



## Fall Checklist

In addition to choosing plants that will add color to your landscape, fall is a great time to perform lots of gardening chores. The weather is cooler, most of the biting insects have gone, and you can give yourself a head start on spring when too many jobs seem to come at once.

Here's a short clean-up and winter preparation checklist:

Keep mowing the lawn as necessary and when you suspect it may be the last time, mow it especially short. Allowing the lawn to enter the winter in a shaggy state is an invitation to snow mold and to opportunistic rodents.

Rake up all leaves and use them as mulch in woodland areas or add them to your compost pile. If you have Norway maples, be sure to get every last leaf, bag them, and dispose of them to prevent spreading tar spot fungus via spores on the leaves.

Draw up diagrams for planting drifts of spring bulbs, taking into consideration color combinations and times of bloom. Avoid planting the bulbs in straight rows..they'll look more natural in groups. If you're hopelessly plagued by squirrels, consider falling in love with the many varieties of daffodils and narcissus. They're toxic to squirrels and if the rodents eat them, they'll die. (Vindictiveness is forgivable when you've lost your prize pink tulips.)

Divide and replant perennials up until early October and then heavily mulch them to moderate the effects of freezing and thawing. Once the plants have been hit by frost, cut down any remaining stalks and clean up the leaves.

Begin preparation of new flower beds. Extend the edges of perennial beds as necessary.

Properly clean and put away all planters and pots. Tools should be thoroughly cleaned and oiled before storing for the winter. Hoses should be drained, loosely coiled, and stored.

Once you've done your chores, you can sit back and look at your own autumn color. You can also reflect on our great good fortune in being blessed by science here in Western New York. Hurricanes and typhoons are for those who live elsewhere. We concern ourselves not with natural disasters but with the variations of the prettiest red leaf and how the yellow aspen dapples the slanting autumn light in the loveliest way.

Incidentally:

With fall foliage trips contributing a significant percent of tourism to New York State, state and national hotlines have been established that track the colors as they move from high to low elevations and from northern to southern latitudes. Even the Weather Channel provides maps and reports. Here are a few hotlines and websites to help you plan your itinerary:

1-800-CALL-NYS connects travelers with the state's tourism department where they can plan their trips using the I LOVE NY Travel Guide and the I LOVE NY Autumn Guide.

Three of the most breathtaking areas listed by New York's tourism department include the vista from the Rainbow Bridge looking down the gorge, Thayer Road Overview Park in Portland off of Route 20 near Dunkirk, and the Genesee River Gorge in Letchworth State Park.

The United States Department of Agriculture also has a toll-free number to assist National Forest visitors. The hotline (1-800-354-4595) provides callers with an automated voice system for hearing weekly updates on peak color in different regions of the country. Additional information is on the Forest Service's website: [www.fs.fed.us/news/fall.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/news/fall.shtml)

Fall color maps that track the progress of fall colors are also on the Weather Channel's website: [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

**Come in for suggestions and help with your fall chores.**

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