



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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PBOG crew plants perennials

Greetings,

As the calendar turns to Fall, we welcome cooler air, more frequent rain, and the chance to rework our gardens. I keep seeing signs around nurseries that say "Fall is for Planting," and I couldn't agree more strongly. Take advantage of this season to plant, divide and transplant now! Get a jump start on Spring, when there is always too much to do at once. Soils are still warm and roots establish quickly now.

### **How Does Potassium Help My Soil and My Plants?**

We've just finished a round of soil testing as we get ready for soil amending in another month. I will begin planning specific amending programs in the near future. Below is a brief discussion of one of the common issues we address.

Many soils in this region show a deficiency of Potassium, a key nutrient necessary for strong stems, dark green leaves, and exuberant blooms and fruits. In hot weather, plants quickly take up Potassium as they work to survive the heat. By fall, we're often left with insufficient Potassium for the coming growing season.

What to do? Potassium needs to be added to the garden beds in the form of minerals such as Greensand, Potash or Kelp Meal. Our high fungal compost also supplies a healthy dose of Potassium. These materials stimulate biological activity and improve soil structure. We follow the NOFA Organic Land Care Standards when applying Potassium, as an oversupply can cause

## Fall Watering Tips

We recommend changing settings on automatic irrigation systems to a Fall Schedule now. This means less frequent watering and for shorter cycles. Keep the system running as long as possible this fall if you have new plantings or have transplanted woody plants.

Click [here](#) for a copy of our fall watering tips.



Lantana

problems with soil balance. Sometimes it takes several years to bring the Potassium up to the proper level.

Fall is the best time for soil amending, when the roots of woody plants are putting on active growth. Vegetable, perennial and annual gardens appreciate this treatment, too, as the harvest season signals fall cleanup.



Greensand

## "Mad Stash" - How to Save Tender Plants from Frost

The time is fast approaching for Jack Frost to drag his brush across our region. Temperatures have dipped as low as 36 degrees here in Townsend. I have already sprayed my begonia collection with insecticidal soap and brought it indoors for winter, as these plants don't care much for weather below 40 degrees! It's a good idea to cut these plants back a bit now, as they will soon begin to drop leaves while they acclimate to indoor conditions.

I'm waiting a bit, watching the forecast. When it dips down that low again, that will be the signal to make some hard decisions. All the plants I decide to save will get the same insecticidal soap spray treatment to kill off any insect pests that may have decided to lay eggs or take shelter under leaves, along stems or at the crowns. I cut them all back hard before the spraying treatment.

Christmas cactus and potted amaryllis can come indoors now. These plants need a period of darkness and no water for 6 weeks. A basement or unheated garage is ideal. Then bring them into the house, remove dead foliage and resume watering to stimulate winter blossoms.

In past years I've had success overwintering scented geraniums, lantana standards, plumbago, succulents, flowering maple and lily of the Nile. They will come into the house in that order. The scented geraniums and plumbago prefer some sunlight in my bay window and water about once a week. The lantana likes to winter over in the basement with a ray of sun coming in from a casement

window. I water it whenever it dries out and I'm passing by!

Succulents can stand winter life in partial sun,

needing very little water as they are usually rather saturated after early fall rains. Flowering maple and Lily of the Nile come in last, when temperatures are regularly at 32 degrees. See my separate tip sheet on [Lily of the Nile](#).



Lily of the Nile



Dahlias add so much color to the summer landscape

This year I'll be saving small bay and olive tree standards that were gifts earlier this summer. They will get a prime spot in the sun. You may want to try saving rosemary, but be forewarned that it likes high humidity on its leaves and doesn't care much for central heating, conditions that are hard to replicate in modern homes. Many of us overwater it in an attempt to keep it happy, and it responds by turning brown! Cool and bright is the guideline for this plant, between 30 and 40 degrees. Remember that rosemary can survive outside until temperatures dip to 10 degrees, so keep harvesting and enjoying it outside through the onset of winter!

Leave dahlias, gladiolus, peacock orchids and other tender bulbs in the ground until frost. Then cut spent foliage away and dig up the

bulbs. More on this in our next issue!

[Let me know](#) if our staff can be helpful with insecticidal soap spray or advice on preserving any tender plants in your own collection.

## Tips for Growing Blueberries, A Great Four Season Plant

Many people grow blueberries with the plan of picking their own fruit for breakfast!

This "superfood" is high in antioxidants, said to help reduce inflammation.

Birdwatchers plant them to attract more birds to the garden. Others like the red, copper and bronzed leaves in fall and reddish stems in the winter garden.



Blueberries waiting to be picked!



Blueberry bush fall foliage

Whatever your reason, blueberries have their quirks. Here are a few tips from the field:

- Prune the oldest stems out from November through February to regenerate the plant, taking no more than one-third away at a time
- Topdress lightly with compost yearly (spring or fall)
- Mulch to suppress weeds and conserve moisture (needed for good fruit set) using pine needles, shredded leaves, or aged woodchips
- Test soil and amend (if needed) to maintain high levels of Sulfur, Magnesium and Iron (the latter isn't a problem in New England)
- Space highbush types properly (at least 6' apart) for easy picking as the plants mature

## Final Call for Spring Bulbs

I have placed the bulb orders and expect them to ship during the first week of October. We can add to the orders right now if you are still interested in planting bulbs this fall for beauty next spring. See [www.springdisplays.com](http://www.springdisplays.com) (password is shovel) for inspiration and ideas!



We'll plant bulbs between Columbus Day and Veteran's Day.

### Quick Links

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- Plant at least two varieties for good cross pollination and fruit set
- Plant in full sun for best fruiting

## September Is the Time for....

- Dividing overgrown perennials that bloom in spring and summer
- Transplanting perennials and shrubs
- Renovating or planting new areas of the garden
- Finalizing bulb orders
- Cleaning up spent areas of the vegetable garden promptly
- Sowing cover crops in the vegetable garden to improve soil structure and suppress weeds
- Reducing watering frequency and duration on automatic irrigation systems
- Keeping up with weeding and deadheading to prolong bloom
- Spraying tender tropicals and annuals with insecticidal soap before bringing indoors for winter

There are so many outdoor opportunities for fun in New England this fall. Hope you are taking advantage of them.

Please [let us know](#) how we can help you with your fall planning.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla

[Forward email](#)



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