

# THE GARDENSMITH

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## Fall Gardening Tasks

**Fall is for planting!** The weather has cooled off, but the soil is still warm, and the rain is on its way. Planting in the fall will allow new plants to begin establishing a good root system before they begin their spring growth. Most all plants will do well when planted in the fall; however, frost-tender or borderline hardy plants should be planted in the spring to allow them to establish themselves before the cold, wet, weather sets in. Be sure to water your newly planted plants if we have a dry spell this winter, and don't forget to water plants planted under evergreen trees and other dry areas of the garden. If you need help in deciding what and where to plant don't hesitate to call for a fall or winter on-site consultation!

**Annuals:** Replace warm season annuals with cool season annuals. Winter pansies will bloom through the winter into the spring; they may look "melted" when it is really cold, but will perk up once the temperature rises above freezing.

**Bulbs:** Plant bulbs soon, give them a chance to grow good roots before it gets cold, and before they are forgotten in a bag in the garage! It is important to leave the foliage on bulbs after blooming, it provides food for next years flowers; but, If you don't like the look of ripening/browning bulb foliage consider planting the bulbs in pots set into the ground. Once the bulbs have bloomed, the pots can be lifted and stored out of view until next fall's planting time.

**Perennials:** Most perennials can be divided in the fall, be sure to water the new divisions well. If you don't need all of the plants from the divided clump consider donating the extras to a volunteer organization, like [POPPA inc.](#), that sells plants through The Recycled Garden as a fund raiser for spaying / neutering dogs, cats, ferrets, and rabbits.

**Lawn:** If you let your lawn go dormant over the summer, weeds will stand out a nice green against the brown lawn grass, this is an excellent time to hand dig or spot spray the weeds; there is really no need to use herbicide sprays or "weed and fertilize" products on the entire lawn. Late summer into early fall is an excellent time to reseed or plant a new lawn, If your lawn gets wet and muddy in the winter, now is the time to core aerate the soil; aerating will also help irrigation water sink into the soil next summer. These links from the Oregon State University's Extension Service have good information on caring for lawns in the Portland area. Check out the following links: [Maintaining a Healthy Lawn](#), [Fertilizing Lawn](#), and [Planting or Renovating a Lawn](#).

**Vegetable Garden:** Clean up the garden as the crops finish up. Litter in the vegetable garden can act as a host for disease and shelter garden pests. Cover areas not being used for winter crops with compost or straw mulch, or plant a cover crop.

**Pest Control:** Watch for rodents looking for a warm winter home; block entrances they may use to get into your home and out buildings. Bait for slugs with a pet safe bait once the wet weather returns; over wintering slugs will be the parents of next springs slugs! Late September is an excellent time to apply beneficial soil nematodes; these microscopic critters eat the larval stages of several garden pests (root weevil, crane fly, fleas, and others), and they don't harm the good guys (earth worms).

**Weeds:** Keep up with the weeding. Perennial weeds can grow an extensive root system over the winter and be hard to pull in the spring. Annual weeds can flower and then send out seeds to sprout once the weather warms up.

**Drainage:** Prepare for winter rains. Clean the gutters, check the down spouts, and rout rain water away from the house. Venture outside during a downpour to look for drainage problems before they have a chance to do serious damage. If your landscape has a drainage problem, look for a qualified contractor in the "drainage contractors" section of the yellow pages.