

Ready for fall....

With the sunshine we are enjoying it is hard to believe that fall has arrived, though evidence can be seen in the falling leaves and the chrysanthemum blooms. There is still time to enjoy the garden but there is also a lot of work to

do to get it ready for winter. Autumn in the garden can be as busy as spring. Some chores are easy and pleasant such as planting spring bulbs, cutting the last of the summer flowers or harvesting herbs. Other jobs can be hard work such as lifting dahlia tubers for storage, digging and dividing perennials or preparing new garden beds. One of the nice things about autumn cleanup jobs is the cooler weather which makes it easier for working and a good time for planting.



Before starting any cleanup work, take a walk around your garden and really look at it. Did it perform the way you wanted it to? Make notes about the best and the worst areas, what you liked and what you didn't like. Look at the condition of your perennials. Are they getting too big for the spot where they are? Are they getting hollow in the middle? How did your containers and baskets fare this year? Is there something new you'd like to try next year? Now is the time to think about some changes.

Don't be too tidy when cleaning up the garden. You don't want to cut everything to the ground because it means that the heart of the perennial is exposed to the freezing temperature which could kill it. Leave some of the seed heads on the rudbeckia or sedum, even the hosta flowers for the birds to enjoy. Clear out the annuals and any perennials that have soft mushy leaves as you don't want to provide any hiding for the bugs. Rake the leaves off the grass but mulch them for topdressing your flower beds instead of sending bags of leaves to the garbage.

Planting bulbs now will provide spring colour. Try planting some mini- daffodils and muscari in the containers under the kale & winter pansies. Or plant some lily of the valley in a pretty terra cotta pot, top with sphagnum moss and then fill with cuttings of evergreens and holly for the winter. In the spring when the shoots of the lily of the valley start to show remove the moss and evergreen branches and enjoy.