

November 7, 2022

November Tasks

"The wind that makes music in November corn is in a hurry. The stalks hum, the loose husks whisk skyward in half-playing swirls, and the wind hurries on... A tree tries to argue, bare limbs waving, but there is no detaining the wind."

— Aldo Leopold

I spent the first weekend in November enjoying a Badger game and then attempting to finish harvesting the last of my garden produce. With this warm weather, I'm still picking lots of broccoli and kale. I finally picked the Poblano peppers and some tomatoes in my green house. I haven't yet harvested my Brussel sprouts. I know I will have to soon but maybe I can wait until Thanksgiving and serve them for dinner. I should be done with most of my garden tasks, it's been hard for me to complete all of them as I've been trying to enjoy as much of the nice weather as possible. However, the more frequent winds remind us that winter will eventually arrive and there are some tasks you're going to want to get completed before it gets too cold to work outside comfortably.

Take time to prepare the soil for any new perennial beds so they are ready to plant next spring. Once the ground finally freezes, mulch perennial beds with shredded leaves or other coarse material. Take care if you have self-sowing annuals in those beds or elsewhere to not smother them with heavy mulch. Clean out window boxes and outdoor planters and fill them with seasonal greens and berries

In the vegetable garden, finish cleaning up the garden and disposing of garden materials on your compost pile. If you have diseased plant material, take care not to put it on the compost pile as it will only harbor the diseases until next year. Mulch the asparagus bed with chopped leaves or straw to protect the crowns. My strawberries are interplanted with my asparagus, so they get mulched at the same time. Harvest the last of hardy vegetables such as Chinese cabbage, Brussel sprouts, and kale. These can continue to produce until a hardy frost below 25 degrees. Carrots, parsnips, and leeks can remain in the ground for winter harvesting if you mulch them with about a foot of straw. Don't forget to mark their location though. Drain the gas from your tiller and lawn mower after their last use for the season. Finally take soil samples for testing if you haven't done it in a few years. Cut back any summer-bearing raspberry or blackberry canes that fruited this year.

If the ground is dry, water your trees, shrubs, and especially evergreens deeply before the ground freezes. Prop up any heavy evergreen branches to prevent snow damage. Wrap young trees, including fruit trees, and other woody plants to prevent rodent damage. You may prune Hydrangeas paniculate cultivars (ie. hardy, peegee and Limelight hydrangeas) in the fall once they are fully dormant to minimize the stems from breaking from heavy ice or snow. I tend to leave mine so the dry flowers provide some winter interest. Mulch azaleas and rhododendrons with shredded leaves or pine needs.

Soon enough, the wind and snow will come and you'll be glad to have these tasks done and your garden ready to recoup over the winter. I know I'll be ready!

This week's article is written by Jeannie Manis, a Wisconsin Certified Sauk County Master Gardener Volunteer. If you have any gardening questions, please contact the Extension Sauk County by emailing to tripp@wisc.edu or calling the University of Wisconsin Madison Division of Extension Sauk County office at 608-355-3250.