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WSU Ferry County Extension
350 E. Delaware Ave. #9
Republic, WA 99166
(509) 775-5225, X1116
tammy.folks@wsu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ferry County Fall Gardening Chores

By Diane Tonasket, WSU Ferry County Extension Master Gardener

Yes, fall IS coming and with the cooler weather comes the winding down of our gardens – vegetable and/or flower. Our first frost is likely to occur in the next few weeks. Watch the news and be ready to protect any plants you want to keep to prolong the season. We usually have a week to several weeks after the first killing frost of the season to enjoy the flowers and continue with harvesting our produce.

Continue to **water**; our perennial plants and trees need to go into winter with wet roots. Dry roots allow frost to damage and kill precious trees and beloved perennials.

Weeding is as essential for gardens now as in the spring when our plants are young and beginning to grow and produce. They produce seeds that will remain in the soil and are ready with that first warmth of spring to sprout and torment the gardener that strives for the well-kept garden.

For those of us who love our flowers, **deadheading** will allow us to enjoy more of our flowers as well as enjoy them longer into the season. Leaving a few for seed saving is an option, however one or two of each chosen plant is all that is necessary.

Harvesting the produce from vegetable gardens can be overwhelming this time of year. Canning, drying, storing in root cellars are some ways to preserve our garden treasures. Also, each of our small communities probably has places that excess can be taken to share with others.

For the serious or new gardener, this is an ideal time to walk around your yard and garden. **Take notes and photos** of what did well, any disasters or changes you would like to make. Photos can focus on views that our eyes can overlook.

September Chores-

- Plant garlic; fall planted garlic is larger than spring planted (one less planting task in spring).
- Order fall bulbs – daffodils, tulips, crocus, etc. Buy now for good selection, store for later when cooler.
- Fertilize lawn to develop strong root system for winter. NO ‘weed and feed’ products!
- Mow as necessary, do not scalp.
- Dig, clean and store summer bulbs – dahlias, glads, cannas, begonias
- Divide peonies and irises.
- If outside, clean houseplants, check for insects, repot if necessary; bring indoors.
- Start a new compost pile for all the clean up from gardens.
- Pot up some herbs for the sunny windowsill to use and enjoy through the winter.

October Chores-

- Plant the fall bulbs you ordered and/or bought earlier.
- Drain or blow out your irrigation system to prevent damage to your watering system.
- Leaf raking is a necessary evil; they can kill grass and other plants if too thick and left through the winter.
- Leaf raking is a bonus for those who compost, rich in nitrogen and creates a wonderful compost.

- Mulch permanent gardens, this helps maintain soil structure through the winter.
- Gather fallen fruit beneath trees, dispose of if they contain pests or have diseases, if unaffected, compost.
- Cover your winter root crops with a thick layer of straw if you leave them out for the winter.

November Chores-

- Finish outdoor tasks from the above lists.
- Leave decorative grasses for winter interest, cut back in early spring.
- Create a compost to use during the winter.
- After the ground freezes, some mulch will help stop plants from frost heave, which can kill plants. Small bulbs and coral bells frequently experience this.
- All hoses, connections, sprinklers stored and ready for spring.
- Clean metal trowels and shovels. Sharpen, scour rust off, apply thin layer of oil to prevent rust.
- Sharpen pruners and other cutting tools. Apply oil to moving parts.
- Rub linseed oil into wooden handles after a light sanding.

December chores-

- Check for rodent damage around trees and large shrubs, if you can get to them.
- Any plants brought in to over-winter need to be monitored, watered and trimmed. (Geraniums, verbena, etc.)
- Create seasonal arrangements in some pots or hanging baskets.
- Remember your notes and photos from early fall? Now is the perfect time to pull them out and...
- Enjoy the new garden catalogs and...
- Dream and Plan for next year!

Master Gardeners is a WSU Extension program, which is available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.