

Hands down (pardon the gardener's pun), autumn is everyone's favourite time to garden. Comfortably cool, often sunny, bug-free, these autumn days allow us to perform our gardening tasks with zest. Most of the chores required of you this time of year are of a housekeeping nature, although there is still important planting to be done.



Border patrol: the garden in autumn

One or two days dedicated to your fall garden will reap you big time rewards next spring and summer. So grab your garden tools, put on your favourite old sweater, and get down and dirty.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Most perennials love to be divided in the fall, especially peony, iris, hosta, phlox, daylily, and black-eyed susan. Lift the roots carefully out of the ground, then divide into two or more sections. Each new clump should have some strong roots and several growing points. Some root systems can be pried apart with garden forks, others will need to be cut with a sharp clean spade. Dividing is a great way to start new plantings – or to renew an old favourite. As a general rule, you can divide a healthy plant every 3 or 4 years. Just be sure to water the newly planted divisions well and often before the first frost.

HOUSEKEEPING

You may not be spending as much time in the garden these days, but keep a watchful eye for anything that looks diseased – blackspot on roses, or mildewed leaves on lilac, for example, and discard these carefully. And pull up and compost any decayed hosta leaves and browning annuals. But don't be too tidy in your fall garden; some spent plants look wonderful in the winter, and provide protection and food (seed pods) for our birds. So keep your garden shabbily chic.

KEEP PLANTING

If you haven't already, now is the time to add glorious asters and goldenrod to your plant roster. They are the backbone floral colour of the fall garden, and will perform every year for you. Coppery-toned sedums are also perennially hardy and gorgeous. Make sure you have some shrubs and vines that turn brilliant scarlet for you; sumac, burning bush, and Virginia creeper always do the trick. Top it off with a pot of colourful mums plopped into an empty spot.

LOVE THOSE LEAVES!

Tree leaves are like gold to the gardener, so if you have some mature trees, you're in wonderful luck. Guerrilla gardeners make annual "leaf runs" through mature neighbourhoods, collecting leaves that have been raked to the curbside for disposal. If you're lucky enough to have your own leaves, find a composting corner or spread them over your cleaned flowerbeds for the winter. To break leaves down even faster (especially oak leaves), toss them into a large clean garbage can and run your string trimmer through the pile to shred the leaves.

PLANT STINKY BULBS

Fall is the time to plant your spring bulbs. Look for stinky bulbs – alliums, fritillaria, muscari, and of course narcissus (which encompasses the huge daffodil family). These bulbs are largely trouble-free, will come up reliably for years, and are (happily) despised by squirrels and other rodents, who hate the oniony odour. A sprinkling of these bulbs, in fact, will help keep pests away from tulips and hyacinths (two of a squirrel's favourite treats).

DRAW A MAP

Autumn is the perfect time to draw a map of your garden. Even if you think you will remember where various plants are, you won't. Also, you will be proud of yourself in the spring when you see where you have placed identification markers for your perennials. This way, you will not accidentally pull them up in April and May, thinking that they are weeds. Even experienced gardeners can make this mistake. When all is done, settle into the garden with a warm beverage and a good book – knowing your garden has been tucked into bed for the season!



Kim Gibbons, AMP

Mortgage Agent

FSCO Lic. M08001363

t 416-400-8107

f 1-866-827-9671

e kim@mortgagesuperhero.com

w www.mortgagesuperhero.com

