

Your yard may be looking a bit jaded at this time of year, as leaves begin to turn brown and plants wilt as temperatures drop. You can rejuvenate your yard until frost by adding some chrysanthemums, dead-heading dahlias and other flower heads, working over your lawn, raking the mulch over and cleaning out weeds.

Walk around your garden now and make a note of trees and shrubs that are overgrown and will need pruning. Take a look at your trees and see where the shade falls and what can be done to help plants that are shaded. Make notes now so that when winter arrives you'll be able to see where to prune and trim. In another couple of months, winter will be here, and you will be able to see the bones of the garden, making it easy to get organized for next season, but unless you note problem areas now, you'll be lost during winter.

**In your flower garden**

Order and plant your spring bulbs for next season. Daffodils, crocus, hyacinth and fritillaries can all be planted and mulched. If you have a problem with animals digging the bulbs, put chicken wire over the bed and cover it with mulch. Deadhead and weed as needed. But stop fertilizing right around now to give plant growth time to harden off. Label your dahlias now while you can still see the flowers to be sure that you have correctly identified tubers for next year.

**Indoor plants**

While your indoor plants are outdoors, knock them out of the pots to check which are root bound and in need of repotting.



**The Island Garden**

By Roger Marshall

Check all your indoor plants and repot as necessary. Remember that when you bring your plants inside they will have a growth spurt as the indoor heat hits them. Make your first spraying of insecticide (dormant oil for organic gardeners) to get rid of unwanted pests before bringing the plants indoors. You'll need to spray them again in two to three weeks, then bring the plants inside.

**Your lawn**

Hit the lawn with a fall fertilizer to help grass roots to grow while the ground is still warm. The grass may not grow as fast at this time of year, but by strengthening the roots you'll have a better lawn next year. Try to rake leaves off the lawn while it is still growing to help the grass stay strong. If you have any bare patches, you can seed them during the fall. My experience is that fewer weeds grow in the fall, which gives better grass. Jamestown Hardware has a variety of grass seeds. If you pick up a pound or two you can sprinkle seeds on bare patches and rake them in at any time.

**In your vegetable garden**

Harvest pumpkins and squash before raccoons and other animals attack them. Make sure you have cleaned out dead corn stalks and

other debris from growing beds. Harvest potatoes and onions if you haven't already done so. Anything you leave in the ground will start to grow again next year.

If you've grown onions let them dry for a few weeks before storing. Yellow onions store well, but Ailsa Craig and other giant onions should be used fairly soon after harvesting. (Hint: onion soup uses a lot of onions, as does stuffed onions and onion and olive pie.) We have about six weeks until first frost so that should be enough time to get some lettuce, spinach, and parsley if you start your seeds right now. If you leave the spinach and parsley in the ground it will grow again next spring and you can harvest it just before it goes to seed. Buy your garlic and prepare the garlic bed now. In two or three weeks you should have your garlic ready to go into the ground. In six weeks or so you should mulch the garlic with ground leaves, untreated grass or straw for the winter. Pot up chives, thyme, parsley, and other herbs to bring indoors for the winter.

**Fruit trees**

If you have kept up a conscientious spraying program your apples and pears should be harvestable right now. Try to pick your fruit and store before wasps and bugs get into it.

Check the bark on your fruit trees to ensure it is not being chewed by animals. You might want to buy some plastic bark protectors to stop deer from chewing the bark on trees. If they chew around the trunk, called girdling, they can kill the tree.

**Soft fruit.**

Not much you can do with raspberries, blackberries, black currants and red currants right now, but grapes are coming strongly, and you will need to keep an eye open to pick them at exactly the right moment.

**Shrubs**

Stop pruning privet, forsythia, and boxwood hedges around now to give the plant time to harden off new growth before frost comes. You can prune your holly now, but why not wait until just before Christmas when you can use the prunings around the home.

**In the greenhouse**

Heated greenhouses should be cleaned by wiping down with a solution of bleach and water. I like to set up an isolation area for new plants coming into the greenhouse, but you may not have space to do so. For smaller plants, you can use a 20-gallon aquarium tank, but put it in the shade. For unheated greenhouses, start lettuce, Chinese greens, spinach, kale, carrots, and broccoli now. The idea is to get the greens as large as possible before the weak sun halts growth.

**Water gardens**

Plan what you are going to do with any fish and plants you might have in your outdoor pond. Smaller fish often will not last the winter outdoors. If you set up an indoor aquarium, make sure it is large enough for your fish and plants and that the water is of the same ph as the pond water. If you have a large pond, larger fish will survive when the water freezes, but beware of smashing a hole in the ice to get air to your fish. The impact may kill your fish.



Kathleen DeCubellis took her grandsons Preston Kerman, 2 and Aiden Kerman, 5, to the shoreline to gather sea glass and shells last weekend. Photo by Vic Richardson

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