

PUTTING YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN TO BED FOR WINTER

As the winter months slowly creep up on us, it is time to start thinking about closing your vegetable garden before we find it buried after the first snowfall arrives. Here are some simple steps you can take now to make sure your plot is ready for the next gardening season.

1. **Plan and manage your time wisely!** – Take some time to close your garden over a few weekends. That way it will feel less like a chore and will be less stressful.
 - Before getting out to the garden for the last time it might be useful to think about what vegetables grew well and which ones did not so you can better arrange your plants in the upcoming season. Draw a picture of your garden on a notepad to help you save time and space in the spring.
2. **Freeze Frame!** The first frost is typically the best time to start preparing your garden for the winter. Your perennials will have died by then and harvesting has been finished as well.
 - Grab your shovel, hoe, or rake and a pair of sturdy thick gloves and you're ready to go!
 - Don't forget to dress warmly with comfortable layers for the cool, clear, crisp autumn day. Bring a water bottle and drink water frequently while you work to stay hydrated.
3. **Clean up and Clear Out!**
 - Start the clean up by removing any supports like stakes, cages, row makers, or trellises. Don't forget to clean them with bleach and water to kill any diseases that may be hanging around.
 - Cut down and remove the past season's vegetables.
 - Examples: tomato plants, potato vines, cucumber vines
 - You may want to save seeds for next year by gathering them on a white piece of paper, drying them, and storing them in a labeled plastic baggie. Masking tape works well for labeling since it won't smudge or rub off.
 - Remove leaves, roots, and cut back faded or dead foliage on perennials and add to the compost pile.
 - Never compost diseased or pest-infested plants into your home compost. Simply cut down the stems or stalks of disease or pest-infested plants and discard in the regular garbage.
 - Do not remove perennial vegetables (e.g., rhubarb & asparagus) and herbs (e.g., oregano & thyme) because they will come back next season.
4. **Rake it until you make it!** – Once your garden is clear, mix up the soil, either by hand or with a tiller. This will loosen the soil and will get rid of any leftover smaller weeds you may have missed.

5. **Stop, Drop, Compost, and Cover Crop** – This plays an important role in winterizing your vegetable garden. It will enrich your soil, keep it warm, and stop unwanted weeds from popping up.
- Cover areas that are not planted with a layer of partially or fully decomposed compost or fertilizer and mulch.
 - Plant a cover crop for the winter to introduce nutrients back into the soil. Although there are a number of options, common cover crops are rye, clover or buckwheat.
6. **What time is it? Tool time!**
- Tune up your tools before putting into winter storage. There's nothing worse than picking up a dull and rusted tool in the spring. Proper care can save you money by giving you tools that last for a long time.

RESOURCES

- Martha Stewart – Vegetable Garden Guide. <http://www.marthastewart.com/photogallery/prepping-your-garden-for-winter>
- Vegetable Gardening Online
<http://www.vegetable-gardening-online.com/preparing-a-vegetable-garden.html>
- Home and Garden Ideas – How to prepare your vegetable garden for winter.
<http://www.homeandgardenideas.com/gardening/fruits-vegetables/care/how-prepare-your-vegetable-garden-winter>
- Better Homes and Gardens – Preparing your garden for winter.
<http://www.bhg.com/gardening/yard/garden-care/preparing-your-garden-for-winter/?page=1>
- Raised Bed Vegetable Garden – How to Prepare Your Garden for Winter
<http://www.raisedbedvegetablegardenblog.com/raised-bed-vegetable-garden/how-to-prepare-your-garden-for-winter>
- Gardening Know How – Cleaning the Garden in Autumn: Getting Your Garden Ready for Winter.
<http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/gardening-how-to/fall-garden-clean-up.htm>
- Government of New Brunswick – Cover Crops.
<http://www.gnb.ca/0173/30/CoverCrop.pdf>
- Canadian Gardening Magazine – Blanket your garden with a cozy mulch
<http://www.canadiangardening.com/what-to-do-now/jobs-in-the-garden-by-season/blanket-your-garden-with-a-cosy-winter-mulch/a/19055>