

The Grapevine

Putting the Growing Season to Bed

As we enjoyed what maybe some of the last really warm days of the year over the weekend it's hard to believe that the growing season is almost officially over. I have to admit, having lived in North Dakota for the last six years, I have loved the longer warm fall weather (they have already had snow where I lived at this point). Unfortunately, with the end of the growing season it's time to make sure that we have set our gardens and flowerbeds up for success during the next growing season. Just a little time spent now can pay off big in terms of time and work in the spring.

Now is an excellent time to do a soil test and have the results you need to start the growing season. Soil testing has been a topic of other Grapevines so we won't go too in depth this time. With the dry weather we have had over the last week, now is the time to add organic matter to your soil and till it in in preparation for the spring season. It's easier to work the soil when it's dry than wait for it to dry out in the spring. If you follow a no-till system, this is the perfect time to collect leaves, other organic material or plant a cover crop to provide ground cover for your gardening spot next summer. If you haven't read about no-till or Lasagna gardening here is an excellent resource here:



<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/soil-compost/sheet-mulching-aka-lasagna-composting-builds-soil-saves-time>

With the dry weather we have had lately (there is a chance of rain in the forecast for later in the week) be sure you are watering your landscape plants and lawn as needed so there is adequate moisture going into the winter. If you planted any new trees or shrubs this fall it is especially important to water them regularly since they have a limited root system. Even trees and shrubs planted within the last 2 to 3 years are more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant. Evergreens are also more at risk because moisture is lost from the foliage during the winter months. Trees or shrubs planted within the last year can be watered inexpensively with a 5-gallon bucket. Drill a small hole (1/8") in the side of the bucket near the bottom. Fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once more, and you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted two to three years ago will require more water. Soaker hoses are also an excellent option to water your flower beds or other areas. The hoses do tend to water unevenly but hooking both ends up to the faucet can help prevent uneven watering.



Although we haven't had a killing frost yet, at least not in my yard, it's time to think about mulching around perennials to help protect the crowns through the winter. As our roses go dormant this fall it's time to start mounding soil or compost about 8 to 10 inches over the top of the plants to protect the crown during the winter. Mounding of Roses should be finished by Thanksgiving. After the ground has frozen you can add an addition layer of mulch on top. It's best to wait to add the mulch till the ground freezes otherwise mice or other unwelcome critters might make a nest and eat the plants. Other plants such as fall blooming mums should also be covered with much if you cut the stems back after they bloom. I usually wait to trim my perennial plants back, except iris and peonies because of disease issues, until right before they start growing in the spring. This provides habitat for small native bees to lay eggs or overwinter in plus it helps protect the perennials from the extreme cold that we had last winter.

Enjoy the rest of the beautiful fall weather and spend just a little more time enjoying the outdoors. Just a reminder that now is still a good time to fertilize your cool season lawns but not your warm season lawns as they are dormant at this time. Happy Growing!!

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