

## Top 3 Fall Garden Activities and Favorite Resources Survey of Orange County Master Gardeners, 2019

### Linda

1. Mowing over falling leaves, grinding them up and adding to gardens. Makes a fantastic lightweight mulch.
2. In the fall I always cut back perennials, divide those that need it and lightly mulch. No heavy mulch since I want these plants to go dormant. Too much mulch warms the ground to much confusing plants on dormancy.
3. Before I start adding new liter to compost I like to turn compost removing the non decomposed matter. Then taking all the good new soil and adding that to vegetable garden.
4. Planting a fall garden is high on the to-do list as well as additions of new Narcissus.

### Katie

1. Fall is the best time to plant new shrubs and trees and spring bulbs.
2. Also, this is a good time to divide and transplant perennials.
3. Before the first frost, I put my tender plants, like the amaryllis, dahlias, tuberous begonias and caladium into the crawl space.
4. And I clean up the vegetable garden to reduce pests and diseases the next year.

### Jerry

1. Move and divide perennial plants, transplant or plant bushes/shrubs/bulbs.
2. Roses: prune canes to 2 to 3 feet and cover crown with mulch.
3. Aerate and seed lawn.
4. Great places for plants, bulbs and seeds:
  - Logan's Garden Center (formerly Logan's Trading Co), Raleigh.
  - Southern States
  - Amazon for bulbs
  - [AmericanMeadows.com](http://AmericanMeadows.com) - wildflower seeds

## Leigh

Keep in mind that I have a yard with mature trees and no full sun. I have many ornamental beds in shade/part sun with a mix of ground covers, perennials, shrubs and small trees, but only a tiny vegetable/herb spot for a few leafy greens, which are the only category that will succeed.

1. Leaf cleanup, meaning removing fallen tree leaves, not fallen perennial and shrub leaves, but only to the extent that they are covering plant crowns or are covering a bed too heavily. Otherwise they remain in place. I do not tidy borders (my one plant exception is peonies, which I cut back to deter botrytis) because I prefer to foster cover for insects, birds, etc. The excess leaves are piled (preferably shredded but probably only half are) to be added to my composter as needed and to do their own partial composting over the winter. In the spring, I will "scrunch" the leaves that remained on the beds --- those dry out and do not compost here --- and use the piled leaves as additional mulch.
  2. Division, planting, and transplanting most species, the major exception being warm-season ornamental grasses.
  3. Soil renovation for new bed areas or renewal where I am changing the plantings in an established bed. I add compost and aged pine fines, then for new beds, I let the soil sit over the winter, assess in spring and either plant or add more amendments and let go over the summer. For established beds, I should amend and then wait a few weeks before planting, but the temptation is usually too much for me!
4. I think fall is a good time to assess:
- What has worked/failed over the growing season, both in terms of plant performance and overall design? Are the results due to luck or unusual weather or are they predictive of the long run?
  - Once the leaves have fallen, I assess tree pruning needs or if anything requires removal. I wait until at least December/January for any action.
  - Similarly, once foliage has died down, it is easy to assess if any areas should be regraded and then to work on those.

## **Carol**

1. Planting fall plants, extending summer crops into the fall. I use the NCSU planting guides( Especially the one produced by Doug Jones and Debbie Roose to determine plants that would be good. They list the varieties, dates that acceptable for planting in the fall.
2. Clearing beds and putting them to rest for the winter, clearing up debris.
3. Cleaning tools and storing properly.
4. Collecting leaves for the next growing season

## **Jaime**

1. Raking leaves and piling up to make leaf mould.
2. Tagging dead or unhealthy trees to cut or keep an eye on.
3. Lifting tender perennials. Like banana trees, colocasia, etc
4. Planting spring blooming bulbs.
5. I get most of chore/task list from the Orange Gardener website or from "Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast" by Ira Wallace.

## **Dana**

Okay....I am primarily a veggie gardener, so my fall priorities consist of getting my seeds started indoors, and then keeping things alive during late August and September when the weather still feels like summer!

1. Getting the fall veggie garden started
2. Cutting back spring and summer perennials, so that my fall flowers (asters, chrysanthemums, etc.) can be showcased. I usually try to leave seed heads for the birds.
3. Putting 1-2" of leaf mulch on all beds
4. Putting away plant supports and garden art.
5. Every year I wish I would plant more bulbs!
6. Once again, it's a veggie thing. I am working hard to have year round salad options in the garden. Johnny's Seed site has some great articles for season extensions, varieties that are cold-hardy, and cover crops.

