



HOME AND GARDEN INFORMATION CENTER

University of Maryland Extension

12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21024 • 800-342-2507 • www.hgic.umd.edu

November 2009

Herbaceous Ornamental Plant Tips

Culture

- **Annuals and Perennials** - Pansies are a good choice for fall and winter color in the garden. If you want to plant pansies you need to do it very soon to assure that their roots get established for winter. Perennials can still be divided and replanted at this time. Leave the flower heads on sunflowers, coneflowers, coreopsis and black-eyed Susan to provide winter food for birds.
- **Mulch** - Don't begin mulching your perennials until after the first hard freeze- around mid-November. The mulch should be 2-3 inches deep and surround the plant crowns. Waiting to mulch will help the ground to cool and remain cold during winter. The freezing and thawing of the soil in winter can cause many perennials to heave, mulching helps moderate temperature fluctuations.
- **Cut back and compost** other annuals and perennials after hard frost kills the top foliage. Do not compost foliage from plants that suffered from disease problems this season. Fall garden clean-up may result in a healthier garden next season by reducing disease spores and insect eggs, which overwinter in plant material.
- **Bulbs** - It's time to dig summer bulbs, such as canna, dahlia, gladiolus, caladium or tuberous begonia, and store them indoors for the winter. After digging, remove loose soil and cormels (found on gladiolus and other corms, Fig. 1), cut the foliage back to just above the bulb and spread them out to cure for one to three weeks. Allow a 4-6" stem to remain above the cannas and dahlia tubers. Store bulbs in paper or mesh bags, cardboard boxes, or nylon stockings. Cover or layer the bulbs with peat moss, perlite or vermiculite. Store most bulbs in a cool (40- 50 degrees), dry place and check periodically for shriveling or decay. Store caladiums, dahlias and tuberous begonia in slightly moistened peat moss. Gladiolus requires an 8-week chilling period at 35-41° F.
- **Spring flowering bulbs** can still be planted in a sunny spot in well-drained soil, amended with compost. Fertilize the planting area with a balanced fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Anecdotal evidence suggests that composted sewer sludge products applied on the soil surface may repel voles and squirrels. Bulbs can also be protected from animal pests by surrounding them with a wire mesh like chicken wire. If deer or other wildlife have ravaged your past bulb plantings, try planting bulbs that are rarely damage by deer, such as Allium, Narcissus, Fritillaria, Hyacinth, and Scilla.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

The University of Maryland is equal opportunity. The University's policies, programs, and activities are in conformance with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, and disability. Inquiries regarding compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; or related legal requirements should be directed to the Director of Personnel/Human Relations, Office of the Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Symons Hall, College Park, MD 20742.

Water Gardens

- Cover your pond with a small mesh wire screen, like chicken wire, to keep the leaves out during the fall and winter. Consider buying a stock tank heater for small ponds to prevent them from freezing over completely during the winter.
- Cut down and remove all water plant parts that succumb to frost and freezing weather. Tropical lilies should be allowed to die outside; they are very difficult to overwinter inside. Stop feeding your fish. They cannot metabolize food easily during cold weather. Clean up pond statuary. Remove them from the water to prevent freeze damage. Cover fountains and other concrete or plastic pond features with plastic to prevent snow and ice damage. Bring pumps and filters indoors.

**Do you have a plant or insect pest question?
Call the Home and Garden Information Center
1-800-342-2507
www.hgic.umd.edu**