

Beautification Council of Southeastern Michigan

Fall Garden Fact or Fiction? By Jim Childs

POINTS OF INTEREST:

Our Sept. 17th Meeting will be hosted by Wyandotte at the Wyandotte Boat Club at 1 Pine St., Wyandotte, Mich., 48182. *Please be on time with sending in your registration!*

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! SIGN UP TO HOST A MEETING TODAY! WE'RE NOT KIDDING!



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This article from Jim Childs of Garden Gate asks if you're getting the best advice about fall garden chores. What are the best ways to keep our gardens looking their best? It may be that not everything you hear is true. This is a nice overview of common fall garden advice. Are these items right for your garden?

You may have heard:

Dig summer bulbs only after they go dormant. Yes, you can wait for the frost to kill canna and dahlia foliage and send the plants into dormancy. However, elephant ears, tuberous begonias, Peruvian daffodils and caladiums are very sensitive to cold. You should dig them up and bring them indoors before the leaves are damaged by frost. With tender summer bulbs, as the night temps start to drop, food production falls and the foliage turns yellow. This is the time to dig them up. You can really do it in late summer when the foliage starts drying up. This is an indicator of dormancy.

Clean up your perennial beds in the fall.

This is true if there are insect eggs that could overwinter in leaves and stems. They should be cut off and removed as soon as they turn brown. Another reason is if you are the type that is bothered by the look of dead foliage and seed heads over winter. Perennials will survive best if they are not cut down in autumn. This is especially true if foliage is still green. Why you ask? The reason is because the food that is produced in the leaves is still being stored in the plant roots. In addition, leaving stems standing until spring helps collect leaf litter and snow acts as insulation over the crown of the plant. As maintainers of public gardens, it may look better to clear the dead foliage, and it also helps to have somewhat of a head start in the spring if some of the labor of cleaning up a bed is done in the fall.

Don't fertilize trees, shrubs and perennials in fall. Late fall actually is a good time to use a balanced fertilizer, but timing is the key. The ground needs to be cold so the plant has stopped growing. A way to tell is when deciduous plants have lost their leaves. When it is cold the nutrients hold in the soil. They actually work their way down deeper. When the plant grows once again in the spring the nutrients will be down with the roots and will be available to be absorbed by the roots.

Putting down weed-preventing mulch in the fall will keep the soil frozen too long in the spring. The timing of when you mulch will not make a difference. The idea is to keep the soil temperature from fluctuating so your plant roots benefit. You can buy bags of wood chips on clearance in the fall.

Typically you will have more time to mulch now than in the spring.

Wait until spring to add compost and work the soil. It may surprise you to know that fall is the best time to spread compost.

Moisture from rain and winter snow helps carry compost into the soil. If you freeze and thaw in areas, it will help even more. It is usually more dry in the fall, allowing for easier digging and tilling. During the spring or the fall wet soil can get compacted when you walk on it. Tilling soil when it's wet makes hard clumps that are tough to break.

Frost will kill the weeds, so there is no point in weeding in the fall. This may be true for some annual weeds that have already seeded your beds, waiting to sprout in the spring, but there may be many more seeds on that plant. Pull the weeds carefully and place them in a bucket. You want a minimal number of seeds dropping into your beds. Fall is a good time to pull out perennial weeds before their roots have a chance to spread next spring. After a killing frost, most perennial weeds are still green and are easy to spot, so pull them before winter.

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What Gives Autumn Containers and your Body a Kick?....Kale!

Really? Kale? Yep! It's great for fall containers and so good for you! One cup of chopped kale contains 33 calories, 9% of your daily calcium, 206% of vitamin A, 134% of vitamin C, and 684% of vitamin K. It's amazingly nutritious, and a very beautiful addition to autumn containers. Take a look at the designs on the next page, and try them with whole grain pasta, pine nuts, feta cheese, and a little olive oil. Dinner from your container garden!

Greetings From The President by James Keehn

In 1972 I remember seeing a film called "What You Are is What You Were When" that one professor presented. The film talked about at what age our values and morals are developed and how generational and cultural differences play a part in our development. The film described three major periods during which values are developed. It better helped me understand our interest and drive for volunteerism :

1. The Imprint Period. Up to the age of seven, we are like sponges, absorbing everything around us and accepting much of it as true, especially when it come from our parents. The confusion and blind belief of this period can also lead to the early formation of trauma and other deep problems. The critical thing here is to learn a sense of right and wrong, good and bad. This is a human condition which we often assume would exist even if we were not here, which is an indication of how deeply imprinted it has become.
2. The Modelling Period. Between the ages of 8 and 13, we copy people, often our parents, but also other people. Rather than blind acceptance, we are trying on things like a suit of clothes, to see how they feel. We may be impressed with religion or our teachers. You may remember being influenced by junior high school teachers who seemed so knowledgeable, more than parents.
3. The Socialization Period. Between 13 and 21, we are largely influenced by our peers. As we develop as individuals and look for ways to get away from the earlier programming, we turn to people who seem more like us. Other influences at these ages include the media, especially the parts that resonate with the values of our peers.

What stuck most with me is how even as we move through our adult life, though interests come and go, we tend to reflect the values we had in our late teens. Often I hear people say that they feel in their minds that they are still eighteen. I know I often feel that way. One of the characteristics of the Baby Boomer generation, which I fell in the middle of, is our independence. This generation grew up in an era of reform and believe they can change the world. They questioned established authority systems and challenged the status quo. There is also a very strong work and community ethic. As my generations retires, there is a chance that they will remain supporting and volunteering with community efforts.

