

1999

Frosty Farewell to Gardening

Dennis Hinkamp
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall

 Part of the [Horticulture Commons](#)

Warning: The information in this series may be obsolete. It is presented here for historical purposes only. For the most up to date information please visit [The Utah State University Cooperative Extension Office](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinkamp, Dennis, "Frosty Farewell to Gardening" (1999). *All Archived Publications*. Paper 924.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/924

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Archived USU Extension Publications at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Archived Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact dylan.burns@usu.edu.





GARDEN NOTES

FROSTY FAREWELL TO GARDENING

By Dennis Hinkamp

September 1999

Fall-11

If a frost has not turned your garden to green slush yet, it will soon. Fall is the season for tough love in the garden.

This is the time of year most gardeners start ripping plants out by their roots, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. This can be therapeutic.

“Annuals that refused to grow and look good can finally be grabbed by the throat (of the blossom) and thrown mercilessly into the nearest compost pile,” Goodspeed says. “That will teach them what happens when they refuse to bloom. And, once the word spreads to the other plants, next year’s annuals won’t dare do so poorly.”

What about those vegetables that just didn’t produce like they have in years past? “Treat them just as roughly by chucking them into a large shredder and totally annihilating them. Throw the excess zucchini in too, just for good measure,” he adds.

What about those perennials that were supposed to bloom all summer, look great in the winter, complete your landscape and bring world peace (at least according to the catalogue)? Trim them to the ground and shred the foliage into little bits, then toss them over the perennial bed as a reminder to all other plants what happens to flowers that do not live up to their billing, Goodspeed suggests.

“To really make the message sink in, spread the cut perennials out on the lawn, run over them with a lawn mower, then throw the contents of the bag over the perennials. This sounds a little cruel but is effective.”

All this up-rooting and shredding not only relieves some pent up gardening frustrations, it adds to the organic matter in the soil and improves next year’s gardening experience, he explains.

Shredded plant material used as a mulch in the fall works itself into the soil throughout the winter, Goodspeed says. It breaks down and by spring it adds a small amount of organic matter to the soil, enhancing next years garden and flower beds.

Most perennials can be trimmed back to the ground once a hard frost comes, he adds. Many spring and summer blooming perennials have already begun to die back. Cut them back and recycle the foliage, if not diseased, by shredding it and applying it to the soil.

Most plant materials break down even during the cold, snowy months, but there are a few, like corn stalks, that will not, Goodspeed says. Cut them up and leave them in the garden. Next spring they will still be visible, so till those large pieces and chunks in to promote some aeration in the soil.

Organic matter that has not completely decomposed does not hurt the existing plants when it is left in the soil and actually helps, he says. Consider Mother Nature — plants are continually dying, decomposing, and re-growing in the same soil. Over time, this process helps recharge and build the nutrients and tilth of soil.

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

Utah State University Extension is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity employer and educational organization. We offer our program to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 9 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice-President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. (EP/09/1999/DF)