



Time to..... Put the Garden to Bed

I don't know about you but I want to get all end of the season work finished in my garden this next week. Fall is my favorite time of year. I would just like to sit back and enjoy the rest of it. So I'm going clean up my perennial /herb garden. I will harvest my herbs for the last time. Then I will plant more bulbs. Patty's Plants has some fun varieties and I must have them. I will bring my house-plants in this weekend after I report them outside (should have done this a couple weeks ago). Plus.... I believe I have at least two more batches of salsa to make. Sounds like a lot of work but Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner. All of a sudden they somehow just sneak up

on me and I'm never ready. This year I plan to be ready! In this newsletter I will have tips on seed saving, preserving, harvesting and storing herbs, garden clean up and a fall harvest recipe.

*Happy Fall Gardening,
Patty*



Do You Prune Perennials In The Fall?

Some gardeners like to prune their perennial gardens in the fall to give it a nice clean look going into the winter. That's fine but I like to leave some plants for winter interest and to feed the birds with their seed heads. I prune my perennial herbs one last time to dry and store for winter use. As far as my perennials go, I only prune the perennials that have absolutely no winter interest or their dried stems/leaves help protect them during the harsh winter. These are some of the perennials that do better if pruned or cleaned up in the spring: Asclepias (Butterfly Weed), Chrysanthemums and Heuchera (Coral Bells).

Any perennials that turn into mush after a frost like Hosta should defiantly be cleaned up. They could harbor pests and diseases. If any perennials are diseased, you must prune them and like I said before throw the foliage away, do not compost it. I leave the seeds heads of Echinacea (Purple Coneflower) and Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susan) because they will attract and feed the birds. Those along with Autumn Joy Sedum and grasses will also give winter interest. Mulch with crushed leaves or shredded bark after the ground starts to freeze so as not to get any little critters nesting and feeding on your plants all winter.

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October Free Workshop

**Put my next workshop
on your calendar.
Tuesday, October 11th 6:30.
"Planting Bulbs Outdoors this
Fall" plus "Forcing Spring Bulbs
for Winter Color".
See attached Flyer**

Harvesting Herbs

Harvesting

Not always is harvest time done during a specific date or month. Sometimes it has to be done when the particular herb is ready to be harvested. Most herbs are ready when they are just about to flower but before they are fully open. The leaves contain the most amount of volatile or essential oils at this stage, which gives them the best flavor and aroma. It is also very important to harvest herbs at the right time of day. Gather them early in the morning, just after the dew has evaporated and before it's hot and sunny. This is one of the best time for us to be out in the garden anyway. It smells so fresh in the morning, the bees and butterflies are just waking up.

Annual Herbs

Annual herbs can be cut back quite severely when harvesting them in the fall. Use a sharp knife or pruning shears and cut just above a leaf or pair of leaves, leaving approximately 4 to 6 inches of the stem for later growth when pruning earlier in the

season. If you grow an herb for its seed (such as dill), do not cut it back. In this case, allow the plants to mature fully and form their seeds; then harvest them. Collect the seed heads when they are turning brown and put them in a paper bag for drying. I slice a few holes in the paper bag. After the seeds drop off into the bag and are dry, place them in an airtight container.

Perennial Herbs

Prune perennial herbs 6-8 inches or to last years growth as long as there's still some growth or shoots below this level. So depending how they have grown, remove only about one-third of the top growth at a time and, in some cases, only prune the leafy tips.

Most perennial herbs, such as tarragon and oregano, would have been ready to harvest just prior to or during the early part of July. You can usually make a second or third harvest in September or October too. Remember that a sharp knife or pair of pruning shears is a must when harvesting herbs.

Drying & Freezing Herbs

There are many ways of preserving herbs. Here are just two of the way I preserve them.

Air-Drying

Drying herbs like this is one of the easiest ways to save your herbs. Wash the herbs and dry them off before tying in bundles. Make small bundles (5-8 stems) and take off the bottom leaves. Tie twine around the stems. I find using rubber bands or twist ties easier to work with. Hang the bundles in a warm dry area and check them frequently to make sure they are drying out properly. The ideal temperature for drying them is between 68-80 degrees. The area should be well ventilated. To keep dust off the herbs while drying, put each bundle upside down in a paper bag. Cut some holes in the sides of the bag for ventilation, then hang. The smaller the bundle the faster they will dry and less chance of them getting black and moldy. As I said before using the bag works especially well for herbs with seeds,

like dill or fennel, their seeds will fall right into the bag, nothing will be lost. Air-Drying can take 1-3 weeks.

Freezing

Some herbs don't dry well, so freezing would be better for them. Basil and chives freeze very well. Tear or cut them in small pieces and put them in ice cube trays with water. Once frozen take out and put into freezer bags. Buy ice trays just for freezing herbs, they will get very stained. You can also spread herbs on a tray or cookie sheet and place in the freezer. When frozen solid, pack into airtight containers. I lay my basil leaves flat in a freezer bag. Then when I need some for cooking I crush a leaf and add it to my sauce. Frozen herbs will not be good as a garnish. You'll have to grow some in a south window here in the winter for that.

