

# Fall Garden Prep Checklist

The best way to ensure a productive garden next spring and summer is to start this fall. Here's a checklist to help you prepare your garden this year for a great gardening season ever next year!



## Step 1: Clear out last season's annuals

- Pull out all annual plants from the garden.\* Harvest fruits and veggies that remain and then pull out the plants from the root.

*\*Cold-hardy veggies like carrots, beets, potatoes, onions, cabbage and kale can be left in the ground until after your first frost. Pull them up before the ground freezes solid.*

- Pull out all weeds.
- Compost any healthy plants and dispose of diseased or pest-ridden plants in a yard waste bag or by burning.
- Save seeds from any viable plants. Dry seeds well, then store and label them for planting next spring.
- Make a plan to use and preserve your end-of-season bounty so nothing goes to waste.

## Step 2: Prune perennials

- Prune perennial, evergreen herbs like rosemary, thyme and sage by  $\frac{1}{3}$ .
- Prune soft perennial herbs like chives, mint, oregano and parsley by cutting them right back to within about an inch of the ground.
- Prune rhubarb by cutting it right back to within a couple inches of the ground.
- Prune ornamental shrubs.\*

*\*Check your specific gardening zone or ask at your local garden centre to find out exactly which plants you should prune in the fall vs. which ones you should prune in the winter or early spring.*

## Step 3: Plant spring bulbs, winter crops & ornamentals

- Plant seed garlic. Plant cloves 2 inches deep and 4 inches apart in rows.
- Plant spring ornamental bulbs like tulips, daffodils, crocuses and hyacinths. Follow planting guidelines for each plant type and variety.

- Sow winter crops like kale, collards, lettuce and other winter greens outside or in greenhouse depending on your garden zone.
- Plant ornamental shrubs and trees. Check with your local garden supply store to find out which specific ornamentals should be planted in fall and which ones can wait until spring.



#### Step 4: Feed your soil

- Add a thick layer of compost or manure to annual beds. Aim for a one or two-inch thick layer on top of soil which will decompose over fall and winter.
- Plant a cover crop or add mulch either in place of or in addition to compost or manure. If using compost or manure, put a layer down first and then sow your cover crop or add mulch on top. Otherwise just sow your cover crop or add mulch directly on soil to create “green manure” that can be tilled into soil in the spring.
- Add a layer of mulch over freshly-planted garlic and spring bulbs to help protect them from the cold as they establish themselves.
- \* Amend soil if necessary. If you are aware of a specific deficiency or imbalance (ie. too acidic or too alkaline), add appropriate soil amendments to balance your soil. You might want to consider having your soil tested if you suspect a specific or major imbalance or nutrient deficiency. Talk to your local garden supply store to find out about specific soil amendments. Otherwise stick to the methods outlined above.



#### Step 5: Tidy up

- Clean off and put away all garden tools laying around.
- Coil up the garden hose and make sure water is off so it doesn't freeze.
- Bring potted plants into greenhouse or indoors to extend their life and prevent pots from freezing and cracking.



#### Step 6: Take some notes

- Record this year's garden layout and results for reference next year. Draw a quick diagram of where things were planted in your garden so you can rotate your crops next year and make note of what worked well, what didn't and how much you planted.
- Make a plan for next year. In-depth garden plans can wait until late winter/early spring, but you might want to make some quick notes now about what you want to try again, what to try differently, where you want to plant certain things and new plant types and varieties you'd like to try. It's never too early to start dreaming!