## **Betsy**

1. Before frost, I bring in house plants that have spent the summer outdoors.
2. Tidy the area where my pots are kept and bag any I won't use or that are broken and take them to Lowes for recycling.
3. Buy and plant new bulbs for spring: daffodils, crocuses, Dutch Iris, hyacinths and others. Put some hyacinth bulbs in bulb jars for January blooms.(They take about 3 months to bloom after they have been resting on the water in the neck of a jar.)
4. Put all gardening tools on their proper hooks under the porch for the winter, after leaf raking is done.
5. Purchase and plant perennials that can settle in over winter.
6. As for resources, I rely on friends, on the Internet, and on gardening books I have if I don't know the answer or am uncertain about it.

## **Carol**

1. My main Fall activity is cleaning up my flower beds and containers...pulling up dead or dying plants, pruning perennials, and raking through and turning over the soil and putting several ceramic pots in the shed for the winter.
2. I also add mulch to most of my perennial gardens. I don't mulch too deep because that will attract voles to the garden.
3. At the Carolina Campus Community Garden I help prepare and amend beds for winter planting and help plant cover crops such as winter peas in beds that won't be used until early Spring.
4. Because we don't get really cold here in the 7b planting zone, I have found that if I don't mulch my peony plants for the winter they produce much more blooms in the Spring. I have found that they need the cold temps to do well.

## Patricia

1. Dealing with leaves—both a resource and a nuisance—is an ongoing job, right on through the winter. I never put valuable organic matter at the curb for the city machines to vacuum up and take away. Where possible, e.g., my “tree islands”, leaves are left where they fell or mowed over lightly to shred. The next year in late spring I sometimes then add a layer of mulch like pine straw over these leaves and let them continue to happily decompose. Raked leaves are added to these natural areas or piled into informal compost mounds. Lawn areas are mowed with the bag on when the leaf fall is heavy, and these shredded leaves are a prized resource in my opinion, as they make excellent deep mulch piled into fence wire cylinders which have been placed over elephant ear clumps. According to articles, shredding the leaves allows water to percolate and therefore avoids rotting the large tubers. In this way the tubers don’t have to be dug up.
2. Dealing the little bit of lawn I have involves over-seeding mostly, with small areas that might need more working of the soil, seed, and straw. For my location the hot dry conditions of late summer are hanging on longer than in the past, so I often wait past the traditionally recommended September to do this. Early October seems to bring rain. I have also shifted the recommended time for fall fertilization later than Labor Day. I watch the weather reports, trying to time applying fertilizer just before a good long period of rain. Then I’m sure to also fertilize around Thanksgiving and Valentines Day—and then stop. (Fescue lawn)
3. Heavy work projects feel better in fall or spring. This group of activities includes planting large items or building things (decks, structures, walls, etc.) and working on the hardscape of the garden.
4. Wait to mulch heavily until a good frost has occurred. Otherwise, the plants might not go into dormancy when they should. I do try to then get everything tidied up and mulched so it looks good by Thanksgiving or Christmas at the latest.

## Resources

### General Gardening

Orange Gardener website: <https://theorangegardener.org/>

NC State Cooperative Extension sites:

<https://horticulture.ces.ncsu.edu/publications/>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/>

### Vegetable Gardening

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/central-north-carolina-planting-calendar-for-annual-vegetables-fruits-and-herbs>

NCSU vegetable crop planting guides by Doug Jones and Debbie Roos:

<https://growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast by Ira Wallace

Johnny's Seed site has some great articles for season extensions, varieties that are cold-hardy, and cover crops. <https://www.johnnyseeds.com/>

### Native Plants

North Carolina Botanical Gardens (native plants, books)

Doug Tallamy's Bringing Nature Home

The Living Landscape by Rich Darke and Doug Tallamy

[www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Search](http://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/Search)

### Interested in learning more about becoming a Master Gardener?

Wait-list for next training - sign up or email [mart\\_bumgarner@ncsu.edu](mailto:mart_bumgarner@ncsu.edu)

Join our monthly educational program meetings