



THE GRAPEVINE

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Winter storage of summer bulbs

As cooler temperatures are in the forecast it's time to start thinking about storing those beautiful summer blooming bulbs such as calla lilies, dahlias, cannas, caladiums, gladiolus and others. These beautiful flowers will unfortunately not survive our Kansas winters and need to be stored indoors to be replanted next spring. Actually, the storage organ of the above plants is not a true bulb. Canna and calla lilies are rhizomes, caladium, and tuberous begonias are tubers, gladiolus is a corm, and dahlia is a tuberous rooted plant. With the exception of tuberous begonias, the bulbs can be dug after the first frost has killed the foliage above the ground. Tuberous begonias should be dug before the first frost.

Once the bulbs have been dug allow them to dry for a week in a shady, well ventilated area. Freezing temperatures should be avoided. Remove any excess soil and pack them in peat moss, vermiculite, shredded newspaper or perlite. Make sure the bulbs don't touch so that if one decays, the rot doesn't spread. Dusting them with fungicide before storage will help prevent them from rotting. Place the bulbs in a cool dry area with temperatures between 45-50 degrees except caladiums which should be stored between 50- and 60-degrees F. The hardest part of storing bulbs might be finding a good place to keep them cool. Some people place them against a basement wall farthest from the furnace and insulate them so the wall keeps them cool.

Putting the lawn to bed

Fall is an excellent time of the year to control weeds in your lawn. Next year's dandelions have germinated and right now, all weeds are moving nutrients into their roots to help them make it through the long winter which means broadleaf herbicides will also be taken to the roots. These young plants are small and easily controlled with herbicides such as 2,4-D or combination products (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Choose a day that is 50 degrees or higher as the better the weed is growing; the more weed killer will be moved from the leaves to the roots. Cold temperatures will slow this process but these products will still work at lower temperatures. The best way to prevent weeds in your lawn is to have a thick healthy stand of grass, but that is a conversation for a different time. It is impossible to control 100% of weeds in the lawn and that is OK!

As we prepare to mow the yard for what is hopefully one of the last times of the year it's time to think about preparing your lawn mower ready for its long winters break. Be sure to drain the gasoline from gas powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer to prevent the gas from becoming thick and gummy. Check your spark plug or replace it so you are ready to mow in the spring. If you have a riding lawn mower or one with a battery be sure to remove the battery and clean the terminals to prevent corrosion.

Once you have serviced the engine, be sure to check the blades. Dull blades can damage the grass when you cut it and leave a "feathered" look to the ends of the grass blades. As you sharpen the blades check for damage, if you can't smooth it out the blades need to be replaced. Grind or file the edge of the blade till it is about 1/32 inch as a razor sharp edge can actually lead to a poor cut. Clean the blades and the underside of the mower to remove any matted grass.

If you seeded your yard this fall continue to water it to keep the seedlings growing and ensure they are more likely to survive the winter. If we continue to have rain, a mature lawn won't need much water but we do want to make sure the lawn goes into the winter with moist soil.





Take Away:

- ✿ Apply lawn herbicides as little as possible each year.
- ✿ A one-time, fall application will be most effective at controlling perennial weeds.
- ⚠ Spraying: Wear Boots! Wear Long Sleeves! Wear Gloves! Back AWAY from the application area – DON'T walk INTO it! READ the LABEL! UNDERSTAND the LABEL. These are not chemicals to mess around with. Don't let your children or pets onto a lawn before it dries. Or better yet, until you've cut it one more time.
- ✿ Be sure to service your lawn mower so it's ready to go in the spring.
- ✿ Water your lawn as needed so the soil is moist going into winter.

Preserving pumpkins

Some of my favorite fall decorations are the pumpkins and gourds bought from an annual visit to the local pumpkin patches. If you are like me and can't wait to find the perfect pumpkin early in the year, here are a few tricks to help keep your pumpkins fresh so they last through Halloween if not beyond. Make sure the pumpkin wasn't harvested too early; before the rind developed a hard, waxy layer to keep it from drying out and shriveling. Test the pumpkin with your thumbnail. If it penetrates the fruit easily, it was harvested too early. Pumpkins also keep better in cooler weather. Even mature pumpkins may benefit from a light application of a spray wax such as that used for cars to seal the rind and keep it fresh. Note that carving reduces the longevity of pumpkins with carved pumpkins doing well to last a week.

Fall crafts

Fall is one of my favorite times, especially as the leaves are starting to turn brilliant shades of red, gold and orange. As a child I loved to rake up a big pile of leaves and jump into them, a tradition I hope to pass on to my two-year-old son this fall, but as an adult I've found there are other things to do with those leaves I used to gleefully scatter around the yard. This fall check out some of these crafts and take advantage of Mother Natures beautiful colors to add some lasting beauty in your décor or do a fun activity. If you have kids leaves can be used to paint, make colorful suncatchers or even make cool art pieces.



Make a beautiful fall wreath or garland out of preserved fall leaves. Check out this website for the instructions to make the garland and preserve the leaves:

<https://www.mandysdiycare.com/diy-fall-real-leaf-garland/>

Check out this video to make a cool leaf wreath:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6aFx21Q8TI>

Check out this website for some really cool youth activities:

<https://handsonaswegrow.com/kids-leaf-crafts/>

Upcoming Events-

Kansas Forest Service Tree, Shrub Seedling Sale, September 1 - October 15

Kansas Orchid Society Fall Show and Sale, November 6, 2021

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