

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



October 1, 2010

Our October To-Do List

1. If you haven't already, start taking in plants to be overwintered. Be sure plants and pots are clean and sans hitchhikers.
2. Finish harvesting fruits such as apples, pears and quince.
3. Discard annuals that have done their job. Toss on compost heap.
4. Wash and dry empty pots. Put away.
5. Hurry up and take cuttings of plants like hydrangea, coleus and geraniums to root. This is also a good time to divide root bound plants. Make gifts of some these "babies."
6. Keep weeding.
7. Stop mowing the lawn. Instead, get rid of any thatch, reseed the lawn and spread a layer of compost. The compost layer feeds the soil and thwarts the weeds.
8. Cut back all perennials except those that will provide birds with food or look interesting in the cold months.
9. Lift tender bulbs, corms and tubers like dahlias and gladioli and store in a cool, dry place. Protect from rodents.
10. Collect ripe seeds. Dry and store in a cool, dry place. Don't forget to label.
11. Clean and put away outdoor furniture.
12. Unless you are growing cool weather crops, clear the vegetable plot once all plants are done. Turn

the soil over. At this point, you can either grow “green manure” like wheat grass or clover, which will protect the soil and put nutrients back into it, or you can leave the plot fallow. As soon as the ground is workable in spring, turn the green manure over and let it decay into the ground. Alternatively, cover the turned over and denuded plot with black garden fabric for the winter season. The cover will inhibit weeds and warm the soil quickly in spring.

13. Start planting spring blooming bulbs. Rule of thumb is that the bulbs should be placed in hole three times deeper than the bulb. I heard placing a leaf or two of holly deters critters from digging up the bulbs. I have not tried it but if you do, will you please let me know about it? Instead of adding bone meal, I add compost to feed the bulbs. I find bone meal attracts unwanted attention from squirrels and such.

14. There is still time to plant trees and shrubs. Be sure they are well protected and fed. The season ahead can be harsh and you want the new plants to pull through well.

15. Rake the leaves! If possible, deposit the leaves in woods and compost bins.

16. Get ready with autumn decorations. Think natural. Do please remember not to encourage the use of invasive things like bittersweet. The less used, the less it'll be the icon of the season.

For those skeptics who doubted that I'd be making jams and such from my harvest, there's a particular photo being submitted as evidence. I rest my case.