I’ve trimmed and pruned, raked and cleaned, until the cows came home—my garden and yard chores are finished for the season! Well, almost. In this edition of Garden Highlights are some things I’m doing now and some things to do later this month. Right now it’s spider season and I’m on patrol—if these creatures are scampering around your home check out page 3 for some tips. Then if all this work is making you hungry, there is a tasty recipe on page 3 utilizing winter squash. Now, what to do with those cows?

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Garden Highlights is celebrating 8 years! Our readership is 4,798 and growing! We would like to extend a big welcome to the following readers who joined us this month:

Lois, Marie, Crystal, James & Allie

We’re always looking to expand our family of readers—please join us by emailing me at:

gardenhighlights@hrecn.net

We look forward to hearing from you!

“Gardening is something you learn by doing—and by making mistakes...like cooking, gardening is a constant process of experimentation, repeating the successes and throwing out the failures.”

- Carol Stocker

Happy holidays and a heartfelt thanks to all my readers! May your holidays be filled with memories from summer, fall’s harvest, winter’s dreams and spring’s promise!

- Marty

“‘I saw the lovely arch of rainbow span the sky, the gold sun burning as the rain swept by.’

- Elizabeth Coatsworth, November
A couple reader inquiries asked if we could discuss the differences between compost, mulch, and bark dust. Over time we have talked a lot about compost, mulch, and bark dust, however we really haven’t discussed the differences and when to use or apply them. So Kathy and Laura (and other interested readers), we will try to give you an overview on these three materials.

**Compost** is organic matter that has been decomposed and then is recycled as a fertilizer and soil amendment. The decomposition process is aided by shredding the plant matter, adding water and assuring proper aeration. Worms and fungi further break up the material. Aerobic bacteria manage the chemical process by converting this material into heat, carbon dioxide and ammonium. The ammonium is further converted by bacteria into plant-nourishing nitrites and nitrates. **Compost** can be rich in nutrients.

For the sake of this article, we won’t go into composting per se as there are many places to get more detailed information on composting and how to do it. **Compost** is generally recommended as a soil additive and can be added by **tilling into the soil** to boost the level of organic matter and the overall fertility of the soil. It can be applied to the soil surface, however its effectiveness is diminished.

**Mulch** is a layer of material that is **applied to the surface of the soil**. Its purpose is to conserve moisture, improve the fertility and health of the soil, reduce weed growth and to enhance the visual appeal of an area. **Mulch** is usually but not exclusively organic. It may be permanent (e.g. bark chips) or temporary (e.g. plastic sheeting). It may be applied to bare soil and around existing plants. Mulches of manure or compost will incorporate naturally into the soil by the activity of worms and other organisms.

**Bark dust** (also bark chips, bark mulch or beauty bark) is a form of **mulch** produced out of chipped or shredded trees. Coarser forms of **bark dust** may be known as bark nuggets or chips. Trees generally used in the production of **bark dust** include the Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock and cedar. **Bark dust** often is a byproduct of lumber production, or from the yard recycling process.

**Bark dust** is applied to the surface of the soil, with finer forms being used the same as **mulch** and coarser forms are used for weed control, as a playground surface or other decorative purposes. **Bark dust** increases soil acidity and its decomposition uses nitrogen, especially when mixed with soil. Additionally, **bark dust** is commonly used in landscaping and weed suppression; many plants that are considered weeds do not tolerate the soil conditions it creates. On the other hand, the same is true for many flowering plants such as dahlias.

The **OSU Extension Service Master Gardener™** program strongly recommends mulching in autumn, as this will help protect your soil and prevent spring weed infestations. (Weed-suppressing mulches save a lot of work; you can easily pull out the occasional weed that may poke through the mulch.)

- The end of the growing season is the optimal time to work mulch into the soil; this practice will help supply organic matter for the following growing season. On your perennial beds and beds that are now empty of summer crops, mulch the soil surface with an organic material. Sawdust, straw and compost make excellent mulches and are easy to apply. Simply spread a 2–to 4-inch layer of one of these organic materials on the soil surface around your plants, making certain to not cover the plants.

- Adding mulch is not a one-time task; eventually you will need to add more mulching material over the old layers. If you are adding more mulch to an existing layer, use a garden fork to rough up and loosen existing, compacted mulch before adding a fresh layer.

- Be aware that some mulches may contain weed seeds. To alleviate the weed problem in manure, compost it for one year, and then use it as mulch. Avoid mulching with hay, especially ryegrass straw, unless it is thoroughly composted—otherwise it has too many seeds that will eventually sprout and create a serious weed problem.

Special thanks to **Garden Highlights** readers Kathy G. and Laura R. for submitting inquiries about the uses of compost, mulch and bark dust!
It’s Spider Season!

