



Vine
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Fall 2022

Learn about Harvesting Winter Crops. Discover New Upcycling Ideas. Enjoy Tips on Keeping Our Wildlife Fed.



Greetings Everyone!

Is it the Holiday Season already?! What a year it has been! My first six months as Director of Horticulture have just flown by, as the saying goes: "Time flies when you're having fun." We have been working hard all year, and I can not wait for you all to see the fruits of our labor next spring. Speaking of fruits - one of our focus areas has been the revitalization of our old orchard behind the Urban Home Garden. We have added almost 20 fruit trees, all varieties of apples, pears, and persimmons that are known to be able to produce abundant fruit in the South without the use of pesticides and chemicals. We are also adding a dozen or so blueberries, figs, expanding our blackberry patch, and adding a strawberry patch. In addition to adding new fruits, we are doubling our vegetable growing area in the Urban Home Garden. If you wander back that way this winter you'll notice a large black plastic tarp down over an area of turf grass, this is a chemical free way for us to get rid of the turf grass in preparation of expanding our vegetables into that space next spring. Owen Smith, our horticulturist for the Orchard and Urban Home Garden, has been hard at work to maximize the amount of food we can grow in this space while being completely organic and pesticide free. His article below describes ways you can get more out of your garden space with a fall and winter harvest!

Another big project this summer has been our native Woodland. If you follow us on social media, you know we recently had the grand opening of the Woodland Garden behind Sara's Place to cap off our most recent three year Nourish Greenprint: 2021 capital campaign. Let me tell you, I love this garden! It is over a half acre space that includes a creek bed, a beautiful boardwalk, an art piece from the Metal Museum, and features exclusively native plantings designed to showcase how beautiful they can be. We have also added hundreds of wildflowers and ferns along our wildflower walk on the main Woodland path that will be ready to show us their magic next spring. There are trilliums, woodland phlox, tiarellas, geraniums, wood poppy, asters, helianthus, lobelias, and a few lesser known woodland ephemerals in store for next year!

For now though, it is time for these plantings to rest and let mother nature prepare them for next season. One of the ways nature does that is by the falling of leaves. Tara Henderson, a local naturalist, landscape designer, and seasonal MBG horticulturist has written about the importance of leaf litter and the role it plays in the life cycle of our plants, insects, and wildlife.

The third article is written by My Big Backyard horticulturist, Anna Vo, on upcycling. There are some aspects in a garden that take it beyond just looking pretty to having a "magic" to them. Upcycling is one of the ways to create that. As a landscape designer for over a decade, no matter how well I designed a garden, the pieces that always breathed the most life into a space were the little things added by the homeowners themselves. The kind of things Anna has written about are what brings a bit of whimsy, charm, and individuality to a garden that makes it uniquely yours.

Happy holidays to you all and don't forget to come check out Holiday Wonders at the Garden!

David Drose

MBG Director of Horticulture



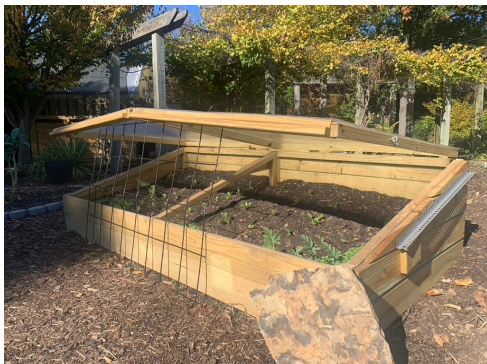
Harvest Through the Winter

Vegetable gardening in the fall months is highly rewarding. While it is tempting to call it quits after a busy summer, it is just the beginning of what is perhaps the easiest time of year to grow food. The summer heat has subsided, moisture is consistent, and insect pest pressure is reduced dramatically. Fresh lettuce, carrots, kale, peas, and radishes are abundant and sweet, and crops that haven't grown since early spring become available again. Many of these crops mature in a little over a month, so the turnaround is quick. As temperatures drop, most of these foods will become sweeter as freezing temperatures cause the plants to produce sugars. This is especially evident when eating carrots or spinach that have been freshly harvested in January!

In northern climates, a soft blanket of snow is a great natural insulator for these cool-season crops. However, in our climate, we must provide that protection in some other form. Rapid temperature changes throughout the fall and winter months mean that it will be helpful to have a plan for protecting your crops before the freezing temperatures arrive. Lettuce will require more protection than frost-hardy vegetables such as spinach, carrots, arugula, and onion. While cabbage, kale, arugula, and other brassicas are extremely frost tolerant, you will need to protect them when temperatures dip below freezing to prolong the harvest beyond November. Keep an eye on the low temperatures and provide nighttime protection for your crops when the temperature dips below 28 degrees. Most days, when the temperature rises again, you will have to provide some ventilation so that the crops do not get too hot in the sun. A generous layer of compost and shredded leaf mulch will help to moderate these temperature fluctuations. As always, careful observation will help you to learn the specifics of what each plant needs.



