

Cleaning Out Your Garden

After harvesting the fruits and vegetables you labored over throughout the summer, it's important to clean out your garden.

Leaving behind decaying plants or roots can cause a breeding ground for pests and bacteria that can harm your plants next year.

Fall is the perfect time for a garden overhaul because waiting for winter will introduce a harder ground and frost that can cripple a plant's chances of returning. From maintaining your gardening tools to preparing land for next season's planting, readying a garden during autumn will provide an advantage for a successful harvest when the temperatures rise again.

CLEAR THE GROUND

First, you will want to clear the ground of anything used for last summer's harvest. This includes items you used to support your plants like trellises, tomato cages and stakes. Keep these to the side because they will require maintenance before they are stored for the year.

Next, it's important to remove dormant or dead plants, fruits and vegetables. Inspect them for signs of decay or disease before adding them to your compost pile. If they are compromised, they should instead be burned or disposed of. The Morton Arboretum recommends compost should avoid diseased plants as it may spread to next year's crop.

WINTER PREP

Once the ground is cleared of plants, the Farmer's Almanac suggests these steps when preparing your garden for winter.

Gently till the soil to remove insects that have laid claim to the garden to avoid their intrusion during spring and summer.

Add a layer of compost, leaves or aged manure to create a barrier. You can improve your soil by sowing a cover crop like winter rye.

If weeds have become unmanageable, cover them with black plastic or cardboard throughout the season to subdue them.

If you add flowers to your garden landscape, now is the time to plant spring-blooming bulbs for a beautiful appearance next year.

CLEAN EQUIPMENT

You will want to clean your plant-supporting equipment from earlier use with a bleach and water solution to eradicate diseases.

Don't forget to clean up your other gardening tools like rakes, hoes and shovels to make it easier to get started next year.





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