It’s that time of year when we seem to be sharing our home with some unwanted guests—eight-legged guests! Hobo spiders (also known as aggressive house spiders) are on the move and searching for mates, thus they are more visible to homeowners. Most of the time they stay in secluded areas of your garage, basement, wood pile, etc. but now they may be wandering into your house (why they show up in the bathtub is still a mystery to me). Here are some tips to reduce your unwanted guests:

- Seal holes around doors, windows and outlets for plumbing and wiring where spiders can gain entry.
- Sweep webs from corners, rock walls, under eaves and around shrubs.
- Keep the premises free of debris such as boxes, papers, clothing and lumber; keep wood piles a distance from the house.
- Place simple cardboard sticky traps (without the use of insecticide sprays) along baseboards and bed frames where wandering spiders tend to move. (Sticky traps are available at garden centers and hardware stores.)

Time to Prune

If you have fruit trees in your backyard, you should prune for fruit production and tree health this winter. The best time to prune fruit trees is anywhere between November through March. To learn about pruning and training fruit trees, download or order a copy of OSU Extension’s “Training & Pruning Your Home Orchard” (PNW 400). This 14-page illustrated guide explains and illustrates the basic principles of training and pruning apple, pear, cherry, peach, prune, plum, walnut, filbert and apricot trees. Visit OSU Extension Service online to download/order pamphlets about pruning: http://extension.oregonstate.edu.

Harvest Winter Squash Before The First Frost

Winter squash (butternut, calabaza, Hubbard, sweet dumpling, acorn, etc.) is planted in the spring, grows all summer and is harvested at the mature stage before the first frost; harvest winter squash with two inches of stem remaining—a stem cut too short is like an open wound which will cause early decay. For storage, choose squash that is heavy with fairly glossy skin that is unblemished by soft spots, cuts, breaks or discolorations; most winter squash benefits from a curing stage—curing is simply holding the squash at room temperature (about 70˚F) for 10 to 20 days; after curing, transfer to a cool (45˚ to 50˚F), dry place such as the basement or garage for long term storage. Do not allow to freeze! Winter squash can be stored up to six months (warmer temperatures simply mean shorter storage time). Also, do not store whole squash in the refrigerator—this is too humid and they will deteriorate quickly.

Squash Bread

- Sift together the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg, set aside.
- In a large bowl mix the butter, sugar and honey until light and fluffy, beat in the eggs, then add the squash puree and beat until smooth.
- Fold in the dry ingredients; pour into a greased 9x5-inch loaf pan.
- Bake at 350˚F until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean (about 1 hour); remove from the oven and leave in pan for 10 minutes; turn out onto a wire cooling rack to cool; serve warm or at room temperature.
Garden Journals

While looking outside into the drizzle and gray, gardeners may want to start planning next season’s gardens and put together a garden journal. Garden journals can help you track your gardening successes and failures—which plant worked best in a particular location, which seed had the best germination rate, which plants were susceptible to powdery mildew—and can be as simple or complex as you wish. Keeping notes, sketches and photos will serve as a good reference later. Here is a list of some ideas you may want to incorporate into your journal:

• Daily activities in the garden
• Garden plans & drawings
• Types & amounts of fertilizers used
• Pests you found/control solutions
• Plant diseases/solutions for control
• garden budget/expenses
• lists of vegetables, including cultivar
• rainfall amounts/how often you watered
• soil conditions & amendments
• seed packets/plant tags
• favorite sources for seed, equipment
• spacing & depth of seeds/plants
• recipes for your garden harvest
• which veggies performed best
• pictures/drawings of gardens

Check out bonus page 7 of this issue of Garden Highlights for a sample journal page to give you some ideas and get you started on your garden journal! Planning ahead can save you time and money!

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 & winter! It is very much appreciated…plant it forward!

Garden Highlights Newsletter
Tips, Tidbits & Humor

Marty Miller
OSU Master Gardener™

“Your thoughts feed Garden Highlights the way good soil feeds our gardens!”

gardenhighlights@hrecn.net

Garden Journals (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!

Gorge Gardeners…
...get local weather information and forecasts (as well as wit & wisdom) at this great site:
HOOD RIVER WEATHER
http://hoodriverweather.info

Tri-County Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program

Upcoming free hazardous waste collections for households will be:
Friday November 16th, 9am-2pm at Hood River Garbage Service;
Saturday November 17th, 9am-2pm at The Dalles Disposal Service.
For more information visit: www.tricountyrecycle.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
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@hrecn.net

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

**Garden Chore Checklist**

- 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 and 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.
- Cover rhubarb and asparagus beds with composted manure and straw.
- Place mulch around berries for winter protection.
- Service lawn mower prior to winter.

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

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Sun  Mon  Tue  Wed  Thu  Fri  Sat

4    Daylight Saving Time Ends
5
6    Election Day
7    Last Quarter
8
9
10
11   Veterans Day
12   New Moon
13   
14
15
16   Free Hazardous Waste Collection in Hood River (see page 4)!
17   Free Hazardous Waste Collection in The Dalles (see page 4)!
18
19   First Quarter
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22   Thanksgiving Day
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28   Full Moon
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“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
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.

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

- Request seed catalogs.
- Plan design changes for next season’s gardens.
- Add gardening supplies to your holiday wish list.
- Check stored 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.
- Turn the compost pile and protect it from heavy rains if necessary.

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

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“Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us, snow is exhilarating. There is no such thing as bad weather, just different kinds of good weather.”

- John Ruskin

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