

Putting the Lawn to Rest: Garden Care for the Fall
Stephanie Duer, Water Conservation Coordinator
Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities

Fall is a great time of year to garden. The air starts to feel cool and we welcome the warmth of the sun. Plants feel less stress, and even though daytime temperatures decline, the soil is warm and encourages new root growth. To prepare your garden for winter, follow these simple steps to ensure that your garden recovers from the stress of the hot dry summer and is ready to grow again next spring.

Lawn Care

- Raise the mower height to 2 1/2 to 3 inches. The longer grass blades will shade weed seeds, keeping them from sprouting. Also, the longer blade will provide extra protection for the turf during the winter. Stop mowing as soon as a hard frost hits
- If snow molds have been a problem in the past, bag the grass clippings, and rake up any leaves that are on the lawn before the snow falls
- Reduce watering to once every 7 to 14 days. Frequent watering will encourage fungus and molds
- Aerate compacted soils, leaving the soil plugs on the lawn to provide rich organic material
- De-thatch if your lawn feels spongy or if you can't feel the soil when you dig your fingers into the lawn
- Fertilize with a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer or home-made compost. Organic fertilizers tend to be "slower" than chemical fertilizers
- Rake fallen leaves; don't let them stay on the lawn under the snow

Trees and Shrubs

- Apply a 3 to 4 inch layer of mulch around the drip line of trees and shrubs, taking care to not pile mulch against the trunks
- Deep water newly planted trees and shrubs twice a month if there is no snow or rain. Water evergreens once a month throughout the winter if there is no snow or rain
- Remove damaged, diseased, or broken limbs and branches

Perennials

- Apply a 3 to 4 inch layer of mulch around perennials
- Deep water perennials once a month if there is no snow or rain
- Remove diseased plants and destroy them
- Start a compost pile

Vegetables

- Mulch fall crops, especially root crops, for winter harvest
- Remove summer crop plants, composting healthy plants and destroying plants infested with insects or disease
- Plant a green manure crop to improve soil quality and moisture retention