

## October in the Vegetable Gardens\_2017

### CHORES

-Begin cleaning the garden up-Remove any weeds and dying plants as you go. Start to clean up the garden now and it will be much easier later. Any vacant beds can now get amended with compost, which is a good source of organic matter.

**START A COMPOST PILE-** Make a new compost pile and start to cook it now before winter sets in. Use blood meal to kick start your pile. If you don't like animal sources, you can use cottonseed meal which is high in nitrogen Use leaves, coffee grounds, and healthy dead plants in the compost pile along with egg shells and non-meat kitchen scraps.

Avoid horse manure unless you know that doesn't have herbicides in it. This is now a problem in are area. The only way to know is for you or the owner of the hay to contact their hay farmer to make sure the farmers are not spraying their hay crops with herbicides.

**VERMICOMPOST BINS-** Continue to feed and water your worm composting piles. Bring plastic worm composting boxes inside. If worms live outside, cover with 6-8 inches of straw. Continue to feed throughout winter. Do not feed worms citrus as it dehydrates them.

**WATERING SYSTEMS-** Turn off drip systems to gardens when frost is imminent. I do not blast air through lines and have never had a blow out when it freezes BUT I do take off the timers as their little manifolds inside can freeze and crack.

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### TRANSPLANTING COOL SEASON CROPS

-Got any vacant beds and still want some veggies? Squeeze in cold hardy vegetable as transplants not seeds like lettuce, spinach, kale, Asian greens and chard. You may not get huge bundles of kale or chard but they are very nice in a salad when small. You will need to cover these crops with a winter weight row cover when a freeze is forecast. Winter weight row cover is (1.0) ml

Still plant vegetable cold season veggies *if you have a cold frame, low tunnel, hoophouse or greenhouse*. These will also have to be covered with row cover as the nighttime's get into freezing temperatures. Don't have a cold frame or low tunnel or hoop house? Perfect time of year to start one!

## **VEGETABLE GARDENS**

**Beans-** My beans are slowing way down now that the nights/days are cooler. When you finish harvesting beans cut the plant away at ground level, leaving the roots in the soil. Legume crops such as beans and peas fix nitrogen in the soil where it is slowly released as the roots break down. If you plan to grow beans next year, start preparing the site by digging trenches and filling with manure or compost.

**Beets/Carrots-**Harvest as you need them but be sure to get them out of the ground before the ground freezes in December.

**Winter Squash/pumpkins-**Harvest AFTER the first frost. This will make them sweeter but don't wait till we get more frosts. They will deteriorate.

**Cabbage-** when you harvest your cabbages cut the plant off level with the ground, leaving the root in the ground, to encourage smaller leaves.

**Tomatoes-**Any plants with green tomatoes SHOULD be picked BEFORE the first frost and brought inside to finish ripening. Do not put them in the sun. Put tomatoes in paper bags, 2 rows deep with a slice of apple and fold the bag so no light gets in. Apples produce ethylene gas. Most fruits produce ethylene gas naturally- ethylene gas promotes ripening and by adding the apple slice you help speed up the ripening process. Every 3 days, open your bags and sort the tomatoes out according how ripe they are. I.e.: all green ones stay in the bag and those that are starting to change go into other bags according to ripeness. No need to wrap each tomato in newspaper as is sometimes suggested. What a pain that would be to unwrap each one to see where it's at!

**Garlic/shallots-**October is the perfect month to plant garlic and shallots. Plant now for a bumper crop in next June. Planting in the fall gives the roots a head start for next spring without a lot of top growth. Work some compost into your soil and loosen it up a bit, plant the biggest cloves pointy side up and cover with 2-3 inches of soil, then cover with 4-6 " of straw for the winter but don't forget to water in the winter. Maybe once every 2 weeks unless we get snow, in which case you are off the hook for watering.

**Asparagus-** Wait for the fronds to turn yellow then cut back yellowing asparagus foliage to within 3 inches of the ground. Cover with 4" of straw for the winter. Water this as well in the winter.

**Peppers-**Most peppers will slow down in October and when it does freeze at night, they will be done like tomatoes.

**Potatoes-**Wait till foliage starts to die, then dig out. Do not wash the harvested potatoes, instead lightly brush the dirt off them and leave outside in a shady area to cure. Bring them inside after 3 weeks and keep in dark place like a pantry.

## **FRUIT GARDENS**

**Strawberries-** Shear back old foliage in late October to encourage fresh new growth but do not cut the crowns where the leaves come out, just right above it. Some people like to put straw on the plants but I like a sheet of winter weight row cover. Less messy in the spring.

**Rhubarb-** Divide congested clumps of rhubarb by digging up and splitting into several pieces. Replant the healthiest looking pieces.

**Fruit Trees-** Autumn is an ideal time to plant many varieties of fruit trees. Talk to *Tooley's Trees* in Truchas, NM or contact them at [tooleystrees.com](http://tooleystrees.com) about what varieties to plant in the fall. I just planted plum, peach and pear tree 2 weeks ago.

**Apples-** I didn't get any apples this year! Last year I got 400 lbs! Sometimes apples will take a year off when they have a heavy crop or we could have gotten a late freeze last spring that caused the blossoms to drop. If yours did not produce, next spring would be a great time to prune them before they blossom. If you did get some apples, to test when apples **are ripe** gently lift them in the palm of your hand or give them a gentle pull - they should come away easily.

If you still have crops or fruit trees then hand water until ground freezes. If we don't get any snow and ground doesn't freeze then continue to water fruit trees throughout winter.

## **WATERING FORMULA FOR TREES FOR NEW TREES-**

To know how many gallons to water a tree per week- measure the tree trunk 4 feet up from ground-measure around the tree trunk and that's the circumference around the trunk. Divide that number by 3 and water 10 gal of water per inch. Example-a tree measures 3 inches around. Divide 3 by 3. That equals 1 inch. Multiply by 10 gal per inch. So 10 gal x 1 equals 10 gal of water per week.

## **FOR MATURE OLDER TREES-**

Figure it out as above and cut water in half. So a 9 inch circumference divided by 3 would be 3 inches. Multiply by 10 gal an inch. That equals 30 gal of water and then divide by 2 (cut in half). So that mature tree would need 15 gallons of water.