PEOPLE WITH PLANTS

Fall garden *checklist.*

Plant, protect & prepare.



- Plant / Protect
- Bring indoors / Clean up
- Plan around your local conditions

GardenSage™
by SmartPlant®

Every garden *has its own season.*

A little fall planning can make a big difference in your garden. Use this checklist to decide what to plant, what needs protection, which plants to bring indoors, and what to prepare for next season. Focus on the tasks that fit your garden and local conditions.



YOUR GARDEN AT A GLANCE

Location / ZIP code

USDA zone

Date / usual first frost

Forecast to watch

Find your USDA zone by ZIP code if you do not know it. Your zone describes the average extreme winter cold, not when to plant. Check local frost dates, soil conditions, daylight and each plant's needs before deciding what to do.

Need help getting started?

New to fall gardening? These two free tools can help you find reliable advice for your area.

1. Find your USDA zone: Enter your ZIP code at USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map ↗.
2. Find local gardening advice: Choose your state at Find Your Local Extension Office ↗.
3. Make it your own: Use only the checklist tasks that fit your plants and local conditions.

01

Plant with the *season in mind.*

LOCAL CONDITIONS FIRST



Good plans start in the soil.

- ☐ Check local planting recommendations for vegetables, bulbs, trees and shrubs. Your local Extension office or garden center can help.
- ☐ Before planting vegetables, check how long they need to grow and whether local temperatures allow enough time. Growth slows as days get shorter.
- ☐ Check the soil and weather forecast before sowing or transplanting. If the planting window has passed, plan for next season.
- ☐ Record what is already growing and what may still be harvested.

Plants / next step

02

Give roots *a little protection.*

SHELTER STARTS BELOW THE SURFACE

- [ ] Identify tender plants and containers that need shelter before cold weather.
- [ ] Protect tender plants before cold weather arrives. Plants in pots may need extra protection.
- [ ] Watch the local forecast for cold nights. Your USDA zone does not predict when they will happen.
- [ ] Check soil moisture before watering, and make sure pots drain well.

WHY CONTAINERS NEED EXTRA CARE

Roots feel the cold, too.

Potted plants are highly vulnerable to freezing temperatures because their roots lack the insulating mass of the earth, making them roughly 20°F less hardy than when planted directly in the ground. Because thin container walls provide little protection against harsh winds and freezing air, immediate steps should be taken to shield your exposed container garden before temperatures drop.

The 20°F difference is a planning rule of thumb, not a guarantee. Protection needs vary with the plant, container, exposure and local conditions.

Plants / protection plan

Reference: Illinois Extension · Overwintering potted plants ↗

03

A gentler *move indoors.*

A NEW PLACE. A LITTLE OBSERVATION.



- [ ] Check how much cold each plant tolerates, and bring it indoors before temperatures drop too low.
- [ ] Check under leaves, along stems and around pots for pests. Keep returning plants apart from other indoor plants while monitoring for problems.
- [ ] Give each plant suitable indoor light and temperature. Avoid heating vents and cold drafts.
- [ ] Check potting mix after the move. Water based on the plant and soil, not a fixed schedule.

Indoor location / observations

04

Make room for *what comes next.*

CLEAN UP AND PREPARE

- [ ] Clean tools and store supplies where you can find them next season.
- [ ] Remove diseased material using local disposal guidance; keep it out of a home compost pile.
- [ ] Reuse suitable healthy leaves or plant material where helpful, and leave healthy stems or seed heads where they can support wildlife.
- [ ] Remove fallen debris from indoor pots and check drainage.
- [ ] Note what worked, what struggled and what you want to try next season.

My three priorities

01

02

03



Keep growing, *one step at a time.*

Have questions about a particular plant? Get horticulturist-backed care guidance with GardenSage™ by SmartPlant®.