

Fall 2026 Homes & Gardens

Town Tribune Weekly Guide To Fall Living

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Is Your Garden Suddenly Looking Overgrown? Try These 6 Easy Fixes

As summer ends, even the most carefully maintained gardens can start to look a little unruly. Plants have sprouted, veggies and herbs are beginning to fade, heat stress and drought have done a number on the grass, weeds seem to appear overnight, and spent foliage can leave landscapes looking tired and messy.

Fortunately, a few quick, simple tasks can refresh your garden without losing any late-season charm ahead of fall. From cutting back unruly plants to refreshing tired containers, these tasks will give your garden an instant refresh and help it look its best through the rest of the growing season.

Deadhead Spent Blooms:

Deadheading spent blooms is one of the simplest ways to tidy an overgrown-looking garden at any time of year, but especially at the end of summer, when cooler weather is looming.

But certain flowers benefit from deadheading at the end of the summer more than others, in-

cluding roses, dahlias, daisies, petunias, catmint, salvia, and more.

On the other hand, Catherine Trudeau, Landscape Designer and Partner of The Outside Design Studio, says there are some flowers she always avoids cutting back at this time of year.

"There are certain plants that I would definitely avoid pruning in August, including plants that have flower heads that turn to seed (like echinacea) or just persist on the plant (like astilbe)," she says.

Other plants to avoid deadheading at the end of August include sedum, old-wood hydrangeas, black-eyed Susans, roses, fall asters, and mums.

Stay on Top of Weeding:

By the end of the summer, most gardeners are fed up with weeding; however, the end of summer is the perfect time to stay on top of weeding in the garden.

"The weeds are at their strongest this time of year, and they will produce seeds if you let them, which will eventually mi-

grate into the soil and cause larger problems in the future," says Trudeau.

At the same time, thanks to late-summer drought conditions, weeds are relatively easy to remove by the root from the dry soil. Ten to fifteen minutes spent weeding each day (or every few days) will go a long way toward the overall appearance and health of your garden as the fall season approaches.

Remove Spent Vegetable Plants:

By the time summer ends, many plants in the vegetable garden are coming to the end of their season. These include early spring crops like lettuce, garlic, onions, and peas, along with summer favorites like tomatoes, zucchini, peppers, and beans that will start to slow down in the heat.

Johana Steele, Account Manager at Seattle Sustainable Landscapes, says that clearing out spent vegetable plants is a great way to clean up the garden ahead of the fall season. Not only will it make your garden feel tidier, but it will give you the space to plant fall vegetables or prepare the beds for next year's spring harvest.

Clear Out Garden Beds:

The end of August is also the perfect time to clear out any garden beds filled with plants that are coming to the end of their season.

"This allows you to re-evaluate your yard and plan for fall (which is one of the best times to plant)," Steele says.

Depending on your climate and garden, that could mean planting cool-season root vegetables and leafy greens, adding cool-season annuals for a fresh pop of color, or getting a head start on spring by planting spring-flowering bulbs. Fall is also an excellent time to plant many perennials, trees, and shrubs, giving them time to establish their roots before the heat of next summer.

Refresh Tired Container Displays:

Swapping out tired container displays is an often underrated end-of-summer task that can give your landscape an instant refresh. Those ferns and petunias that you purchased in the spring may be coming to the end of their season, but fortunately, nurseries and garden centers everywhere are filled to the brim with gorgeous autumnal plants and flowers.

Some popular options to welcome fall into your landscape include chrysanthemums, marigolds, ornamental kale and cabbage, sedum, ornamental grasses, and more.

Prune Back Overgrown Growth:

Lastly, late summer is a great time to prune back overgrown growth on many trees, shrubs, and hardy perennials. Removing dead, damaged, diseased, or excessively long branches can instantly make plants look tidier and help restore some definition to your garden beds. It's also a good opportunity to trim back perennials that have become floppy or are crowding nearby plants.

However, avoid giving everything a hard haircut. Some plants are best pruned at other times of year, particularly spring-flowering shrubs, which may already have formed next year's flower buds. Before making any major cuts, check the pruning requirements for the specific plant to avoid accidentally removing next season's blooms. For a quick garden refresh, focus on selective pruning and shaping rather than cutting everything back at once.

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