



October

Michaela Farm, embodying the Franciscan spirit, nurtures sustainable relationships among land, plants, animals and humans, and utilizes farm resources to fulfill its goals.

**Michaela Farm
Mission Statement**

Websites to explore:

- Purdue Agricultural:**
www.agcom.purdue.edu/agcom/news
- Audubon at Home:**
www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/
- Wild Ones-Native Plants:**
www.for-wild.org
- Organic Gardening:**
www.organicgardening.com
- **Civic Garden Center:**
www.civicgardencenter.org
- National Wildlife Federation:** www.nwf.org
- American Horticulture Society:** www.ahs.org
- www.gardenweb.com
- www.garden.org
- National Arboretum-**
www.usna.usda.gov
- Marvin's Organic Gardens:**
www.marvinsgardens.com
- Union of Concerned Scientists:**
www.ucsusa.org/

October Calendar

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day, for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m., for eight to 10 weeks until red bracts begin to show.

Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and allow an additional three to four weeks for blooming.

Houseplants, especially those grown outdoors during the summer, commonly drop some or many of their leaves in response to the lower natural light intensity in autumn and reduced light intensity indoors.

Water indoor plants less frequently, and discontinue fertilizer as plants slow down or stop growing for the winter season.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

Keep plants, especially newly planted stock, well-watered until ground freezes.

Have soil ready to mound roses for winter protection. Do not mound or cover roses until after leaves drop and soil is near freezing, usually late November or early December.

Strawberry plants need protection from winter's extremes, but applying winter mulch too early may cause crowns to rot. Apply winter protection when plants are dormant but before temperatures drop below 20 F, usually late November or early December.

Rake or shred large, fallen tree leaves, such as maple, to prevent them from matting down and smothering grass. Raking smaller leaves, such as honey locust, is optional. Continue mowing lawn as needed.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.

Harvest Brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.

Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.

Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 F for two to four weeks.

Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost, and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.

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Coping with Storm-damaged Trees

Homeowners assessing tree damage caused by recent storms will want to make a few important decisions soon. Small trees with minor damage can probably be taken care of by the homeowner, but large, mature trees likely will need the help of a professional tree service.

It can be hard to decide whether trees with severe damage should be completely removed. Homeowners often are reluctant to cut down a tree, either because of sentimental attachment or because the tree provides shade or screening that won't quickly be replaced.

But the first priority should be safety. Assess whether the tree itself or some of its branches are in danger of falling now or in the near future. If the tree is not an immediate danger, you may be able to plant a new tree nearby and wait for it to grow a bit before removing the old tree.

Just because a trunk is split does not necessarily mean the tree will die soon. Large, split branches or trunks that have not broken off the tree can be braced and possibly saved by an arborist. If limbs have fallen completely off the tree, there is nothing that can be done to save the branch. In either case, the wounded area in the tree will always be a weak spot that is susceptible to disease, rotting and insects.

For trees that just have a few damaged limbs, it is relatively easy to remove small, lower branches with loppers or a pruning saw. Use sharp pruning tools appropriate to the size of the job to ensure a clean, smooth cut. Use hand shears on branches up to one-quarter inch in diameter,

loppers on branches up to 1.5 inches in diameter and a pruning saw on branches more than 1-inch thick.

While you're at it, look for branches that already have broken free and may have left a jagged stump on the trunk. Make a cleaner cut on those branches to help the tree wound seal more easily.

For larger limbs, or those too far up to reach, hire an arborist or other professional service. They'll have the appropriate tools and equipment to safely bring down large or high limbs so that the tree, house or other nearby objects will not be damaged.

In general, pruning sealants or paint are no longer recommended for treating pruning wounds. There is some controversy regarding these products, but generally they have not been shown to be helpful. Some scientists believe the sealant actually may interfere with the tree's ability to form a protective callous over the wound.

Find more detailed information on pruning in Extension publication "HO-4, Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs," (online at <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-4.pdf>) or contact the Purdue Extension office in your county and ask for a printed copy. For more information on hiring a professional tree service, see Extension Publication FNR-FAQ-13-W, "Why Hire An Arborist," (online at <http://www.fnr.purdue.edu/Pubs/OnLine/Faq13W.PDF>).

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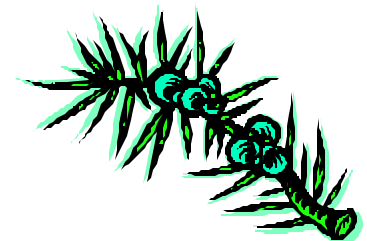
Evergreen Needles Don't Last Forever

Evergreens provide green color all year long, but that doesn't mean the individual needles live forever. Evergreens do shed their older needles to make room for new growth. But what makes them evergreen is that they retain some foliage all year long, instead of shedding all of the leaves at once.

Evergreen needles have varying life spans, depending on the species. Arborvitae and pine needles live for 2 years, while spruce needles live 3-10 years. Some species of evergreens have a more noticeable leaf drop than others. In autumn, arborvitae and white pine will drop their 2-year old needles all at once, which can be quite alarming, if you don't realize that it's perfectly normal.

On other species, needle drop occurs gradually, with a small number of needles falling at one time. The older needles of yew shrubs will turn yellow and drop in late spring or early summer. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as rhododendrons, drop their 2-3 year-old leaves in late summer and early fall.

Inner and lower needles that are hidden from light are usually the first to drop. There's no need to worry; they are just doing what comes naturally.



