

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for November

By Cynthia Brian

"There is a harmony in autumn, and a luster in its sky." – Percy Bysshe Shelley



Rake and grind fallen leaves to add to compost pile. Note the daffodils already sprouting.



Prepare for a wet winter by installing Rain Chains, a pretty alternative to downspouts.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Chains, a pretty alternative to downspouts.

With the approach of Thanksgiving, it is finally feeling like autumn with cooler and crisper air, changing of the leaves, and chrysanthemums blooming. I picked my first bouquet of narcissi of the season on Oct. 10, a full month earlier than last year. Our climate is changing and as gardeners we struggle to keep pace. November is the best time to begin planting spring blooming bulbs. Once the ground chills to about 55 degrees, start the process of planting naturalizing narcissi as well as other bulbs in well-drained sandy loam where they'll receive at least six hours of sunlight daily. With our dense, nutrition

lacking clay soil, we need to amend with sand, peat moss, and compost before digging the holes. All flower bulbs require neutral pH soil around 7.0 in order to develop a strong root system that supports flowers. Mother Nature is busy spreading her wild seeds via the wind, birds, animal fur, and even our stocking feet. Most flowers need the next few colder months to rest and germinate. Before the geese head south, walk around your yard to ponder what you'll want to improve, include, edit, or change for the spring. Our year of outdoor work is winding down as our celebration of gratitude approaches. Get ready for a respite!

- **PROTECT** plant roots by mulching your garden.
- **GRIND** fallen leaves with a mower to reduce particle size and increase decomposition time.
- **TURN** the soil in your vegetable garden, pull out any unwanted growers such as mint, add buckets of compost, and plant a nitrogen-rich cover crop like fava beans or clover. Blanket the ground with straw and continue mulching until planting time in spring.
- **SUPPRESS** weeds while enriching the soil by laying newspaper (three or four sheets) on your bare earth. The newspaper will biodegrade and the zinc in the ink adds nutrients to the mulch. Cover with straw, leaves, or wood chips to continue adding nutrients.
- **DIG** up bulbets of mother bulbs with numerous offshoots. Separate and replant in other areas.
- **SOAK** ranunculus and anemone tubers in tepid water overnight or for at least three or four hours before planting three inches deep and six inches apart in well-draining soil in full sunlight.
- **PLANT** spring bulbs beginning this month. Tulips and crocus need to be refrigerated for at least four weeks before being dug. Make sure to remove all fruit or vegetables from the fridge to discourage rotting from ethylene gases. Keep all bulbs away from sunlight and in a dark place before planting. For blooms that last throughout the spring season, stagger planting days for daffodils, Dutch iris, muscari, scilla, and galanthus.

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