



A word about Minnehaha Master Gardeners: We are volunteers trained through the South Dakota State University Extension [Master Gardener Program](#). The mission of MMG is to enhance and supplement community educational efforts of the SDSU Extension Master Gardener Program and to provide research-based education and information on horticulture and environmental stewardship. For more information on becoming a Master Gardener, visit [SDSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer program](#)

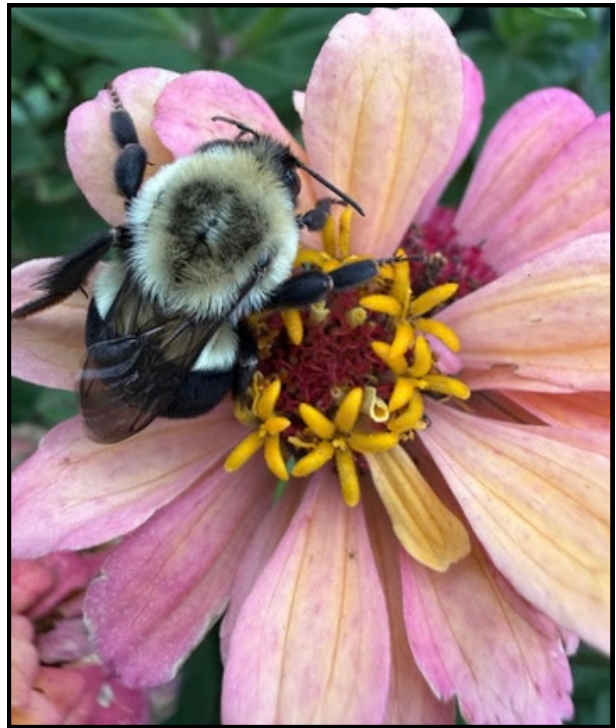
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Find out more about us!





Time to Begin the Garden Clean Up

Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener

I don't know about you, but after a long, cold winter, there's nothing I enjoy more than getting my hands back into the soil. Yet as much as I look forward to spring, I've learned to appreciate the other end of the gardening season just as much. Fall is my time to slow down, put the garden to bed, and enjoy a little well-earned rest.

After such a hot and dry summer, I'm more than ready to call it a season and begin my fall clean-up. I hate to complain about the rain when we've all been desperate for moisture, but I wouldn't mind a few dry days so I can get a good start on my list!

My vegetable garden still has a few surprises left. I have carrots in the ground that I'm hoping will mature—it's my first time growing them, so wish me luck! The leeks will stay put for a few more weeks, and my broccoli still provides enough for dinner every few days.

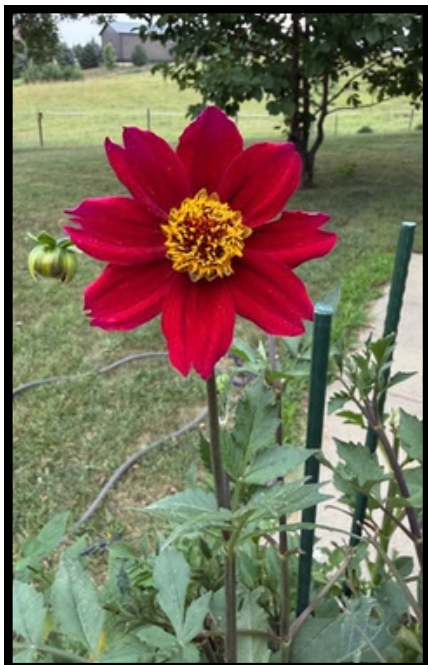
My basil is still hanging on, so I'd better get busy making more pesto and basil salt. I may even take a few cuttings to enjoy indoors before cooler temperatures take over.

I'll cut the rest of my vegetable plants off at soil level rather than pulling them out. I've started leaving the roots in the soil so they can break down and add organic matter over the winter. I'd also like to get a cover crop planted before the snow flies. That's always the fall dilemma: Do I remove the garden early enough to give a cover crop time to germinate, or do I keep harvesting those last few vegetables? Somehow, there never seems to be quite enough time!

My flower gardens have a few projects of their own. I'll take cuttings from coleus, geraniums, and a few favorite herbs to overwinter indoors. Sometimes my succulents make it through the winter, too—but I never count on it! I also have

Time to Begin Garden Clean Up

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dahlia tubers to dig and store in boxes of vermiculite. Once a month, I check them and remove any that show signs of mold. The last few years have been successful, so I'm sticking with this method.

And then there are the hummingbirds. I'm still seeing a few darting between my lantana and firecracker plant (Vermillionaire Cuphea), so those plants will stay right where they are until I know the last hummingbirds have headed south.

I love making lists, especially when I get to check things off. There's just something satisfying about seeing that list get shorter!

Here's what's on my fall garden checklist:

1. Save seeds from zinnias, marigolds, basil, sunflowers, and other favorites.
2. Pot up herbs to overwinter indoors, checking carefully for bugs first.
3. Remove spent plants from pots and the vegetable garden and add them to the compost bin.

4. Add compost and leaf mulch to raised beds and flower gardens.
5. Empty soil from pots into the pumpkin patch area.
6. Cut back dead foliage from hostas, daylilies and peonies.
7. Treat invasive creeping bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*) one last time.
8. Put away garden decorations, frost-sensitive pots and hoses.
9. Clean and store garden tools in the garden shed.
10. Take notes about what worked—and what didn't—in the garden this year.
11. Set out the seed catalogs! After all, planning next year's garden is the best part of putting this year's garden to bed.

