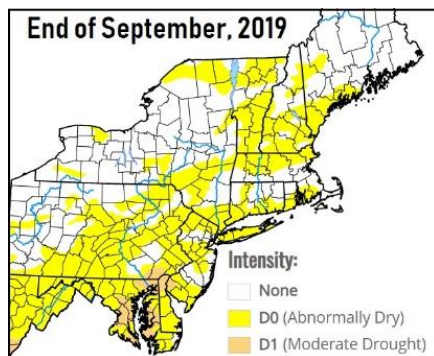


# Garden Club Horticultural Hints

October 2019

## Bring on Autumn!



**Drought watch.** Most of New England experienced a drier-than-usual late summer and early fall. If we don't get more rain soon, you will need to water trees, shrubs and any new plantings. Even established plants need lots of water before entering that long, dry spell when water is unavailable after the soil freezes.



**Autumn leaves are spring nutrients.** Mow leaves into the lawn this fall and be rewarded with healthier soil for the lawn next spring. If you use a bag attached to the mower to catch the chopped leaves, spread those chopped leaves as a mulch around trees and shrubs, and also in your perennial beds. The leaf-grass mix can also be added to the vegetable garden or, of course, your compost pile. Healthy leaves in garden beds can be left in place now, or, if you are a neatnik, rake leaves off beds, chip them up by running over the leaves repeatedly with your mulching mower, and return them to the beds. They will return the nutrients to the soil over the winter. If you are into neither mowing nor raking, spread a layer of compost over the garden beds and let Mother Nature do all the work of breaking down your leaves.



*When repotting never go up more than one or two inches in size from the 'old' container*



*Give yourself a spring surprise by planting hard-neck garlic, point up, after a frost late this month. Plant each clove separately. Next month, mulch with six inches of straw or pine needles to encourage continued root growth.*

**Re-potting season.** October is the month to re-pot any house plants that have outgrown their container. Never go up more than one or two inches (for very large plants) in pot size when repotting. Remove any rotten or mushy roots. Pry apart matted or circling roots, and cut off those that are too compacted. Doing this ensures so the remaining roots will reach out into the new soil. When re-potting, start with a coffee filter (or similar) over the pot's drain hole to contain the soil, then add a layer of soil. Hold the plant at the level you want it to sit and add soil around it to stand it upright (with large plants you may need an assistant). Firm the soil but do not pack it down. Water thoroughly until it runs out the bottom. Set the container aside and add more water until you are certain the entire pot is wet. Use a pot saucer to catch any overflow and place the plant in its new home.

*Lime time! Lime your lawn and garden thus month (it's more fun doing it by hand!). Rain, freezing and thawing, and snow melt all help get the lime down into the soil.*





**Put the summer garden to bed.** In the vegetable garden, finish harvesting your herbs and vegetables early this month. Green tomatoes can be ripened indoors on windowsills if frost threatens. Root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes store well in cool humid locations. Don't let this year's diseases and insects carry over to next year in the fallen leaves and plant debris in your vegetable and ornamental beds. Remove all the debris, bag it, and trash it. Do not compost vegetable garden plants.



*Left: pinholes in iris tubers means borers infested the plant, and the tuber needs to be disposed of.*

*Right: Anything 'stalky' or 'viney' can allow diseases or insects to overwinter in your garden. The solution? Remove it!*

**Dig and divide** overgrown summer bloomers. Siberian iris with dead centers will benefit from the division. On bearded iris, look for any pinholes in the tubers. These indicate iris borers and mean a quick trip to the garbage. Healthy plants can be divided and replanted either in your garden or as gifts for friends. For tubers (dahlias), bulbs (caladiums), rhizomes (cannas) or corms gladiolus), they need to be gently lifted, then allowed to dry out of the sun. Carefully remove most of the dirt and check for insect or disease damage. Store healthy ones in paper bags in a cool dry place.

### Is your lawn new this year?

Never rake a new lawn; the roots are too shallow and can easily be pulled out by the rake. If the leaves are thick, mow the lawn, chopping the leaves up so they will disintegrate over the winter, adding organic matter to your soil.



### Late October is the ideal time

to put in new spring bulbs. If you plant daffodil and hyacinth bulbs in the middle of the flower border, new growth from perennials will hide the yellowing foliage next spring. Remember large bulbs need to be 8 to 12 inches deep, small bulbs six inches. Lime, which is beneficial to all spring bulbs in New England's acidic soil, should be placed at the bottom of the hole with the bulb and then sprinkled over the top of the planting area. The lime also helps to disguise the scent of the bulb and deter squirrels and chipmunks.



### Watch the temperature

**forecast.** In the vegetable garden, dig your potatoes and harvest winter squash before that first frost hits. Frost on a pumpkin is quaint; frost on a butternut squash turns it to unusable mush. Harvest winter squash with one inch of stem attached. Clean then dip in a 10% bleach solution and dry before putting away for the winter.