The next generation to reflect these efforts will possibly be the Millennials, those born between 1982 and 2000. They Baby Boomers are still more environmentally conscious than this group. Millennials, or Generation Y, are socially conscious, civically engaged and dedicated to helping those less fortunate than themselves. Today there is less involvement in community organizations than there was when I was young. This drop in membership is seen from bowling leagues to church committees. From what I am seeing from Generation Y, there may be a resurgence back into community life. A Generation Y led organization such as BCSEM may conduct meetings more collaboratively online, and use communication tools more effectively.

In 1972, I ready *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, concerned about ecology and pollution. I participated in an ecology club at school to turn a parking lot into a park, pursued an associate's degree in Environmental Control Technology, and had interesting discussions with my car salesman father about GM and Ralph Nader. My values are still the same...my techniques honed a little.

Sincerely, Jim

Kale Container Plantings



Meet the City of Wyandotte—Your Hosts for our Meeting on Wed., September 17

The Wyandotte Beautification Commission is hosting our next meeting on Wednesday, September 17th at the Wyandotte Boat Club, 1 Pine St., Wyandotte, 48192. Registration begins at 9:30. This meeting's speakers include a representative from the Friends of the Detroit River, and a representative from Wyandotte discussing their history.

The Wyandotte Beautification Commission is primarily responsible for landscaping of the downtown district. The Commission also maintains the Wyandotte Community Garden, which is available for rent by individuals and organizations. Our Commissioners and volunteers assist in planting our "Dig-Ins" twice a year, as well as a monthly Community Garden work day. This year's fall bulb "Dig-In" is September 20th. This event is typically from 9-1. Community Garden work days involve caring for a beautifully maintained garden on Oak between 1st and 2nd streets by the Farmers Market. Those work days are listed on the Wyandotte website at www.wyandotte.net. Volunteering is open to all people who live, work, and appreciate the City of Wyandotte.

The Purple Heart Memorial Garden is also maintained by volunteers. It holds a beautiful statue of a soldier caring for his wounded. Wyandotte has the

distinction of being the first city in the country to which the National Military Order of the Purple Heart commissioned and donated a monument of this type.

Annual Beautification Awards honor residents and businesses that maintain beautiful properties throughout the city.

The Beautification Commission of Wyandotte has a great mission statement: "We seek to involve neighbors throughout the city of Wyandotte in community landscaping, planting and improvement projects; both large and small. Our Commission is an all-volunteer organization, open to all who live or work in the City of Wyandotte. Our goal is to build community pride, encourage participation and have fun. We value any contribution of time or talent. No contribution is ever too small."





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You have to harvest root vegetables in the fall. Turnips, beets, carrots, and rutabagas do taste sweeter and keep longer if you leave them in the ground through a few frosts. Once it is cold, but before the ground is frozen, you can dig them up. You could also set a bale of straw right over the tops. This gives you the option of harvesting vegetables throughout the winter. You can crush the foliage because it is no longer feeding the roots. Putting garbage bags full of leaves on the plants will stop the soil from freezing, so you can dig up what you want by removing and replacing the bag of leaves.

Insect Control will not do anything in the fall—the bugs are dormant or dead.

Not so fast. It may be true that they are not feeding on leaves anymore, so systemic preventatives will not do the job. There is a way to kill overwintering eggs and some insects like mites and scale. You do this with horticultural oil. It does suffocate insects. You apply it when the plant is not growing, so you may also see it called dormant oil. If you are aware you have scale on lilacs or magnolias, you should spray when there is no foliage. You will be able to get the oil in every crevice. Most trees and shrubs, and some evergreens like boxwood can be treated with horticultural oil. Check the labels for the pests that the oil controls, and the rates of application.

Wait until the spring to feed your lawn.

The best time to feed grasses is late summer and early fall. There is not a specific date for

this. Wait until nighttime temperatures begin dropping into the 50 degree F area. If you water the lawn or there is more rainfall, the roots will absorb more nutrients and store them. This will keep your lawn greener, and give it a running start in the spring.

Cover your garden mums on frosty nights.

A frost around 28 degrees F will not hurt most garden mums. Several frosty nights in a row may result in a purple tint on white or pale pastel colored mums. A hard freeze of 20 degrees F or below will definitely cause flowering to stop, and buds that will not open. Even after a deeper frost, flowers that are already open will remain that way with fading color. If you do want to cover mums, use an old sheer or towel, not plastic. If leaves or flowers touch plastic it will transmit the cold. This will result in a burn on them that will likely look worse than if you hadn't covered them.

Toss geraniums before the winter—they are annuals, and you will need to replace them.

Geraniums are truly tender perennials and many of them do survive in Zone 10. They do not overwinter easily indoors. Store them in potted or bareroot in a 40-50 degree F dark area. Dig out the plants, shaking off extra soil and put them in a paper bag right away. Hang it so the plants will be upside down. Don't cut the stems or water them. Open the bag occasionally. If you see stems shriveling, lightly mist the roots. Add a little water to the soil of potted geraniums if they are drying out too much. In the spring after no danger of frost, pot up the bareroot plants, move them outdoors, and resume regular watering.