Healthy EcoTips

Assess Pruning Needs

Now that other yard chores have slowed down, many gardeners turn to their landscape plants to assess their pruning needs. Dead limbs can and should be taken down whenever they are present. But cutting into live tissue should be delayed until late winter or early spring. That is the time of year when the pruning cuts will heal most rapidly.

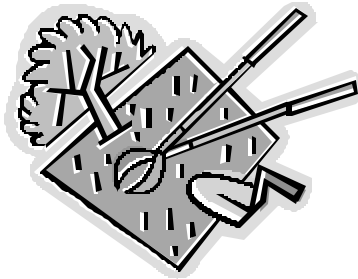
Pruning at the wrong time of year will not kill a tree or shrub outright, but may lead to other problems. Pruning in autumn may cause some late new growth which does not harden-off properly and could be injured by winter extremes. Wounds that are slow to heal over are more susceptible to further dieback during the cold, windy months ahead.

Autumn is a good time to determine which plants need attention and to choose a pruning service, if needed. Pruning of most shrubs and small trees can be easily completed yourself. Young trees may need some thinning each year to remove weak or damaged branches or excess growth. Make notes of what to cut next winter or spring before the new growth begins. Most mature trees should not need pruning except to remove dead limbs. For large limbs or tall trees, it's best to call a professional

who will have the proper equipment and skill.

Whatever the tree or shrub, remember that topping is not a sound pruning practice. Topping results in numerous, fast-growing new shoots which are much weaker and more susceptible to wood rots than the original growth and in the case of large trees, are more likely to cause damage to property and power lines.

It is important to do your homework before you hire a professional. Check with your friends and neighbors to see if they can recommend a particular firm. Look in the yellow pages of the telephone directory under tree service. You can narrow the list of



choices by selecting those that belong to professional organizations such as an arborists' association. These associations sponsor continuing education programs to help keep the members up-to-date. Be sure to ask the firm for estimates and references from their current customers.

- Collect and swap seeds for Hollyhock, bachelor's buttons, sweet William, cosmos, sunflowers and black-eyed Susan, all of which will attract beneficial insects to the garden. Learn about the life cycle of insects found in the garden to determine the most effective timing of treatment / control. Prepare compost bin or area to receive garden debris to get ready for fall clean-up projects.*
- Observe Robber Flies, larger than a bumble bee with a slender body. These beneficial voracious predators catch grasshoppers, cicadas, beetles and flies. During cleanup, look for praying mantid egg cases attached to twigs and stems in the garden. The brownish one-inch hardened foam egg cases can be saved over the winter by clipping the twig bearing the egg case and place in a safe place, such as the garage or a protected area of the garden. When spring temperatures rise, over 200 nymphs will emerge to help take care of garden pests next year. *
- A backyard wildlife habitat or "naturescape" can be created in your own backyard. A miniature version can even be created on your patio or deck. Basic elements include fresh water ; plants and feeders that provide nourishment for birds, insects, etc.; and rocks, trees, bushes and/or bird houses for shelter and nesting. Purchase plants that are native to your area. The National Wildlife Federation has an excellent program: with detailed examples: Go to <http://www.nwf.org/habitats>,

* From the Civic Garden Center, <http://www.civiggardencenter.org>

October Calendar

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Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snows for insulation and moisture.

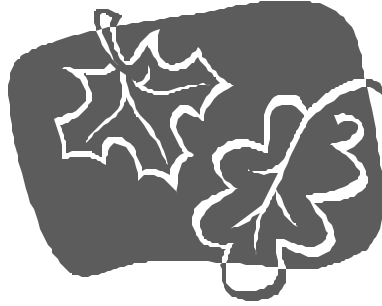
Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's planting from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.

Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.

Plowing and incorporating organic matter in the fall avoids the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Fall-prepared soils also tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.

Carve a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.

Dig tender, garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Calladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost.. Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.



Q&A Corner

Q. I grew some glorious cannas this year, but I know they aren't hardy. How do I handle them now that it's fall?

A. Cannas should be dug up after a hard frost. Cut the tops back to 4 inches, lift the roots with a spading fork and air dry them in a warm spot for one to two weeks. Canna roots do not require covering. They can be stored in shallow boxes and held at 45-50 F. You'll be surprised at how the tuberous roots have increased during the growing season. In the spring, you can plant the clumps in their entirety or divide them into smaller pieces and enjoy many more cannas! Be sure there is a portion of the old stem base in each division that you make, since the new growth buds are in the old stem. Since they bloom all season, Hummingbirds will appreciate this plant, especially in late summer when other plants may not be in bloom.

Q. My hydrangea bush almost tripled in size this summer. I cut some of the top back as it was covering some of the lower flowers. They are beautiful colors of green, pink and blue. I want to keep this plant healthy. It's almost 4 feet tall. How do I thin it, and is there any way to divide it into smaller sections, like a hosta?

A While your hydrangea appears healthy now, hydrangeas are heavy feeders, so watch for yellowing leaves during the summer, indicating a need for fertilizer.

Hydrangeas do not lend themselves to division like hostas. Instead, they are most often propagated by cuttings. To do this, take a 5- to 6-inch cutting, preferably from a branch that did not flower this year. Remove the lower leaves of the bottom two leaf nodes. Dip the ends of the cuttings in rooting hormone, and insert into damp vermiculite or sterile medium. Water them well, and allow to drain. The soil should be moist but not soggy. Cover them with plastic but keep the plastic from touching the leaves by adding stakes. Place the cuttings in bright light but avoid direct sun. Do not overwater. When roots form in 2-3 weeks, transplant the cuttings into potting soil, and keep them indoors until spring.

