



Fall into Spring

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Jack Frost finally was nipping at our noses, but he seems to have gone away for a bit. Although the days are getting much shorter now, the upcoming holiday season seems to provide good distractions. Even so, I tend to be outside as much as possible. I like to walk the gardens and look at things even though the productivity is done (I still have potatoes to dig out).

Spring is generally the furthest thing from our minds this time of year, but recently I have been thinking about it. As short as the days are now, we never seem to have enough time in the spring either. I find I generally cannot keep up with my gardening ambitions, and each year some things simply do not get done. I began wondering how I could change that, and this time of year is what came to mind.

Now would be a great time to do those extra projects that you don't have time for otherwise. For example, I was planning a beautiful garden trellis along the side of my old woodshed. I envisioned morning glories, ornamental peas and hyacinth beans climbing up and blooming all summer into the fall. The problem is, for the past two years, I have been too busy to get this job done! Rather than compete with the valuable planting time in spring, now would be a great time to work on building that trellis.



Fall may be the perfect time for constructing a trellis for this spot as the author has not found the time the past two spring seasons (photo by M. Lisy).

Plants don't simply grow on a trellis, however. As such, I will need to dig a nice garden bed, prepare the soil (based on soil test results), and make a nice edge to the bed. But why should I limit myself just to this small bed? Now is a great time to add additional garden beds (you never can have too many). The soil could be tested and amended so it is ready to go for springtime. If any tilling is involved, that just brings up weed seeds that may germinate now or be waiting for spring. If the ground is ready to go, a silage tarp placed on this new bed in the early spring could kill any weeds before you plant.

Although this is probably the last thing you want to hear, weeding now can make things much easier in the future. Grass is still green and active as are some other weeds. Get them now before they can grow roots all winter long and be harder to pull out in the spring. And while you are there, why not plant a few more bulbs!

The next thing that, more often times than not, gets overlooked is putting the hoses away. Mine are still sitting out on the rock wall and lying up by the house. These should be picked up, drained of all the water, rolled up neatly to avoid kinks, and placed in a shed or garage over winter. Water left in hoses grows fungi and bacteria. When it freezes and expands, it will rupture your hose, or at the very least stretch and weaken it. The outside of the hose can be damaged as well by cold, freezing weather and precipitation, so if you want them to last, put them away.

While you are in the garden shed, why not take stock of your equipment? It is a great time to sharpen all of your pruning shears, loppers, and other tools with a blade. Wooden garden tool handles can be cleaned and oiled to keep them looking fresh and help prevent splintering. Check everything for damage and either repair or replace so you can spend your time planting in the spring and not driving to the hardware store.



Hoses left out all winter usually have water in them that grows fungi and bacteria, in addition to being damaged or ruined by the freezing process (photo by M. Lisy).

Lastly, I like to take stock of what worked and what did not. This may include new techniques tried, and also the varieties of plants I planted that year. I always think I will remember all this information the next spring, but almost always forget. Writing this information in a gardening journal can save you a lot of time and heartache come next year.

Hopefully you can put this information to good use and save yourself some time this spring. After getting more crops and flowers into the ground, you will thank yourself for the time investment this fall.

For your gardening questions, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.