**Marty Miller—OSU Master Gardener™**

**Garden Highlights**

**Zzzzzzz...Put Your Garden To Bed!**

The calendar says winter begins December 22nd — my garden feels like it is starting sooner! November is the time of year when we see the last colors of the growing season giving way to a dormant landscape.

However, there are still chores to be completed before putting the garden tools away for the season. Inside this issue of Garden Highlights are tips for preparing your garden for winter as well as tips for what you can do now to help prevent plant disease in the spring.

With the weather turning chilly and damp, check out page 4 for a Harvest Soup recipe that will help chase that chill. And don’t forget our feathered friends—we’ve also included a recipe just for them on page 3.

During the fall and winter, don’t forget to make notes of what was good about the garden the past season, as well as those things that you weren’t happy with; these notes, taken while memories are still fresh, will serve you well as you’re inside these next few months, planning for next year’s garden.

Enjoy the colors of fall...and Happy Thanksgiving to all!

-Marty

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**OSU Master Gardener™ Training**

If you would like to apply to take the OSU Master Gardener™ training program in Hood River County, applications will be available November 7 to December 18 2011. The training is open to everyone with an interest in gardening; the training is offered one time each year from mid January to the end of March in Hood River County. The training consists of two parts: part one is classroom training (63 hours) and part two is continuing education, volunteering in plant clinics and extending home information to the community (55 hours). The cost of the eleven week course is $150 which includes a 500 page Reference Manual and all classroom materials. The course begins 01/18/12. Applications are available online at [http://extension.oregonstate.edu/hoodriver/MG/mastergardeners.php](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/hoodriver/MG/mastergardeners.php) or at the OSU Extension office located at 2990 Experiment Station Road in Hood River.

As a Master Gardener™ you will work and play with some of the most talented and interesting gardeners in the community. Information about the Wasco County Master Gardener™ training program which begins in February 2012 will appear in the next issue of Garden Highlights.
Winter Garden Preparation

Now is the time to clean up and cut back your garden before winter weather arrives. Before cold weather sets in, cleaning up in your yard and garden will help protect your landscape from the ravages of winter. Several chores can best be done in November:

• Mulch your empty garden beds for the winter if they don’t have a cover crop on them yet. Mulch will protect them from erosion (even flat beds experience soil erosion and compaction from rainwater). Mulching will add organic matter to your soil and it will encourage earthworm activity and keep weed germination down.

• Control the weeds that have recently germinated from early fall rains. It is a much easier job now than in the spring. A hoe or hand pulling will do it as the soil will be damp and loose.

• Apply slow-release nitrogen fertilizer to lawns. Just enough to keep the lawn green, but not enough to cause need for additional mowing. Don’t use quick-release fertilizer, as it will just leach away. Don’t apply fertilizer to trees, flowers or shrubs this time of year as it may reduce their cold tolerance.

• Cut back late flowering perennials like asters and chrysanthemums to a few inches. Peonies can be cut back all the way to the ground. Mulch the crowns with compost to protect them from hard freezes.

• Prune late summer and fall flowering shrubs like butterfly bush, clethra and hydrangea several weeks before icy weather or hold off until early spring to do your pruning. Trim back roses to knee height so winter winds won’t cause damage.

• Keep your perennial gardens free of wind-blown plant refuse. Continue to rake as more leaves fall. Add the leaves to your compost pile to turn them into humus.

• Pull up spent summer annuals like snapdragons, marigolds, zinnias, cosmos and nasturtiums that have died back.

• Dig and store summer flowering bulbs and tubers including dahlias, calla lilies, cannas, gladiolus and tuberoses. Store them in a dark, dry and cool (above freezing) place.

• Keep the yard’s leaves raked or mulched in order to maintain your turf through the winter season. Too many leaves accumulating can smother out grasses if they aren’t removed periodically.

• Don’t forget to mulch the strawberry beds with straw or leaves. Mulch should be applied after there is some frost in the ground. Mulching strawberries serves two purposes—to keep the winter weather from damaging the plants and to keep the soil cold so the plants won’t begin to grow until spring arrives.

Plant Disease Prevention

Garden and landscape plants are susceptible to plant diseases which can reduce the yield of your vegetable crops and disfigure your ornamentals. In order to help prevent diseases from developing, it is a good idea to do a few chores in the fall. Now is a good time to remove any diseased plants and to do cleanup in and around your gardens. Cleaning up garden foliage now will help decrease the incidence of disease next season. (Garden litter also becomes a haven in which insects can seek shelter from the winter weather.)

