your family can do to save money while still enjoying a good standard of living. Here are just a few tips on what you can do to stretch your dollars:

- **Keep a list of restaurants where kids eat free on certain nights.** This way, celebration meals won't break the bank. As kids get older, they can even help you look through coupon books and the newspaper for these special deals. It will help them get reading practice and learn to be careful with money.
- **Set aside twenty dollars from each paycheck** and put it towards making a switch to a greener and cheaper home. Start by changing all your incandescent light bulbs to CFL bulbs, which emit less heat and carbon dioxide. Purchase a water heater blanket to wrap around your water heater – it will reduce the energy needed to heat water for family showers. You can also purchase light-sensing nightlights for your kids. Small changes like this can translate into big savings at the end of the year.
- **Clip coupons** and pay attention to weekly grocery store specials. Buy using coupons on items that are already on special, you can double your savings instantly!
- **For kid-friendly snacks**, buy blocks of cheese and generic Goldfish or Nilla Waffers in bulk. Then divide them into small snack bags yourself – you'd be amazed how much you pay for packaging when you buy the name brand stuff!
- **Set aside a specific amount of cash each week to pay for groceries, eating out, and miscellaneous shopping.** It will make you more aware of your spending. Make a deal that when the money is gone, the spending stops!
- **Stop wasting money on bottled water.** Instead, invest in good-quality metal thermoses or plastic Nalgene bottles. Refill them each morning with water from your tap. You can put them in your kids' lunch boxes and keep one with you in the car or at the office. You'll be saving money *and* the environment!
- **Before you buy something online, check to see if you can find a discount coupon.** Just Google the company's name and the word 'coupon.' For example "Target coupon.") You may find special codes that will give you free shipping or 10% or more off your order!
- **Need a new car? Consider working with a credit union.** They can send your 'order' to all the local dealerships who will then bid to get you the best deal. It will save you a lot of time and money!
- **Set up a rainy day fund** by placing a container on the kitchen counter for collecting loose change. Empty your pockets and wallet of those coins every day (kids can help by contributing leftover lunch money, too). When the container gets full, take your family out for a special treat!

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 3 medium tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 2 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 1 large red pepper, cut into thin strips (1½ inches long)
- 1 large green pepper, cut into thin strips (1½ inches long)
- 1 stalk celery, cut into thin strips (1½ inches long)
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil
- Salt and pepper to taste



1. Heat oil over moderate heat in a large pot. Add the onion and garlic and sauté 3-4 minutes.
2. Add tomatoes and vegetable broth, bring to a boil and reduce heat. Simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Add corn, peppers, celery, zucchini, basil, salt and pepper, bring to a boil and reduce heat.
4. Simmer for 10-15 minutes until vegetables are tender.

The Basics of Choosing Window Treatments

Window coverings can paralyze a decorating project. You may be tempted to just buy *something* -- anything -- to be done with it rather than struggle through the multitude of colors and styles available today. However, there are ways to go about choosing wisely -- starting with the basics: **privacy, light control, function, and style.**

Privacy.

Unless you live deep in the woods far from prying eyes, you want privacy. To get it, you'll need to choose window treatments that offer **complete opaque covering.** Consider the following types of privacy shades: Fabric or Roller Shades, Curtains and Draperies with linings, Pleated and cellular shades in non-sheer materials, Sheer curtains and draperies with shades underneath, Mini Blinds, wood blinds, and shutters.

Light Control.

This factor has two elements. First, **keeping glare down** is necessary when someone is sleeping in the daytime, watching TV, or working at a desk near a bright window. Second, **UV rays from bright sunlight** will adversely affect fabrics, furnishings, and artwork in your home. Any of the opaque window treatments listed above can also help with light control.

Function.

Window coverings are practically useless without the element of function. **Consider your needs** for window hardware, fit, wand options, placement, and safety considerations. Do you need cord controls on the left to avoid dangling near a baby crib? Will pets and children get tangled in long draperies? How will you operate blinds on very high windows? There are **window treatment solutions** for almost any problem.

Style.

Style is the fun part of window treatments. Here is where you can choose fabrics, colors, and styles that will add to the beauty and enjoyment of your room. **Add interest** to windows by repeating fabrics and colors used in other parts of your room. Or, add a dash of style with contrasting borders, cordings, or fringe. The **unique touches** you add to your window treatments are a reflection of your personal style.

Paying attention to these four elements can give your project a sense of direction, and combining window treatments in intelligent ways can accomplish the necessary functional aspects as well as complete a room's style.

The Holidays Are Coming Time to Call in the Pros!

Many of us will be inviting friends and family into our homes this holiday season. You take care to tidy up the house, cook a delicious meal, put out festive decorations... but something just doesn't look right... no matter how lovely the rest of your home looks, you just can't hide a dirty, spotted carpet.

Instead of rearranging your furniture to hide those unsightly spots, call in your carpet care professional to take care of things for you. We have all the tools and products to give your carpet that like-new look which will really spruce up the rest of your home.

Here's what you can do before we arrive to make the cleaning experience easier:

1. Clear the floor of small objects such as toys, books, lamps, trashcans, etc. Move these items to another room or place them on a counter so they won't get damaged.
2. Make a note of areas that need special attention. We'll do our best to address all areas of concern.
3. Move any pets into a room not being cleaned (such as the bathroom or basement). Our equipment can be noisy, so nervous animals may be happier staying with someone else during our visit.

If you can't find time to squeeze in a professional cleaning before company arrives, we'll be happy to visit after the holidays. We'll take care of any spills and spots your guests left behind so you and your family can enjoy a freshly cleaned carpet!



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