Low tunnels are the cheapest, easiest, and more temporary way to protect your crops. This is a great solution for larger garden beds. These simple structures are made up of metal, bamboo, or PVC arches set into the ground at 4-6' intervals, with a floating row cover or frost cloth stretched over the top. When winter temperatures rise, the cover can be pulled to the side of the bed and left there until the temperature drops again. There are several ways of securing the fabric so that it does not blow away in the wind, from rocks placed on it around the perimeter of the bed, burying the edges in a trench, or using PVC clips to attach the fabric to PVC arches. Experiment with as many options as you can, to find out what works best for you.



Cold frames are another great way to protect your crops in the winter. Although these require a greater investment in money and time and are more permanent than row cover, they are a great option if you have a small space where you want to grow winter vegetables in, or if you are concerned about the aesthetics of your garden and do not like the look of low tunnels. There are many cold frame designs that can be catered to your situation, or you can purchase one from a garden retailer. Using an automatic greenhouse venting arm, you can automate the lid to rise when temperatures go up during the day. If your

cold frame is made with a removable lid, it can be converted into a raised bed during the warmer months, simply by taking the lid off and storing it until cooler temperatures return in the fall. Recently, the Urban Home Garden was fortunate enough to be the beneficiary of a local eagle scout project. They built two new cold frames for us which will be used to grow winter greens.

While fall planting usually begins in August, many crops can still be planted in October, as long as you're prepared to protect them from winter frosts and freezing temperatures. These cool-season crops have a remarkable tolerance to freezing and cold temperatures, but don't delay your planting routine! With the amount of sunlight decreasing by the day, the earlier you can

plant these crops, the better. In October, there is still time for spinach, arugula, radishes, kale, collards, carrots, beets, onions, and Asian greens. Utilizing the different methods of frost protection above, you will be harvesting from your outdoor pantry until the spring!



For Whom the Bluebell Grows

By Tara Henderson, Seasonal Horticulture Staff

As the midsouth days finally offer enjoyable temperatures for sitting out and enjoying our gardens, many of us will spend time watching insects and birds enjoying our gardens along with us. Fall bloomers like goldenrod and aster paint vivid backdrops showcasing bees and butterflies foraging for late-season nutrition. Birds make fast work of ripening elderberries and chokeberries.

As we watch our flighted friends find sustenance in our gardens, we notice all the things we need to get done this fall—the inevitable tidying of the garden. We begin making mental to-do lists while we sip our coffee. But then we remember that post a friend shared about leaving dried flower stalks up through the winter for birds to eat the seed heads when their fresh food sources are more scarce, and we realize our gardens are not just for us but also for them, our feathered and winged and many-legged friends.

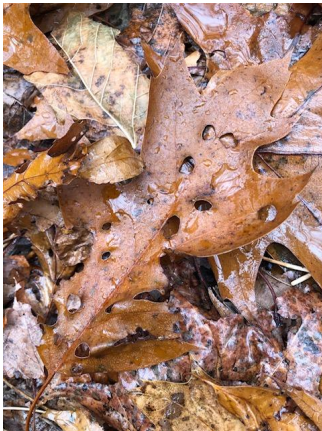
It turns out there are several garden clean-up practices we can alter to offer continuing support to wildlife during their most challenging months.

Still Standing

Leaving those stalks up does indeed provide an open buffet of seeds for birds, but there are additional benefits. Some bees build their nests in standing hollow stalks, emerging in the spring. Standing stalks also provide cover for small mammals during harsh winter weather. One interesting way to leave our stalks up is to tie them in bunches with hemp or jute string, or with a fun ribbon, whatever is handy.

If we must trim back our dried stalks, perhaps due to outdated HOA guidelines or the personal preference of fellow house dwellers, we can leave a few stubs of varying heights standing,

then drop the rest in a pile out of sight where those seeking shelter can still access them.



Leave 'em Be

For years now there's been a lot of buzz about leaving leaves in place rather than bagging or mulching. So why does it matter? It turns out leaf litter serves several valuable functions in the garden. First, leaves provide protective cover for many species that overwinter in or under the litter. When we remove leaves or 'mulch' them with the mower, we are disturbing and often destroying chrysalides of swallowtail butterflies and luna moths, galls of wasps, dens of ground-nesting bees and fireflies, and more.

Another benefit of leaving our leaves where they fall is the custom blend of (free!) fertilizer that's released into the soil with each rain. Although trees are resourceful in retaining most of their chlorophyll and nitrogen over the winter, many nutrients are present in the brilliant red and yellow leaves we adore each fall. These nutrients are then recycled through the soil to support understory plants and even the tree itself.

If we have access to Black Walnut leaves, we can even use them as weed suppressants by mulching beds containing juglone-tolerant species. Do check each species before adopting this practice as Black Walnut leaves will kill or harm species that are susceptible to juglone.

