

10 TO-DO'S IN YOUR AUTUMN GARDEN

Handy horticultural hints from the team at Growing Rooms

As summer wanes, it's time to prepare your garden for winter and the spring that follows. To keep your autumn garden vibrant and healthy you need to plan and take action now.



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ABOUT GROWING ROOMS

Growing Rooms has evolved into one of Sydney's leading landscape firms and have over a decade experience within Sydney. The company was founded by Oliver Sizeland who has worked within the landscaping industry in both London & New Zealand.

Since being in Sydney, Oliver has been involved in constructing some of the city's finest residential gardens. Oliver started Growing Rooms Landscapes with just one simple principle in mind: "To create stunning and functional gardens tailor made to our clients' needs".

To find out more, visit
www.growingrooms.com.au

1. REMOVE LEAVES

Transfer the leaves that fall on your garden and lawn to the compost bin on a regular basis, otherwise they will smother your plants and grass. Rake leaves up and compost or use as a mulch in garden beds. Well-rotted leaf mould, as it's called, is nutrient rich and extremely beneficial to garden soil.

2. PLANT SPRING FLOWERING BULBS

Start planning for a stunning display of bulbs in spring with mass plantings of daffodils, dutch iris, hyacinth, lachenalia, ixia, muscari, ranunculi, Freesia, crocus, anemone, Babiana and tulips. Choose a spot with light, well-drained soil or plant in pots that can be moved out of sight after flowering. In warm areas, chill hyacinth and tulip bulbs in the fridge (about 8 weeks) before planting.

3. TRIM AND PRUNE HEDGES AND PLANTS

Trim hedges before the onset of winter to keep them compact and bushy from ground level.

The thing about pruning is that it actually stimulates new growth. The reason it does is because a chemical is contained in each terminal bud, or leader, and once you've removed that it allows the buds below to break. This means a much bushier plant. Don't make the mistake of pruning back everything in the garden, because if you do you might miss spring blossoms. A Wisteria, for example, has already set its spring buds – look for the flowering spur and leave it because pruning that means missing its spring flush.

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4. POT UP WINTER FLOWERING ANNUALS

When it comes to pretty flowers for your pots and bare spots in the garden during late winter and spring, simply remember the three Ps – pansies, Primula and Polyanthus. Mix up with cineraria and other annuals. Sow seed now in trays or punnets, or look out for seedlings at the garden centre.

5. DIVIDE PERENNIALS

Dig up and divide large clumps of perennials such as dahlias (pictured), cannas, daylilies, Dietes, Euphorbia, foxgloves, Hosta, peonies and red hot poker. Lift them, divide and re-plant into well-conditioned soil.

6. TAKE CARE OF THE LAWN

Autumn is the time to feed the lawn. The reason is that the grass has slowed down with cold nights, but the roots are still growing well, so it's a great time for repair because the soil is warm. Use a slow release lawn food to develop a strong root system and thicker grass. Autumn is also a good time to sow new lawn seeds. Before sowing seed, remove stones and difficult weeds such as dock and dandelion. You will end up with a lush green cover over winter.

7. PLANT NEW TREES AND PLANTS

Autumn is an ideal time to plant new trees or shrubs provided the soil is reasonably moist. Make sure the planting spot isn't on top of underground services such as sewerage drains or power cables. If unsure, you should contact the service provider



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who can supply plans for your section.

To really see the best results with your plants, it's important to prepare the soil properly. Add gypsum to clay soil to help improve its structure, and no matter your soil type, you'll need to regularly add organic matter. This might be manure (ensure it's fully composted so that you don't burn the roots), pelletized fertiliser or compost. This will add nutrients back into your soil and feed your soil microorganisms. It's these microorganisms that do the hard work and will ensure that your soil structure has a good balance of water retention and drainage, and let plants thrive.

8. MAKE NEW PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS

Take 10cm cuttings from hardwood herbs such as rosemary and bay or natives such as banksias, grevillea and coastal rosemary. Remove the lower leaves, dip cuttings into hormone powder and pot in small containers of premium potting mix. Keep just moist and shelter from strong wind and sun.

9. ALLOW PLANTS TO SET SEED

Some flowering perennials such as sedum and coneflower (Echinacea), as well as grasses, have lovely seed heads. Think about leaving those you like on the plant during winter to add interest to the garden. Rose growers recommend leaving some flowers on plants to set hips (red/orange berries). Rose hips not only look attractive but help maintain vigour.

10. EXTRA ATTENTION FOR CITRUS TREES

Give your citrus trees a little late summer attention. Feed them now with a plant food that's specially formulated for citrus – these formulas contain the full range of trace elements your plants need. Water well before and after application, spreading the fertiliser around the dripline area (the zone beneath the outer branches). Check for pests too – spray bronze orange bugs with an insecticide such as Confidor, and treat aphids and scale insects with a horticultural oil.