

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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*“Setting Your Home Landscape up for Spring Success”*

Crisp, fall temperatures may signal a step away from warmer summer weather, but that doesn't mean we can put away all the summer work when it comes to our home landscapes. Several fall chores can set up your lawn and garden for success next spring. Here are some tips to keep in mind for different aspects of your home landscapes.

### **Home Lawns**

Leaves from trees can create a barrier to healthy lawns by blocking sunlight that the grass receives, which can create dead areas in the lawn next spring. One suggestion to help with this is mulch mowing. Once you get a thin layer of leaves down, take the bagger off your mower and mow over the leaves. The mower will chop and shred those leaves and they will filter back to the soil surface.

Mulch mowing breaks leaves down as compost to the soil level, releasing organic matter. You have the right amount of layer down when you can look behind you and see a majority of grass and a few little pieces of leaves here and there. You can also add fallen leaves to a compost pile to mulch gardens next spring. The leaves would also be great for adding a layer around the base of shrubs and other areas this fall as soil amendments.

Lawns should be mowed to their summer length before putting the mower away for the winter. Cool season lawns – tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass – may still be growing as late as Thanksgiving. While warm-season lawns – zoysia and Bermuda – are usually done once the first frost hits.

### **Gardens**

Fall time should be used as a time for a full garden cleanup, including removing remaining vines and weeds. Gardeners should also consider spading or tilling the soil. You can do a rough till in the fall that leaves it looking chunky. Then in March or April, hit it with a rake and you're ready to plant.

### **Lawnmower Maintenance**

Our modern-day gasoline tends to be a little more stable than older products, but it's still important to decide whether to run the mower dry before winter, or to add a stabilizer before storing the mower. It really depends on your preference. However, do a tune-up of your mower before winter starts. Change the oil and air filter and sharpen the blade. Many wait until March to do this, but you can do it in the fall and when spring comes, you're ready to go.

One thing most will overlook is the tires of your mower. If your tires are worn then your cutting height might not be true. Putting new wheels on your mower might add a ½ inch to the mowing height.

### **Garden Hoses**

Unhook your garden hoses from outdoor faucets. If left attached, they may cause backup pressure, leading to frozen pipes. Also, if you leave water in your hoses then the water will freeze and expand to rupture the hose. Ideally, store the hose inside or in a container out of sunlight.

### **Watering Trees**

Kansas gets an adequate amount of rain or snowfall for trees, in most winters. As many know, there hasn't been anything normal about our rainfall lately. If we get a dry winter, it is a good idea to check soil moisture around trees in January and February, and give trees a drink of water on a warm day when the soil is not frozen.

Happy Fall everyone!

Information comes from K-State Research Extension – Johnson County, horticulture agent, Dennis Patton.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at [benjam63@ksu.edu](mailto:benjam63@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension - Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.