



# October Garden Tasks

THINGS TO DO BEFORE  
WINTER: PLANT GARLIC,  
MULCH & COMPOST



01

# GARLIC

Choose a bed for your garlic that hasn't had any allium family planted in it the past 4 years minimum in order to avoid disease & pests.

We can add finished compost to the bed, but refrain from adding manure or other soluble fertilizers since the nitrogen especially will run off with our fall rains. This organic matter will feed & remain tied up with soil microorganisms through the winter.

If soil pH is low, now is the time to add lime, before you plant.

Use only perfect healthy seed garlic & plant after the soil has become cooler and wetter. You don't want to plant garlic too early because it increases the likelihood of infection of a very common disease called Blue Mold Rot.

When there are plenty of leaves available for mulching, spread a nice thick layer over the seeded bed.

02

# SOIL TESTS

If you are curious where your soil stands, now is the time to get a soil test. Labs are less busy, and any home test kit is unreliable - it also doesn't break the bank!

It's a great time of year to add lime if you find your soil to be acidic; it's a slow process to bring that pH up.

We've had great experiences going through "Growers" in Vernon or Kelowna, for \$60-70 you can bring your soil sample(s) in to the store, bag it and send it off. You can expect a reply in a week to ten days with the soil analysis as well as recommendations. Keep in mind these recommendations do not take organic practices into account, but it gives you a snapshot and a basis upon which you can research the ways to make improvements.

03

# COMPOST

As we mentioned in our earlier post on powdery mildew, it's totally fine to compost squash leaves with this fungal disease on them. Also you can add leeks and garlic leaves that may have rust disease on them. Be cautious not to add any plant matter infected with late blight (from your tomatoes) into the compost though...check out our earlier September out on this disease.

If your apple trees had scabby apples this year, be extra careful to rake up all the fallen apple leaves and compost them. As long as the leaves decompose by spring, spores of apple scab will die even if your compost doesn't heat up. Alternatively, you can mow them a few times to shred them so they decompose under the trees.

Be sure to capitalize on the falling leaves over the next month, you can mulch your gardens for free, add an organic carbon source to your compost or bag it up for mulching next spring and summer.

# WINTER GARDEN PREP

Leave everything possible on the ground around or under plants to break down in place over the winter, because after all, the perfect nutrition for any plant is really its own leaves.

Exceptions are woody material that gets in the way and won't decompose over a winter.

Leave roots of spent plants in the ground, you can cut them off at the soil line, rather than pulling them out. The roots provide valuable organic matter and leaving them in the ground also preserves the soil structure inhabited by beneficial microbes that live around roots.

**Mulching:** aim for a fluffy layer of leaves 4-6 inches thick covering the soil of the whole garden between plants by the time cold weather hits. All leaves are usable, but it is best to avoid using black walnut leaves as it can be a growth suppressant to some plants (unless it is well composted first).