SPROUT & SOW

Fall Garden Preparation Checklist

sproutandsow.com/blog/how-to-prepare-your-garden-for-fall-essential-tasks

AUTUMN

"The work you do in the fall is a gift you give to your spring garden." — Short on time? Start with Tasks 1, 3 & 4 for the biggest winter impact.

Weekend priority: Mulch beds & plant garlic first — these two tasks insulate roots and give you a July harvest with zero spring effort.

1 Clean Up Garden Beds

- [ ] Pull out spent annuals and vegetables
- [ ] Prune dead/diseased branches from perennials & shrubs
- [ ] Rake leaves — shred for compost or use as mulch
- [ ] Discard (don't compost) diseased plant material

2 Add Organic Matter to Soil

- [ ] Spread compost or aged manure (2–3 inches)
- [ ] Work lightly into top few inches with a fork
- [ ] Add shredded leaves as free organic amendment
- [ ] Note beds needing extra attention next year

3 Plant Fall Crops

- [ ] Plant garlic 2–3 in. deep, 6 in. apart, tip pointing up
- [ ] Sow kale, spinach, or Swiss chard for cold harvest
- [ ] Sow cover crop (winter rye, clover) in empty beds
- [ ] Plant spring bulbs: tulips, daffodils, alliums

4 Mulch Beds & Protect Perennials

- [ ] Apply 2–4 in. of straw, bark, or shredded leaves
- [ ] Cover empty beds against erosion & early weeds
- [ ] Wrap tender roses or young shrubs with burlap

Timing by Zone
Zones 5 & colder: mulch before first frost (Sept–mid-Oct). Zones 7–9: until late November.

5 Divide & Transplant Perennials

- [ ] Identify overcrowded daylilies, hostas, or irises
- [ ] Dig clump; cut into sections with roots & shoots
- [ ] Replant healthiest divisions and water in well
- [ ] Share or compost extra divisions

6 Prep Trees & Shrubs

- [ ] Remove dead, damaged, or crossing branches
- [ ] Apply slow-release fertilizer around drip line
- [ ] Water deeply before ground freezes
- [ ] Check for disease signs before winter dormancy

7 Clean & Store Garden Tools

- [ ] Scrub tools to remove soil and plant residue
- [ ] Sharpen hoe and spade edges
- [ ] Wipe metal parts with a light coat of oil
- [ ] Store in a dry, sheltered location

8 Plan for Spring

- [ ] Sketch layout — note what worked & what didn't
- [ ] Write seed list before popular varieties sell out
- [ ] Note any pest or disease issues to fix next year
- [ ] Order catalogs or browse online for new varieties

MY NOTES THIS SEASON