



LANDSCAPE  
GARDENING  
SERIES



www.windmillgarden.com

16009 60th Street East, Sumner, WA 98390  
(253) 863-5843



# Fall Garden Cleanup

Just like spring housecleaning, a garden needs some TLC and fall cleanup so that next spring when new plants are bursting forth they'll have a neat and tidy home for the coming year, free from disease and bugs. Whether you have one small flower bed or 10 there are some very easy things that can become part of your fall garden clean-up.

A huge part of the clean up of your fall garden is harvesting seeds and preparing to propagate new starts for the spring. Perhaps you've got a huge amount of iris and decide to exchange some bulbs with your neighbor. Gardeners like to exchange and share.

## Step one: Assess the garden for changes next year

I take pen and paper and walk around assessing how plants grew this past growing season. From my garden notebook, I note when I planted things, how they thrived or didn't thrive and whether I need to make changes in my garden plan. Perhaps I need to move that new lavender to a sunnier area or the bee mint is taking over the herb garden and I need to dig, divide, and give some away! I start assessing in August and finalize it in September. At the same time I make notes of where there are holes or if I want to start a new bed or make a bed smaller.

## Step two: Harvest seeds

Harvest seeds from those plants that you want the seeds. Perhaps you are a seed saver and exchange seeds with friends. There are certain annuals that grow each year from seeds and you might want those to resow in the spring. Cornflower and bellflowers are good examples of this, but also black eyed Susans, which will reseed themselves. Sometimes it's sporadic however, so I like to give them a helping hand by adding in seed that I saved.

## Step three: Propagate plants from stem cuttings and division

Start stem cuttings from plants like Sedum, butterfly bush, forsythia and asters. I cut them and then begin the stem propagation in November or December in the greenhouse. Even if you don't have a greenhouse you can start them in cold frames or even indoors. Fall is when I divide lilies, iris, hosta, etc. Just dig them up, cut them into smaller plants and replant wherever you want them for next year's garden plan, or exchange with a friend!

## Step four: Harvest and dry

It's time for the harvest in September and October. Gather those herbs, peppers, potatoes, onions, etc. that you want to dry or preserve. There are many different methods of harvesting each plant, so consult a good plant guide for harvest tips.

## Step five: Remove dead or diseased foliage

If you suspect a plant is diseased clean up the area really well. Check for blights, leaf mold, insects that need to be cleaned up in that area of the garden. Burn any diseased foliage; don't compost it! If the foliage is just dry and dead, put in compost bin.

## Step six: Enrich the soil

As you're replanting and dividing plants, enrich your soil with compost or manure. That's about as simple as you can get with gardening. Fall is a great time to add good compost, hummus and make soil adjustments for various plants. If you need more sand in an area, for example, add it now and work it in good around the plants.



LANDSCAPE  
GARDENING  
SERIES



[www.windmillgarden.com](http://www.windmillgarden.com)

16009 60th Street East, Sumner, WA 98390  
(253) 863-5843



# Fall Garden Cleanup

## Step seven: Mulch

Add mulch to protect those plants such as roses that need heavier mulch. Most gardens in cold zones need some form of mulch. This isn't about making your beds attractive, but to protect the plants. Mulch can be simply your grass clippings, straw, or standard bark mulch. I generally remove bark mulch when I do my garden clean up in the fall, add a layer of grass clippings mixed with shredded leaves, and cover close to plants. Then I layer the bark mulch back on top. During the fall and winter the grass begins to compost under the bark layer and adds good nutrients to the bed during the early spring months.

## Step eight: Clean out cold frames for winter use

After you've put your precious flower and plant babies to bed for the winter, it's time to get the cold frame cleaned up and ready for winter use. We often plant late fall crops like broccoli or spinach, and after that last harvest, we ready the cold frame for winter propagations of stem cuttings and those early spring starts of cabbage, broccoli and radishes.

## Step nine: Prune shrubs, trees and perennial plants

Mid to late fall is a great time to prune. Most of the leaves are gone or leaving and you can see where pruning cuts need to be made. People are really afraid to prune and I know, it seems scary to start hacking away at your plants. But judicious pruning is essential to the maintenance of all shrubs and trees. Take the time to buy a good book on pruning.

## Step 10: Take care of your equipment

Clean, repair and store away garden tools for next year. This is also a good time to plan maintenance on tractors, lawnmowers and tillers. This is a good time to look for garden clearances on equipment and even plants. Rescue that 75% off plant and nurture it for next spring!