

Fall is Coming Soon
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As summer quickly draws to an end I thought it might be good to share some of my thoughts on how to get ready for fall. Autumn can be a wonderful time in the garden as leaves change color, the air temperature becomes briskly cooler, and fall blooming plants liven up the scene. But, before these changes take place we can keep busy just getting ready for fall.

Overseeding your yard if done by mid September will give plenty of time for grass seedlings to become established before cold weather sets in. Consider core aeration or power raking. After a long summer of use and abuse to your yard, treat it right and give it a good chance for next year. Fertilize at a rate of one-pound actual N per 1000 square feet. Follow this application with another during mid to late October. Even herbicide use will be better now than a few weeks ago. Of course your garden demands some attention now too.

Divide and transplant those overgrown perennials. Bearded and Siberian iris, tall phlox, peony, and daylilies will all do well if divided now. Cut or pull apart the roots and replant in other areas of the garden. Mulch with straw or leaves, as the roots of these new plants will be a bit tender this first winter. While mulching your new perennials add some shredded bark, woodchips, or another suitable organic mulch around your trees and shrubs. A good layer of 3 – 4 inches is sufficient, being careful not to leave mulch right against the trunk. This will help retain moisture and moderate winter soil temperatures.

Continue to water evergreens regularly throughout the autumn as they will continue to lose water all winter long. Watering now will ensure a sufficient supply of water to combat the winter sun and wind that can deplete needle moisture and cause desiccation and winter injury. Take advantage of the fall to plant additional trees and shrubs in your landscape.

Many nurseries offer reduced prices on landscape material in the fall. This saves them the risk of winter storage of container plants. Cooler temperatures will reduce the amount of care these new trees and shrubs need. Give new plants an adequate supply of water and let the roots grow. Tree and shrub roots will continue to grow well into November and maybe even December depending on soil temperatures.

Houseplants that spent the summer outside should be brought in well before frost warnings, as it will be easier for them to adjust to the indoor conditions. Right now indoor and outdoor conditions are similar so use this to your advantage to acclimate these plants. Concentrating on these items will enable you to be ready for the fall work that lies ahead, like raking leaves. Get a head start on this fall by not letting your work pileup, so start now.

If you have questions you can call on me at the Pennington Extension office or call 605-394-2188 or email to ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu.