

# Fall Gardening and Winter Preparation

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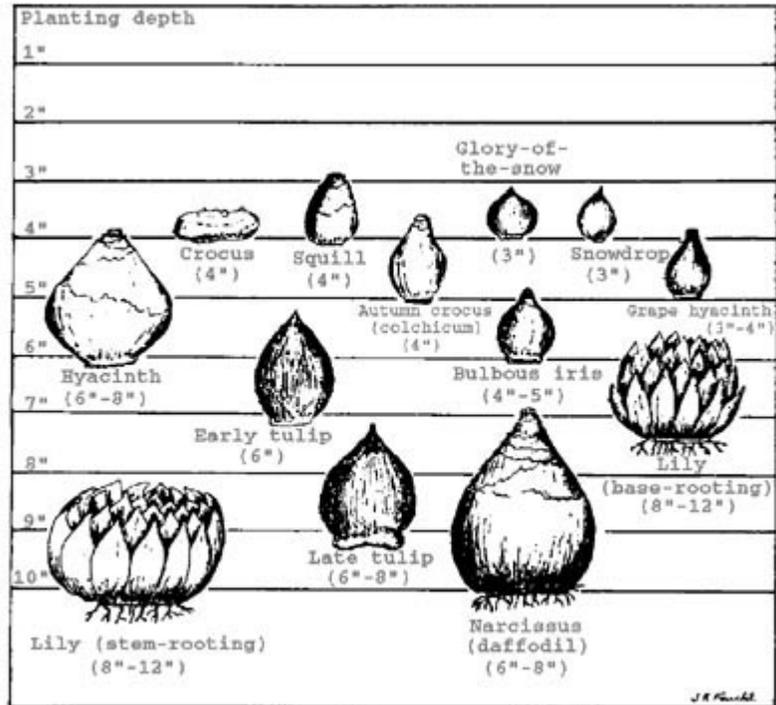
Many people think of gardening as a spring and summer activity. As the days begin to shorten and the leaves turn it is easy to let your garden over-winter as is and wait for the inspiration that arrives with spring. Actually, late summer and autumn are important times for your garden, and a little attention during this season will help your plants survive the winter and emerge healthier in the spring.

The first item on your fall gardening agenda should be to plant bulbs and divide your perennials if needed. Many garden centers have sales on perennials during autumn. Remember that our season in Teller County is shorter than in other areas of Colorado, therefore perennials should be divided and planted in early September. They will need the remainder of the growing season to establish themselves prior to winter. This is also the time to plant your bare root perennials such as peonies, poppies, irises, etc., and also any wildflower seed you might wish to add to your landscape.

One of my favorite gardening activities is planning and planting my bulbs for spring blooming. These include tulips, daffodils, crocus, alliums, and hyacinths. The lilies are usually planted in the spring while autumn crocuses are planted in midsummer while the remaining bulbs shown are planted in the fall. Select the largest bulbs of your chosen variety possible, as bulb size correlates with flower size.

Bulbs are planted deeper than seed and require a sunny location with adequate soil drainage. Apply phosphorus fertilizer at planting time at the bottom of the planting hole so that it is available for the roots.

Make sure that the soil you put back into the hole is amended with organic matter such as sphagnum peat moss or well-decomposed compost using up to one-third of the volume of soil removed from the bed. Also, covering the bulbs with mulch will help them survive the winter.



After the frost arrives and your green plants turn to brown it's time to put your garden to rest for the winter. Remove all the dead flowers, stems, and leaves from your garden. This step is important because insect eggs can over-winter on the foliage. You can then cover your beds with a 3 inch layer of mulch. This will help maintain a more consistent soil temperature and can prevent damage to roots and bulbs caused by the freezing and thawing of the soil.

It is also important to remember to water your garden, trees, lawns, and shrubs during the winter, especially if it is unusually warm and dry. Choose a day when the air and soil temperatures are above 40 degrees and there is no snow cover. Apply water at mid-day so that it will have time to soak in before possibly freezing at night. This will help avoid winter kill.

Spending a little extra time in the fall preparing your garden for winter will help improve plant health, minimize pests, and have it ready for the arrival of spring.

For more information, visit the CSU Extension website at [www.ext.colostate.edu](http://www.ext.colostate.edu) and refer to fact sheets 7.410, 7.235, 7.214, 7.211. For questions regarding produce, landscape, and horticulture questions; please contact the Teller County, Colorado Master Gardener grow line at 686-7980, visit our website at [www.co.teller.co.us/csu](http://www.co.teller.co.us/csu), or visit our booth at the Woodland Park farmers' market.