• Destroy diseased plants. Try to remove infected plants as soon as you notice them. Otherwise, the disease might spread to nearby plants. It usually is easier to spot disease problems in trees and shrubs in the summer or fall when leaves are present. Avoid composting diseased plants, including fallen leaves from diseased trees or shrubs, since several disease-causing organisms can survive in compost unless the pile reaches 160 degrees.

• When removing diseased branches, prune two or three inches below the infected area. If you do cut into the infected part of the limb, sterilize your pruning equipment by wiping the blades with rubbing alcohol or a mixture of one part household bleach and nine parts water.

• Clean and ready garden beds now to start with a clean slate next spring. Spade under, compost, or remove and destroy crop refuse soon after you finish harvesting your garden. Removing plant refuse eliminates places where disease-causing organisms can overwinter.
Now is the ideal time to feed wild birds! Backyard bird feeders can help birds get enough food to maintain sufficient body heat during cold weather; October through April is the ideal season to feed birds because their natural foods are not abundant. Be kind to the birds—they help control many unwanted insects in our gardens! Unwanted pests can ruin your green thumb dreams of a bountiful vegetable garden or a lush, green lawn. You can protect your gardening efforts by attracting pests’ natural enemies. Birds are good predators who eat insects and limit your need to resort to dangerous chemical pesticides. It doesn’t matter where you live—in an apartment, a house, in the city, or in the country—our feathered friends need our help during winter! And it provides great bird watching from your own backyard!

For Our Feathered Friends

| Common Backyard Birds and The Foods They Like to Eat |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Bird             | Sunflower | Millet | Nyjer | Peanuts | Suet |
| Chickadee        | X         | X      | X      | X      |      |
| House Finch/ Purple Finch | X | X | X |      |      |
| Sparrows         | X         | X      | X      | X      | X    |
| Jays             | X         |        |        |        | X    |
| American Goldfinch | X   | X      | X      |        |      |
| Dark-eyed Junco  | X         | X      | X      | X      | X    |
| Spotted Towhee   | X         | X      |        |        | X    |
| Downy/Hairy Woodpecker | X     |        |        |        | X    |
| Nuthatches       | X         |        | X      |        |      |
| Mourning Dove    | X         | X      |        |        | X    |
| Quail            | X         |        |        |        |      |
| Crow/Raven       | X         |        |        |        |      |

Homemade Suet Cakes

1. Heat to boiling 1 part suet and 6 parts water.
2. Add 2 parts cornmeal and ½ part flour.
3. Allow the mixture to cool. Pour into molds to make 1½-inch cakes, and allow to harden. Cupcake tins, butter tubs, or square freezer containers work well as molds.
4. Store in freezer.

- You can add peanut butter, lard, or vegetable shortening to the mix, or use one of them as a substitute for the suet.
- You can also add birdseed, chopped nuts, oatmeal, or chopped fruit to the recipe.

The Indoor Garden

Your houseplants need some TLC in the fall and winter (and you probably have some extra time to devote to them). Here are some do’s and don’ts:

- Don’t place plants near direct sources of hot or cold drafts such as doors, windows, furnace vents or woodstoves. Wilting foliage or brown-tipped leaves may be symptoms of a temperature problem.
- Do fertilize lightly during the winter (about every other month) to maintain green foliage. Use a water-soluble, medium-strength fertilizer (10-5-5).
- Don’t overwater your houseplants. Yellowing lower leaves may be a symptom of overwatering. Water each plant based on its needs rather than a regular schedule. Simply check the soil 2” beneath the surface with your finger to detect whether the soil is still damp before watering.
- Do inspect your plants (undersides too) for any pests. You can gently wash the foliage with a mild soapy solution or wipe the leaves with an alcohol-soaked cotton ball to rid most insects. Be sure to rinse completely!
- Do make sure your houseplants receive adequate light. Leaves with bleached-out areas indicate too much light, while thin, leggy growth of a plant may indicate too little light. Generally, flowering plants prefer stronger light and foliage plants will tolerate low light.
Garden Feasting with Chef Michael

“The colder weather has arrived! I enjoy this time of year and all the wonderful soups and stews that help keep me warm. Here is a tasty recipe using items from your garden now preserved in your root cellar, freezer and pantry. Enjoy!” –Chef Michael

Harvest Soup

- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup diced celery
- ½ cup sliced carrots
- ½ cup diced potatoes
- ½ cup shredded cabbage
- ½ cup diced turnips
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- ½ cup frozen green beans
- ¼ teaspoon dried basil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 ½ cups boiling water
- 1 pint canned tomatoes
- Salt & Pepper to taste
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese for serving

Add all ingredients except the tomatoes to the boiling water; cover and boil gently for 15 minutes; break up large pieces of tomatoes and add to vegetable mixture; continue cooking until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes; remove the bay leaf. Serves 4. This soup is good served with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and a crusty artisan bread!

