

Top Tips to Prepare Your Yard and Garden for Lush Growth Next Year

Landscapes can start to look weary as the growing season winds down. Here is how to spruce up your yard and garden and have it thriving next spring.



Image courtesy of [Pixabay](#)

Your garden. Tending to your garden before winter hits will put it in top shape for the next growing season. It will also mean less work prior to planting next year.

- **Sick plants.** Summer can take a toll on your plants with drought and heat. Pests and disease take the opportunity to infest weakened plants. Some [experts recommend](#) tending these troubles now for a healthier garden next year.
- **Fungal infections.** Perennial plants can be cut back to remove fungi. Infected vegetable plants should also be culled. Damaged material should be bagged and removed or burned. To help prevent fungi next year, rake up all vegetable matter, including leaves, twigs, fruits and cuttings. Rotating plants next season may help. Also consider planting cultivars that are more disease resistant in the future.
- **Weed control.** Fall is a prime time to get weed growth under control. Many weeds harbor diseases and insect pests. Weeds also compete with your

plantings for nutrition and space. By removing weeds before winter you will have less to combat next spring.

- **Cover crops.** The experts at [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#) advise planting cover crops in the fall. Leaving your garden's soil exposed to the harsh elements of winter can kill beneficial fungi, insects, and bacteria. It also leaves it open to opportunistic weeds next spring. Consider a food crop such as mustard greens.
- **Mulch.** Apply a layer of mulch if a cover crop isn't a practical option for you. Straw, chopped leaves, or shredded newspaper should do the trick. Mulch your perennials as well as the vegetable garden. Some [experts recommend](#) a layer of mulch two to three inches thick.
- **Test soil.** Fall is a prime time to have your soil tested. Contact your local [Cooperative Extension System](#) office for what is required. Test results will tell you how to amend your soil for a healthier garden next year. Some materials such as manure are best added in the fall.
- **Compost.** Experts at [EarthEasy](#) recommend adding spent annuals and other healthy clippings to compost. If you have a surplus, bag them in burlap sacks to add later.

Your yard. The warm days and cool nights of fall are perfect for giving your lawn a boost before colder months. [Prepare your grass](#) now for a thriving lawn next spring.

- **Rake leaves.** According to [some experts](#), fallen leaves invite pests and molds. Also, allowing leaves to build up can create a suffocating layer of debris on your lawn. Remove leaves routinely during fall months for a healthier lawn. Mow and mulch small batches of leaves. Bag or compost larger batches.
- **Test soil.** Just like in your garden, your lawn benefits from testing. Healthy areas should be tested once every three or four years. Troubled areas should be tested annually.
- **Patch bare areas.** Once you have tended your soil you can repair damaged areas in your lawn.
- **Dethatch.** A thin layer of thatch can help your lawn through summer drought and stress, but a layer of a half-inch thick or more keeps water and nutrition from penetrating to grass roots. It can also harbor disease. You can dethatch by hand with a rake or rent a dethatcher.
- **End fertilizing.** Distribute your last round of fertilizer six to eight weeks prior to the first frost.
- **Overseed.** Is your lawn looking tired? Add cool season grass seed to revive it. Seed your lawn about 45 days before frost to establish roots before winter.
- **Aerate.** Compacted earth should be aerated for a healthier root system and for healthier soil.
- **Continue mowing.** Mow your lawn in accordance with grass growth. Gradually cut grass shorter going into winter in order to prevent fungal diseases.

The outdoors awaits. Following these great tips will put your landscape into top shape. Tend to both your garden and lawn with a good clean up and prepare them for the next growing season. You'll have a lush, vibrant landscape to enjoy next year.