Fall clean-up doesn't have to mean rushing to make everything perfect. It's a chance to tidy up, save what we can, prepare our gardens for winter, and take a moment to appreciate another season of growing.

Turning Good Intentions into Success...

Houseplant Series, Part 7: The Air Lovers: Plants That Breathe the Rainforest

Pam Conklin, Master Gardener



As autumn arrives, our homes begin to change. Windows close, furnaces turn on, and the air becomes warmer and much drier. While we may notice dry skin or static electricity, many houseplants experience an even greater change.

Boston Fern, Calathea, and Phalaenopsis Orchid evolved beneath the humid canopies of tropical forests, where moisture isn't found only in the soil; it's also suspended in the air.

Their strategy is unique: capture light while depending on humid air to remain healthy.

Boston Fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*) unfurls delicate fronds with thousands of tiny leaflets, creating a large surface area for photosynthesis. Calathea (*Goeppertia* spp.)

displays beautifully patterned leaves that respond to changing light throughout the day, folding upward each evening. Phalaenopsis Orchid grows naturally on tree branches as an epiphyte, anchoring itself with thick aerial roots that absorb both moisture and oxygen from the surrounding air.

In nature, these plants solve the challenge of filtered light and humid conditions by maximizing their exposure to both.

Common Problems

Brown leaf edges, crispy fern fronds, unopened orchid buds, or curling Calathea leaves often indicate dry indoor air rather than insufficient watering. Overwatering to compensate usually creates new problems, including root rot.

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Plants That Breathe the Rainforest Continued from page 4



Care at a Glance

- Light: Bright, indirect light
- Water: Keep soil or growing medium lightly moist, but never soggy
- Soil: Ferns and Calatheas prefer rich, well-draining mixes; Phalaenopsis Orchids require coarse orchid bark.
- Temperature: 65–80°F
- Humidity & Airflow: High humidity with gentle air circulation; avoid heating vents and cold drafts

Extension Insight

University Extension horticulturists frequently remind gardeners that humidity is not the same as watering. A well-watered plant can still struggle if the surrounding air is too dry. Grouping humidity-loving plants, placing them on pebble trays, or using a room humidifier can create a healthier indoor environment during the heating season.

<https://lancaster.unl.edu/success-houseplants-humidity/>

<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g6510>

How to Help Them Thrive:

Think like a rainforest

Choose a bright location away from heating vents and cold drafts. Group humidity-loving plants together to create a small tropical microclimate. If your home's humidity regularly drops below 40% during winter, consider using a humidifier nearby.

These plants remind us that thriving depends on more than soil and water. Sometimes the most important part of their habitat is the one we can't see.

A Final Thought

Over the past seven months, we've explored houseplants through the lens of the habitats that shaped them. We met survivors that store water, climbers that seek light, tropical plants that capture every available ray, and species that flourish in warm, humid air.

The secret to successful houseplant care isn't having a green thumb; it's becoming a careful observer. When we understand where a plant comes from and the challenges it evolved to overcome, we can recreate just enough of that habitat for it to thrive. The reward is more than healthy plants. It's a home filled with living reminders that every leaf tells the story of the place that shaped it.

Bugs in the House in the Fall

Carla Goetsch, Master Gardener

It is cooling down, and bugs are looking for a cozy place to overwinter, so it is the season to find a variety of bugs in the house.

Prevention may include:

- Inspecting windows, doors, vents, and foundation for cracks. Seal any gaps with caulk or weather stripping.
- Insects can hide closer to the house if wood piles and overgrown plants are close to the perimeter. Make sure to trim shrubs and vines so they don't touch the house.
- Take window air conditioners out as soon as the weather cools.
- Insects also like moisture, so rain gutters that do not drain properly will attract bugs.

Specific prevention for certain insects:

1. Crickets - sealing gaps, especially under doors, helps, but some crickets usually end up getting in the house. Setting out non-toxic sticky traps is the best way to catch the crickets that have penetrated your home's defense.
2. Spiders - Remove webs promptly and turn off exterior lights at night. Lights attract insects that spiders like to eat. Pretreat plants that are brought inside with insecticide.
3. Cluster Flies ("attic flies") - Seal cracks, especially from attic windows, siding, and roof area. An infestation may need professional extermination.
4. Boxelder Bugs - Spray the exterior of the home with a residual insecticide, a pesticide that remains on the surface. This is particularly effective on the south side of the house.



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Bugs in the House

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5. Ladybugs or Asian Beetles - Diatomaceous earth around the house or a residual insecticide may help decrease numbers. It's good to keep your vacuum out to suck them up rather than crush them, since they do emit a smell.
6. Ants - Limit food sources by keeping food in sealed containers/bags. Make sure leaky faucets are fixed. Treat the foundation with diatomaceous earth and insecticide granules, and put out liquid ant bait where you see ants.
7. Fruit Flies - Discard or seal any overripe or fermenting produce. Keep drains/garbage disposals covered when not in use. Sticky traps that attract the flies with blue light are the most effective.
8. Fungus Gnats – Live on the top of moist soil. They can be a big problem when bringing in plants for the fall that have been kept moist. Yellow sticky traps in each plant will help to capture the gnats. Plug-in blue-light sticky traps are also very effective at catching adult gnats; however,



you'll likely need treatment for larvae as well. You may need to replace the top inch or two of soil with new soil and add a ½ inch of diatomaceous earth or sand.