

Fall 2017



Dear Homeowner,



We had a great summer, didn't we? Me looking so lush and green while you grilled burgers on the deck.... Remember all those gorgeous flowers you picked from my beds for vases around the house? And oh, those juicy tomatoes!

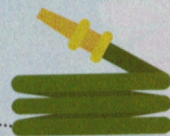
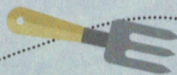
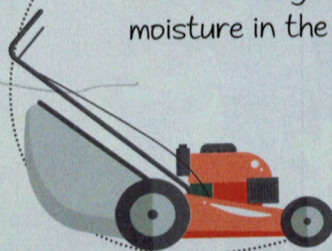
I hope you won't forget about me until next spring. (No hard feelings, but it's happened before.) It would mean so much if we could spend a few more hours together this fall before I settle in for my winter's nap. For starters, you could do something about the leaves falling from the trees. You, ahem, tend to let them sit on the lawn all winter, where they block the sun and encourage disease. I know raking probably isn't your idea of a fun afternoon—what about getting a lawn mower that mulches leaves? Then you can multitask! While you mow the lawn, it shreds the leaves into bits and puts them right back on the ground. Nothing to cart away! (I'm always thinking of you.) The grass grows up through the leaf bits, so it stays healthy, and the mulched leaves add organic matter and nutrients to the soil.



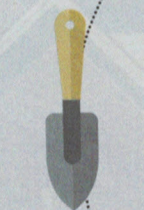
If you'd rather use a rake, you should consider buying the metal kind that you can adjust for width, which makes it easier to get into narrow areas and under shrubs—just a thought!

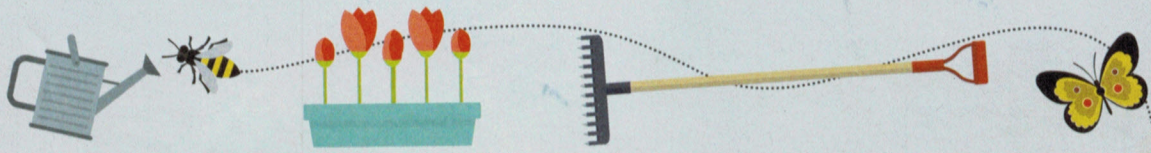
beavis

Speaking of shrubs, you can use some of those shredded leaves from the lawn as mulch around bushes and perennials. I like how they insulate plant roots from cold weather; otherwise insects and diseases could hide out there this winter and wreak havoc next spring. If you aren't into leaf-shredding, pick up a few bags of mulch at the garden store—the planting compost kinds are my favorite, or shredded-bark mulch is nice too, as long as there aren't any added colorants. You can mulch any time of year, but a layer in the fall is great for that insulation I mentioned and to help hold moisture in the soil over winter.



turn →





The other important thing I need you to do this season is fertilize me. In fact, fall is the best time for feeding grass. Summer may be fun for you, but it's a busy time for me, and that's stressful. By the time fall comes, grass is ravenous. I'm also putting down roots and spreading, so feeding me now encourages denser growth, instead of just taller grass you'll need to mow more frequently—another win for you! Shoot for Labor Day (if we lived further south, you could go as late as Halloween). I like a low-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer because it keeps me from gobbling up all the nutrients at once. Fertilize now and I'll be looking good come spring!

Now the fun stuff—planting! What's better than hitting the garden center, picking up some new perennials (like mums, asters, and heucheras), and spending a sunny fall day putting your new purchases to bed? A couple dozen bulbs would be pretty too. We have some bare patches that would look great filled with crocuses and daffodils in the early spring. Plant early in the fall (the first half is perfect) to give the newbies a chance to settle in and grow roots before it gets cold. They need plenty of water, too, especially if we don't get a lot of rain.

I know you can get on a roll, so remember there is stuff you shouldn't do in the fall. While it's a great time to fertilize grass and newly planted bulbs, certain plants—like shrubs and trees—don't need to eat now. Wait until spring. And put those pruning shears away! Sending plants into winter with fresh pruning wounds (ouch!) makes them vulnerable to damage. Hold off until later in the winter, when they've had a chance to go dormant. You can cut back any perennials that are diseased, but it's nice to leave healthy ones standing through winter because it makes them stronger. Early in spring, when you're itching to get outside but it's too soon to really dig in, tidying up those plants is the perfect way to get our relationship going again.

Sincerely,
Your Yard

