

October in the garden 2018

CHORES

GARDEN CLEAN-UP- Start to **Pull out dying vegetable plants and dispose them or compost them. Do not put any diseased plants into your compost piles.** Any vacant beds can now get amended with compost, which is a good source of organic matter. Also fall is a great time to re-mineralize your soil as the plants use up the minerals in the soil. I use Azomite. But you could use other rock dusts. You can put it on either in the fall or wait till spring and lightly turn into the soil. This is something you might do every few years but not every year.

START A COMPOST PILE- Make a new compost pile and start to cook it now before winter sets in so it will be ready by spring. I use blood meal to kick start my pile. If you don't like animal sources, you can use cottonseed meal which is almost as high in nitrogen as blood meal. Use leaves, coffee grounds, and healthy dead plants in the compost pile along with egg shells and non-meat kitchen scraps.

IMPORTANT-Avoid horse manure unless you know that doesn't have herbicides in it. This is now a problem in our area. The only way to know is for you or the owner of the hay to contact their hay farmer to make sure the farmers are not spraying their hay crops with herbicides.

VERMICOMPOST BINS- Continue to feed and water your worm composting piles. Bring plastic worm composting boxes inside. If worms live outside, cover with 6-8 inches of straw. Continue to feed throughout winter.

WATERING SYSTEMS- Disconnect hoses and turn off drip systems to gardens when a **hard freeze** is imminent. I do not blast air through lines and have never had a blow out when it freezes BUT I do take off the timers as their little manifolds inside can freeze and crack.

VEGETABLE GARDENS-PLANTING-Garlic/shallots-October is the perfect month to plant garlic and shallots. Plant now for a bumper crop in early summer. Planting in the fall gives the roots a head start for next spring without a lot of top growth. Work some compost into your soil and loosen it up a bit, plant the biggest cloves pointy side up and cover with 2-3 inches of soil, then cover with 4-6 " of straw for the winter but don't forget to water in the winter. Maybe once every 2 weeks unless we get snow, in which case you are off the hook for watering.

VEGETABLE GARDENS-HOW TO HARVEST

Beans- This year I grew a lot of dry beans. These would be beans like pinto beans or Italian dry beans. Harvest dry beans when the pods are dry. Then bring them inside and shell them later.

Beets/Carrots-Harvest as you need them but be sure to get them out of the ground before the ground freezes in December.

Winter Squash/pumpkins-Harvest AFTER the first light frost. This will make them sweeter but **don't wait till we get a hard freeze**. They will deteriorate. Most winter squashes will last several months and some even longer.

Tomatoes-Any plants with green tomatoes SHOULD be picked **BEFORE the first frost** and brought inside to finish ripening. Some people wrap each tomato individually in newspaper-I don't do that. Some people pull the plant and hang it upside down in their garage-I don't do that. I have a pretty simple method. I put tomatoes in paper bags, 2 rows deep with a slice of apple and fold the bag so no light gets in. Apples produce ethylene gas. Most fruits produce ethylene gas naturally- ethylene gas promotes ripening and by adding the apple slice you help speed up the ripening process. Every few days, open your bags and sort the tomatoes out according how ripe they are. I.e.: all green ones stay in one bag and those that are starting to change color go into other bags according to ripeness.

Asparagus- Wait for the fronds to turn yellow probably in late October or November, then cut back yellowing asparagus foliage to within 3 inches of the ground. Cover with 4" of straw for the winter. Be sure to water in the winter if we don't get any snow.

Peppers-Most peppers will slow down in October and when it does freeze at night, they will be done like tomatoes. Pick before they freeze.

Potaatoes-Dig up late-season potatoes. Give them a couple of weeks to cure in a cool, dark pantry or shelf before storing them for the winter.

FRUIT GARDENS

Raspberries-In spring I planted bare root variety of raspberries called Polana. I purchased them through Nourse Nursery online. I can hardly believe the little scrawny bare roots have turned into 3' plants with lots of raspberries in their first year. They are a fall bearing variety that can be cut back to 6 inches in early spring.

Fruit Trees-Autumn is an ideal time to plant many varieties of fruit trees. Talk to *Tooley's Trees* in Truchas or our local nurseries about what varieties to plant in the fall. Be sure to water all new trees throughout winter, This will give them a head start for spring. If we don't get any snow and ground doesn't freeze then continue to water ALL fruit trees throughout winter.

WATERING FORMULA FOR TREES

FOR NEW TREES-

To know how many gallons to water a tree per week- measure the tree trunk 3-4 feet up from ground-measure around the tree trunk and that's the circumference around the trunk. Divide that number by 3 and water 10 gal of water per inch. Example-a tree measures 3 inches around. Divide 3 by 3. That equals 1 inch. Multiply by 10 gal per inch. So $10 \text{ gal} \times 1$ equals 10 gal of water per week.

FOR MATURE OLDER TREES-

Figure it out as above and cut water in half. So a 9 inch circumference divided by 3 would be 3 inches. Multiply by 10 gal an inch. That equals 30 gal of water and then divide by 2 (cut in half). So that mature tree would need 15 gallons of water.