Seeding the Future

Fall is the perfect time to surface sow annual cover crops or perennial groundcovers. Simply clear the area or a few spots within the target area, then toss or sprinkle the seed mix and lightly cover it with a loose mulch such as pine straw. Depending on the site conditions, several native groundcovers are available: blackseed plantain, yellow wood sorrel, common violet, lyre-leaf sage, spring beauty, partridge pea, sedges, sedums, and more.

In addition to direct seeding, fall is a great time to plant trees and shrubs which will produce needed seeds for years to come. In a sunny garden consider fruit trees like Serviceberry and Plum. For shadier sites, check out Spicebush and Sassafras. We can always use more food-producing trees in our region such as Pecan, Black Walnut, Persimmon, and Pawpaw. For evergreen color, consider Southern or Sweetbay Magnolia, Eastern Red Cedar, or Loblolly Pine.

Remember

A garden is meant to be eaten and lived in. Let's make a few small changes to feed and support more wildlife.



Upcycled Garden Ideas

By Anna Vo, Horticulturist - My Big Backyard

Gardens are an extension of our home where we can connect with nature. Our garden is a place where we can spend time with our loved ones, relax, and watch our flowers and food grow. Gardening is an amazing way to add sustainability to your life. While growing your own food and flowers; you can keep the endeavor as sustainable as possible with upcycling. Upcycling is the process in which one reuses or repurposes discarded materials to create a higher value and quality than the original. You can create the garden of your dreams without spending a fortune. By upcycling, one can save things from going to the landfill while upgrading their garden. It's the best of both worlds. From bottle trees, to a pair of planted boots there's an idea for all garden situations. All you need to get started is a little creativity.

So what can be upcycled in your garden? You can be creative as you want and use any found objects. Saving materials from remodeling, picking up things from the side of the road, yard sales, and thrift stores are all goldmines for cheap/free things you can use; after all - one person's trash is another's treasure. However, you do have to be careful if you are growing food: do not use materials that used to contain toxic chemicals, and beware of rusted metal and pressure-treated lumber that can leak chemicals into your foods.

At the Memphis Botanic Garden, we love to upcycle. You can visit the Garden and see how we have incorporated found things within our display. We use old sinks, toilets, boots, bricks/rocks, tires, and glass bottles in our Garden. Old kitchen sinks or toilets are perfect planters because they already have drainage holes (plug holes). All you have to do is place them in the desired spot and plant them up. Using old boots and shoes as planters adds a rustic feel to your garden. You can fill them with potting mix and plant them with flowers or succulents. It is best to choose low-maintenance plants in these because they only hold a small amount of soil and tend to dry out quickly.



Bricks/rocks can be used to edge garden beds. Rocks can be used to design garden art in your

beds. At Treetop Adventure in My Big Backyard, we use old rocks to lay out images of dragonflies throughout the garden. We also use a lot of old bottles for garden art. Bottles can be used to create bottle trees or even used to edge garden beds. Bottle trees originated from Africa and where it is believed that shiny objects placed outside the home will attract evil spirits away from the family. Bottle trees add an instant pop to any garden.

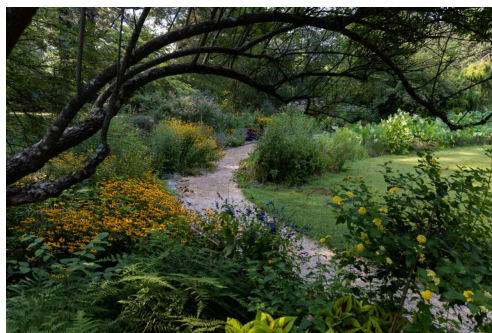
Windchimes are a fun way to add a sensory aspect to your garden. They can be made of many different materials like spoons, forks, and old tins. Many found objects will make an enchanting chime. You just simply drill holes into the item and hang them with twine from a stick.



A great way to attract wildlife to your garden is by creating birdbaths and insect hotels. Building a birdbath is simple. All you need is a bowl or dish filled with water and place that on a stump, upturned bucket, or even an old stool. Be sure to change your birdbath water daily. It is an indescribable experience to watch birds bathe and congregate in your garden. Insect hotels are a great way to ensure you have plenty of pollinators and beneficial bugs in your garden. While building an insect hotel think about the types of insects you want to attract. If you provide the right conditions they will flock to it. Choose an

area that has low foot traffic, and is dry and shaded for your insect hotel. Build a frame and use natural materials easily found in your yard like logs, sticks, leaves, tree bark, woodchips, pine cones, and stones to create “rooms” for your new neighbors. Don’t forget to plant enticing plants nearby your bug hotel like Monarda, Echinacea, and Buddleias.

These sprucing-up your-garden ideas are just scratching the surface. The possibilities are endless. Making your home garden magical does not have to be expensive. You can turn simple objects into fun, rustic, and whimsical garden treasures. These projects provide a chance to be creative and environmentally friendly. We hope you found some of these ideas inspiring while also sparking some creativity! Together we can sustainably spruce up our gardens.



Something you want to learn more about?
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