

## YEAR ROUND GARDENING

# OCTOBER GARDENING CALENDAR

By Eileen Tully, Colorado Master Gardener

**Prepare for winter** is the byword in October. In the garden world 'winter' is signaled by the first killing frost.

A light freeze of 29 to 32 degrees Fahrenheit will kill very tender plants. To extend the season you can cover the most tender plants at night with a sheet or other lightweight protective covering. Be sure to remove the covering first thing in the morning. You may even successfully protect plants with a moderate freeze of 25 to 28 degrees Fahrenheit.

If your containers are moveable they can be put in a protected spot like a garage then moved back to the garden when the weather warms up. If you have room indoors cut back a favorite potted geranium to three inch stems and put it in a sunny window. It will grow and bloom before next spring when it can be brought back outside.

The first hard frost -- 24 degrees and colder signals the end of the growing season. Most herbaceous perennials will not be able to tolerate weather that cold.

### Garden to-do list:

- Early October, stop deadheading roses and reduce water to encourage them to go into dormancy.
- All month prune dead, broken or diseased branches from trees and shrubs.
- Before a hard freeze, pick and ripen green tomatoes indoors.
- Save seeds of your favorite annuals but don't expect an exact replication of your current plant. (note the picture of zinnias). Zinnia seeds saved from a



*Photo courtesy of Eileen Tully*

dwarf plant with ivory flowers produced a wide variety of zinnias from the tall California giants to pom-pom zinnias. All saved seeds should be stored in a cool dry location.

- Flowers like snapdragons, alyssum, marigolds, violas, portulaca, and cosmos are excellent re-seeders. Do not cultivate the soil around these plants if you want more of them next season.
- Pick pumpkins, gourds and winter squash by mid-October, or before the first frost, whichever comes first.
- Plant garlic now for harvesting next summer.
- Cover asparagus and rhubarb beds with 3 to 4 inches of mulch.
- Dig up and store in a dry location tender bulbs such as cannas, dahlias and gladiolus.
- Parsley can be dug, divided and potted to grow in a sunny window indoors all winter.
- Continue to plant spring bulbs. Allium and fritillaria are two of the more unusual bulbs that do well in our area. If deer are problem in your garden check deer resistance of bulbs before you purchase.
- After fall harvest, summer bearing raspberry canes can be cut back to the ground.)
- Clean, sharpen and oil tools and equipment before storing them for winter.
- Drain or blow out your irrigation system. Set up a hose system at your water spigots for important winter watering on mild days. If you make it easy to get at you're more likely to water over winter.

**Lawns:** Fertilize your lawn mid-to-late October with a winterizing fertilizer. Experts consider this the most important fertilization of the year. If your lawn looks thin, weak, or scraggly, core aeration in October will improve lawns that have thatch build up or show signs of soil compaction.

*When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions by visiting [ask.extension.org](http://ask.extension.org) any time day or night. Follow the El Paso County Master Gardeners on [www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC/](https://www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC/).*