Fellow Gardeners: Our gardens have finished producing bounty to donate to our local food banks. They still need our help! Please donate non-perishable items this fall and winter! It is very much appreciated...plant it forward!

Garden Highlights Newsletter
Tip, Tricks & Humor

Marty Miller
OSU Master Gardener

“Your thoughts feed Garden Highlights the way good soil feeds our gardens!”
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Garden Highlights (current and past issues) can also be found online at http://extension.oregonstate.edu/wasco; simply click on Master Gardeners™, then Garden Highlights. The print version can be found at select garden centers and businesses throughout the Mid-Columbia area. A big thanks to my loyal readers!

Tri-County Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program
Upcoming free hazardous waste collections for households and small businesses will be:
Fridays, 11/18 & 12/16, 9am-2pm at Hood River Garbage Service;
Saturdays, 11/19 & 12/17, 9am-2pm at The Dalles Disposal Service.
For more information visit: www.tricountyclecycle.com

“More information on gardening, please contact your local OSU Extension Office/Master Gardener™ Program. They have a wealth of knowledge to share! I welcome hearing from you about Garden Highlights! Please pass along any gardening tips, humor, stories or photos you would like to share with readers. Send me your pearls of wisdom!” “The scent of the rose remains in the hand that gives the rose!” –Marty

Prospect Farm Publishing (prospectfarm@hrecn.net) Garden Highlights is printed on compostable paper!
November’s flower is the **Chrysanthemum**; perennial; flowers summer to fall; can be started by seed, root division, stem cuttings or starter plant; prefers full sun and well-drained soil; mums will last about two weeks in a vase.

**Garden Highlights**
gardenhighlights@hre.cn.net
Use this calendar to record your seed starting dates, transplant dates, harvest dates, etc.

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- Hang bird feeders and fill with seed.
- Prepare your tool/garden shed for winter—move any fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals to a high & dry location where they won’t freeze and away from children & pets.
- Drain and store hoses carefully to avoid damage from freezing; protect built-in sprinkler systems—drain the system, insulate the valve mechanisms.
- Cover beds with mulch to protect them from erosion and compaction by rain or snowmelt.

This calendar is targeted to USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 & 7.

"Heap high the farmer’s wintry hoard! Heap high the golden corn! No richer gift has Autumn poured from out her lavish horn!" -John Greenleaf Whittier
**Flower of the Month**

December’s flower is the **Narcissus**; perennial; flowers in spring; very fragrant, excellent for cutting; prefers full sun and well-drained soil; Narcissus look good planted in borders or in naturalized drifts at the base of trees.

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Use this calendar to record your seed starting dates, transplant dates, harvest dates, etc.

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**DECEMBER 2011**

**Pruning Your Backyard Grapevines**

Prune your grape vines heavily in winter—when gardeners prune, they should remove the majority of wood produced the previous season until 90% is pruned off. Mature plants should be pruned yearly to remove all growth except new one-year old fruiting canes and renewal spurs. Grapes are produced from buds that will grow into shoots on one-year old canes. The most fruitful canes will be those that were exposed to light during the growing season. These are thicker than a pencil in width and as close to the trunk as possible. Visit **OSU Extension Service online at http://extension.oregonstate.edu** to view "Growing Grapes in Your Home Garden" (EC 1305).

This calendar is targeted to USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 6 & 7.

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**Garden Chore Checklist**

- ☑ Request seed catalogs.
- ☑ Plan design changes for next season’s gardens.
- ☑ Add gardening supplies to your holiday wish list.
- ☑ Check flower bulbs, fresh vegetables & fruits for rot and fungus problems; discard any showing signs of rot.
- ☑ Tie limbs of columnar evergreens to prevent snow or ice breakage.
- ☑ Check firewood for insect infestations; burn affected wood first; do not store inside.
- ☑ Order spring bulbs.

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"In the depths of winter I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer." -Albert Camus