

## October Garden TO DO

Transplant herbs from planter boxes on the deck into smaller containers to bring inside before winter weather hits.

Make Pumpkin Puree. Pie pumpkins are plentiful and inexpensive. Freeze enough at the start of the season to keep you in pies through the holidays and beyond.

Drain the Rain Barrel. Make sure the hoses are detached, debris is removed and valves have been left open to protect your rain barrel from ice damage in the cold weather ahead.

Get Garden Soil Tested. Fall is a good time to get soil analyzed so any deficiencies can be addressed before planting in the spring.

Pick and Inspect Gourds. Choose pumpkins and squash that don't have blemishes or cuts to keep them fresher longer. Place a flat rock beneath pumpkins, gourds and decorative squash to prevent direct contact with the soil. This helps limit insect activity and keeps moisture away.

Bring in Houseplants for winter. Time for tropical plants and houseplants to head indoors for winter. Ferry them in a few at a time, starting with the most tropical ones.

Overwinter fuchsia by trimming back green growth and placing plants in a cool room (close heating vents) with a window. If the room has carpet, lay a sheet beneath plants to catch dropping blooms and fruits, which will stain carpeting.

Take cuttings from annual herbs and annual flowers and place in damp sand to water to root (repot later for spring gardening).

Start cutting down perennials, especially any that multiply quickly by setting seed. Examples include goldenrod and boltonia.

Cut back perennials gone to seed. While you're at it, collect seeds in paper envelopes, not plastic bags. Be sure to have a marker nearby to label them. Save seeds from any heirloom (open-pollinated) plants. If you have too many seeds, host a neighborhood seed swap.

Don't clean up everything. Leave some perennial berries and seeds in the garden for overwintering birds. Think about planting more shrubs as cover or as food for birds.

Keep Watering. Continue to water if you're not receiving rain. Plants need water to survive even as temperatures moderate.

Shop for Bulbs. Bulbs are in stores now. I shop now for the best selection but wait to plant until early next month.

Keep Mowing. Continue to mow with the bag attached, gathering chopped leaves for compost and mulch.

Protect Plants From Frost. As temperatures take a nosedive, I monitor weather reports daily. When frost is in the forecast, I cover late-to-ripen winter squash and houseplants still outside.

Divide irises and daylilies.

Cut back perennials and rake up any foliage left on the ground.

Swap out depleted summer plants with cool-weather plants in containers.

Plant beds of pansies. Once they're established, feed them with a bloom-promoting fertilizer.

Use ryegrass and crimson clover in unplanted areas for a winter cover crop. They are great to help hold and revitalize the soil in raised beds. You can also lay in a layer of compost for tilling under in the Spring.

Take advantage of cool weather and warm soil: plant a few trees and shrubs. Water them every day until the ground freezes.

Sources: HGTV.com; Chicago Botanic Garden

