

Is there ever a good season to be a lazy gardener? Is there ever a time to just allow the plants to do their thing while you sit back and enjoy their splendor? It depends on the garden, but in Kansas, not really. There is always a task for the gardener who wants a project and fall is no exception. Some fall tasks are less necessary than others, but hard work now helps to ensure your fall and spring gardens perform at their peak!

- Maintain your vegetables. Summer vegetables and other plants in your garden still need care into the cooler weather. Depending on the temperature, watering can decrease in frequency but should still be done! For warm-season vegetables (tomatoes, peppers and okra) a row cover can keep the plants producing longer, even through minor cold snaps.
- Don't forget your flowers. Daylilies, peonies and hosta can all be divided in the fall. Dividing plants helps produce more flowers in coming years! Deadheading your flowering plants will help extend their blooms even into fall.
- New vegetables can be added as well! Most of the plants you had in your spring garden are perfect for your fall garden. Cucumbers, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, summer squash, leafy greens, beets, carrots and beans can all be grown in the fall. If the weather is still warm in the early fall keep these plants well-watered as they can tolerate heat, but not drought.
- Pest control for some insects is ideal for fall. Hand-picking bagworms and blister beetles and spraying for Elm leaf beetle or Mimosa webworm can be done in the fall. If you're seeing unfamiliar fall pests, make sure to find out if fall is the best time for control methods. By the time you see the damage, the insect may already be dormant or in a less fragile life stage.
- Plant your trees! Fall is a wonderful time to plant trees and shrubs. It allows the plants to establish root systems without dealing with the stress of summer heat. Make sure to keep newly planted trees and shrubs well-watered even through the winter.
- Amend your soil! Fall and spring are both great times to have your lawn and garden soil tested. If you aren't planting in the fall (or perhaps not in the area you're testing) you have the additional benefit of being able to amend the soil as well! Amending soil in the fall allows those amendments (compost, lime, fertilizer) to interact and begin working in the soil before plants need to access nutrients.
- Start your compost pile. I know you've been meaning to get your compost pile started but fall is the ideal time to do it. With lots of leaves and plants to clean up your fall compost pile will be well established before you know it!
- Don't forget your spring bulbs! Allium, anemone, crocus, iris and tulips all need to be planted in the fall. Many spring bulbs are the first sprigs of color in our flower beds so don't overlook

planting a few types of bulbs! If you have spring flowering bulbs in your bed already, October is the time to fertilize them!

- Take care of your tools. Hand tools should be cleaned and put away at the end of fall, but cooler weather may mean your weed eater and lawn mowers are ready for their winter rest. Don't forget to empty the gas tank as gas can deteriorate over time. Clear air filters, sharpen blades, replace tines and fix any broken parts. It's easier to fix repairs now than dealing with them in the spring!

Don't let fall gardening tasks take away from enjoying your outdoor space. No gardener accomplishes every task or project they hope too, there's just never enough time. Instead, prioritize your work by how you want to use your space. If vegetables aren't your interest, spend more time on flowers. Maybe you have dogs who tear up your lawn so seeding new grass wouldn't pay off for you. Whatever your interests or space, a little time and effort can create unique gardens for you and your loved ones to enjoy!

For more information on compost, planting trees, watering your garden and more please visit www.shawnee.ksu.edu.