Herbal Vinegars

Preserving herbs in vinegars is really very simple. Use clean sterilized bottles. Do not use bottles with metal tops, there can be a reaction with the vinegar. Tight fitting cork stoppers work well with recycled glass bottles. Use herbs of your choice, Tarragon, Rosemary, Basil are just a few tasty ones to use. Choose wine, white or cider vinegar depending on whether you are making it for a dressing or a marinade. Wine or white vinegar is better for marinades and cider (like Bragg Organic apple Cider Vinegar) is better for salad dressings. Pack the herbs in the bottles then warm the vinegar, and pour over the herbs. Close and put in a sunny window sill for 2-4 weeks. Shake the bottle every day. When the steeping time is over use a cheese cloth and strain the liquid into a fresh decorative bottle. You may

add a few fresh sprigs for identifying the type of vinegar you just made. Plus it makes it look pretty, especially if you would like to give it as a gift. Tie a little ribbon or raffia around it with a tag for uses to give as a nice hostess gift.



Time for Seed Saving

Fall is the time to collect and save seeds from your favorite plants. There are some tips you need to know and consider first if you would like to save your seeds. I will tell you what I do know about seed saving even if I haven't actively saved many of my own.

First of all only open-pollinated, non hybrid or heirloom (self pollinating) varieties are worth saving. Hybrids can be sterile or will not come back true to seed, meaning hybrids will not be like it's parent plant. Take notes and save the tags that come with the plants so you know whether the plant is a hybrid or not. What open-pollinated means is that it has been pollinated by insects, birds, animals or wind without any human intervention or manipulation. With that being said, you need to be careful collecting open-pollinated plant seeds because many can be cross-pollinated by wind, insects, etc. It's best to plant one variety of say, corn or

If you know your plants are heirlooms, these would be the easiest to save because you will know they will usually grow true to seed.

squash in an area to help prevent that. Self-pollinated plants pollinate themselves with a male and female flower on the same plant. They will grow true to seed each year and produce offspring exactly like it's parents as long as it is not a hybrid. An heirloom would be a self-pollinator which can be passed

down from generation to generation. Some vegetable seeds would include: beans, peas, lettuce, radishes, tomatoes. Heirloom flower seeds such as: cleome, foxgloves, hollyhock, nasturtium, sweet pea, and zinnia would be the easiest to save. I have saved foxglove and delphinium seeds which worked very well.

Always save seed from the healthiest plants. Some seeds can transmit diseases which could infect an entire crop.

Saving Tomatoes

This is the process of saving tomato seeds and it can be just a little smelly. You may not want this on your kitchen cupboard while fermenting.

First, scoop out the seedy jelly (you may eat the meaty part). Put it in a small container, a glass jelly jar works well. Make sure you label the jar with the date and type of tomato. Add a ½ of cup of water in it. Cover it with cheese cloth or a coffee filter, hold it in place with a rubber band. Put it in a place out of the sun for 3 or 4 days. You will see the good seeds fall to the bottom of the jar

when ready and there will be a moldy film on the top after a few days, remove it carefully. Pour out the water and any remaining pulp, add fresh water and stir, strain out that water, continue adding clean water and rinsing until all the seeds are clean. Place the clean seeds on a glass dish or paper plate. I wouldn't use paper towels as the seeds will stick to it and be impossible to get off. Once the seeds are completely dry, place in an envelope. Put the envelope in an air tight container, store in a dry place. Again make sure you label the envelope.



Patty's
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Natural & Organic Garden Supply

Two new shops have moved in our building. They will be having their **Grand Opening Sunday, Oct. 16. Twice The Charm & Whimsy By Rhonda.** Call for more info.

There will also be a Farmer's Market outside on the property in front of Patty's Plants Garden Center on this day.

www.pattysplants.com

Patty's Homemade Garden Tomato/Veggie Soup

6-8 med tomatoes, peeled, cored & chopped in chunks
1 summer squash (patty pan or zucchini)
2 sweet peppers
2 carrots chopped
1 celery stalk
1 medium potato
2 T butter or 1T olive oil
8 large sweet basil leaves chopped
2 T fresh chopped oregano
1 T fresh fine chopped parsley
1 medium onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
8 oz can tomato paste
2-3 t sea salt,
1 Chicken or vegetable bouillon cube
2 pre-cooked chicken breasts or leftovers, cut in chunks (opt)
1 cup uncooked elbow macaroni (opt)



In a large soup pot. Sautee onion and garlic in butter for 5 minutes, or until soft. Chop all veggies in chunks then add and stir in tomatoes, vegetables, chicken (opt.) salt and herbs, except basil (add that closer to the end). Fill pot with water after you've added all the vegetables. Add bouillon and paste, stir. Bring to a boil, and simmer for about 25 minutes then add elbow macaroni (opt) cook until noodles are done, another 10 min or so. May need to add a bit more water at that time. Enjoy!

Fall Clean Up

Cleaning up debris is very important for fall. Remove all plant debris from the garden. Dead plants provide winter hiding places for insects and harbor pests that cause diseases. You should either turn plant debris into the garden soil or compost it. Plant material that is diseased should not be put in your compost bin unless you are certain your compost has enough heat to kill the disease causing organisms.

Garden tool clean-up

Don't wait until spring to clean up your garden tools. Pick out your favorites, use the ones that have seen better days as garden art. Find a way to recycle them creatively. Use this easy way which I use when



cleaning my tools. If there is caked on soil, use mineral oil or even easier a spray on veggie oil. Spray it on and let sit for a few minutes then rinse off with the garden hose. Dry with an old towel. Look to see if any tool has rust on it, rub with steel wool. Sharpen any tool that needs it, they will be easier to work with. If the wooden handles have splinters, use sandpaper and smooth out. Use linseed oil with a soft cloth to treat the wood. Clean your tools after using so you don't spread any diseases, fungi, insect eggs and viruses from one plant to the next. By cleaning the tools this fall you'll be ready to get started right away in the spring.