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Fall is in the air. Pumpkins are everywhere, along with gourds, corn stalks, pansies and violas. Now is a great time to decorate the landscape with the colors of fall. When choosing items for fall color, consider how long the plants will last. Mums are available in a wide range of sizes, colors and flower forms. Don't choose plants that are in full bloom unless you need instant show, or the flowers won't last as long. Instead, choose plants with plenty of flower buds and some color. These plants will flower the longest. While mums are perennials and will come back year after year, many people grow them as annuals, scattering them in the landscape until they have passed their prime, and then discarding.

Summer annuals are still blooming, and will continue until a killing frost. Even if yours are still blooming well, you need to begin planting winter annuals. Pay particular attention to the fall leafy crops—the ornamental and edible kale, cabbage, Swiss chard and beets need time to get a strong root system established before the first killing frost. Pansies and violas are still the standards when it comes to fall and winter color, and there are many options. You can also try snapdragons, dusty miller, dianthus and calendula. We had a mild winter last year, so let's hope for a repeat. Cold winters and/or huge temperatures swings can take their toll. Violas fare better than pansies in our fluctuating winter weather. Some excellent choices include the 'Sorbet' series and the 'Penny' series. Both come in a wide range of colors and are fragrant as well as showy.

Harvest season continues in the fall garden. From the warm season tomatoes and peppers which are still lingering to sweet potatoes, gourds, and winter squash there is still much to be reaped. Pay attention to the weather forecasts. The first frost varies with each season, but on average occurs around the second week of November. Warm season crops typically won't tolerate even a light frost, while the cool season crops can continue to grow all winter with minimal protection. Carrots, turnips and beets can actually be left in the ground over the winter, and harvested as needed. Broccoli, kale, turnip greens and more can grow throughout the winter months and will usually tolerate temperatures around 28 degrees without needing extra protection. If you grow horseradish, be careful how much you leave in the ground over the winter, as it can multiply. If your garden season is finished, good sanitation is important. Don't till in garden refuse, instead compost the old material, unless it is diseased—then dispose of it. Rarely will home compost piles get uniformly hot enough to kill out disease spores. Applying a layer of shredded leaves or grass clippings over the garden will keep it free of weeds in the off season.

By now the houseplants and tropicals that are going to be houseplants for the winter, should be inside or about to make the move. Don't leave them outside too late in the season or they will suffer more during the transition. The best time to move them is

when outside and inside conditions are similar. Don't wait for the night before a killing frost or they will go through a traumatic transition. Don't prune them back too much when making the move, because often the combination of lower light, no humidity and a constant temperature leads to some die-back. Save the severe pruning on summer tropical bloomers until spring when they make the move back outdoors. Do check them for insects before moving them inside, and do a thorough cleaning job.

Outside plants that are permanently planted in containers need a little extra care as we head into the cooler months. No more fertilizer but do water. Just because it is getting cooler outside, doesn't mean you need to go without color in your outdoor containers. The same plants you are planting in the ground can also be in containers and you can add some seasonal color around trees and shrubs in pots. If you just use seasonal color in pots, consider under planting with spring bulbs, with pansies on top. This can add even more color later in the season. Remember that container gardens will need water throughout the winter months, just not as frequently as we watered in the summer.

Leaves are falling in earnest, and while a light covering won't hurt the lawn, don't let them build up so much that they begin to pack down. If you can keep up with it, regular mowing can mulch them enough that you don't have to rake every leaf. Don't let a heavy layer accumulate for too long or it can smother out the lawn grasses. Shredded leaves make an excellent mulch for flower beds and vegetable gardens. Whole and shredded leaves are one of the main component of compost—a rich soil amendment. If you don't have a compost pile, consider starting one now.

Warm season grasses are beginning to go dormant and our mowing season has slowed down, which also means no more fertilizer. If you are plagued by weeds every spring, consider using a pre-emergent herbicide this fall. Don't use a weed and feed, but a separate pre-emergent herbicide. If you had a lot of spring weeds, in addition to the pre-emergent herbicide watch for the early green-up associated with the young weeds in December through February and kill them as they get started with a product containing 2,4-D.

Fall is an ideal time to garden. The days are cooler, there is typically more moisture and we want to be outdoors. Start planting spring blooming bulbs. From now through the end of the year, these bulbs can be planted. Remember that the size of the bulb correlates to the size of the bloom.

If you have perennials that bloom in the spring or summer and they are too crowded, now is a great time to divide them. As the perennials begin to decline, clean up. Remove spent debris, and apply a new layer of mulch. Don't get heavy-handed when mulching. We always want to allow plants to go dormant before adding extra protective mulch. Otherwise, they may rot instead of going dormant. Fall is also an excellent time to plant new perennials. Roots will get established and your chances of blooms in year one is better. Now is also the time to seed wildflowers. Be sure the site is as clean as possible from weeds and other debris.