

The Garden Corner

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Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

Here it is October and our first frost date of October 15th looks more like a guess than a prediction. If you have gardening plans you were thinking of putting off until spring, you might want to reconsider and “go for it”. Even if we turn to winter in an instant, the ground will remain warm for several weeks giving newly planted material plenty of time to acclimate and prepare for the colder temperatures.

Activities such as planting trees, or bushes, or other perennials can be done up to the time the ground freezes.

Some experts claim by planting in the fall the plant’s roots have a wonderful opportunity to begin development and, in fact, develop so extensively that by spring they have achieved almost two years of growth instead of one! If you decide to put in that plant you’ve been thinking about, I would add one suggestion: If we encounter a “hard freeze warning” followed by relatively warm days, cover your newly planted jewel to protect it from the cold. Obviously, once winter arrives and the ground freezes, there is no need to continue to cover the plant. While it is too early to begin winter maintenance on equipment, there are some other timely tasks to be considered. Did you know now is prime time for moles to be raising a new batch of soil digging critters? If you don’t like having the raised trails left behind by a scavenging, merry mole, locate a straight path and insert a poison worm from Tomcat Mole Killer into the tunnel. If you have moles, there’s a better than even chance you also have voles. I use Sweeney’s Mole & Gopher poison peanuts to handle the voles. Sometimes I get confused as to what each of these underground criminals damage. Just remember moles eat meat (worms and grubs) and voles are vegetarians (bulbs and plant roots). And, here is an early reminder for spring. If your lawn suffers from grub damage, an application of Scotts GrubEx in the spring will go a long way towards getting rid of the grubs that produce the Japanese Beetle and the June Bug.

Some fortunate few leave summer bulbs in the ground and buy and replant next year. I have always found that to be an expensive alternative to digging and drying bulbs and storing them until the warmth returns. To insure all goes well with storing your bulbs, wait to dig them until after the first frost. The aboveground part of the plant will have turned to mush and is easily removed. Once the bulb has been dug, either wash or brush off the dirt. Now that the bulbs are clean, place them in an area where they can dry (approximately two weeks). Make certain while the bulbs are drying that they do not touch one another. When the bulbs are dry, they can be stored in a cool location free from freezing with a perfect temperature of around 50 degrees. The number one reason for failure in bulb storage is wetness. To guard against this from happening, you must do two things: 1) Make sure the bulbs are dry, and 2) place bulbs in something to keep the moisture away; e.g., peat moss or sand.

Any questions/comments are always welcome. Write to: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I’ll get right back with you.