

## ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE

### The Garden Spot For week of October 26, 2009

#### Checklist for End-of-Season Gardening

We've had our first frost of the season, which means our yard and gardening chores are now taking on a different tone. So now, as the birds are flying south and squirrels are storing nuts, it's time to do those fall chores to prepare for the winter months ahead.

##### **GATHERING AND USING THE HARVEST**

- ✓ IF any of your garden escaped last week's frost, now's the time to gather the last of the tomatoes, peppers and other warm season vegetables
- ✓ Be careful when slicing those last few hot peppers. Capsaicin, the powerful compound that gives hot peppers their fire, can set your hands on fire! This compound is located mainly on the light-colored ribs inside the peppers. Slicing through these ribs releases this compound. In addition to getting the Capsaicin on your hands, it can also be released into the air.
- ✓ Don't store potatoes near your fall apples because apples give off ethylene gas, which causes potatoes to sprout.
- ✓ If some of your stored onions start to sprout this winter, pot one up, put on the windowsill and cut the top back periodically to use as green onions. Another harvest onion tip: Need only half an onion? Slice the top of the sprout end and store the root end. The root half will keep longer in the fridge.
- ✓ Freeze whole leaves or stems of herbs such as parsley, chives, oregano and rosemary in a single layer on a baking sheet. Once they're frozen, pack in plastic bags and return to freezer. This winter when you need "fresh herbs" remove herbs from freezer, chop while still frozen and add to your recipe. Still have a bounty of basil, chives and other herbs? Why not make some

herbal vinegars to give as holiday gifts? It is really simple and who doesn't appreciate a gift you made yourself?

## **LAWNS**

Depending on what the temperatures do, you may still have time to overseed ryegrass into your lawn. It is, however a calculated risk because moderate temperatures are still needed to help the rye get its start.

## **BULBS**

Get those spring flowering bulbs out before November 15. They will greet you in the early spring months.

## **TREES AND SHRUBS**

Generally speaking, no pruning, fertilizing or otherwise doing anything to stimulate new, tender growth on trees and shrubs should be done now. Why? Because the new growth that will result from fertilization and pruning now will not have sufficient time to harden off before cold weather and will be very susceptible to winter kill. Enjoy the fall color, the evergreens and basically leave them alone!

## **PERENNIALS AND ANNUALS**

By this time, you should have removed the summer annuals and replaced them with fall annuals like marigolds, pansies, flowering cabbage and kale, colorful lettuces and other interesting fall plants. Try something different this year. Don't just plunk down a few mums and leave it at that. Garden centers and nurseries are broadening their selections of fall plants and you should be adventuresome and give some of these a try.

## **EQUIPMENT**

Just as your lawn and garden need fall maintenance, don't forget your equipment. Check out your lawn mowers, weed eaters, chain saws, and other equipment. This is the perfect time to clean, oil, make repairs, and do other maintenance. Then store them in a safe place for the winter months. In fact, you may even be able to strike some good deals on end-of season sales right now.

Taking care of our lawn and garden never stops. It just changes from season to season. You can probably think of a dozen more things to add to your 'to-do' list to prepare for the change in seasons.

###