

## The Extension Connection

By Megan Vig

We've been fortunate to have some stretches of warm temperatures if you do not consider the gusts of wind. Take advantage of the next warm day and winterize your garden and yard.

For the vegetable garden. If you have not already done so, start with making a map of where vegetables were planted this past year. This will help you next year when planting your garden and following crop rotation techniques to minimize garden pathogens and pests. Remove all foliage, stakes and row markers. Diseased foliage and weeds should not be worked back into the soil. Good sanitation now will result in fewer problems next spring. If you have raw manure to add to your garden, it is recommended to apply 120 days before harvesting a crop. So if you get it on now before winter, you will surely meet those requirements. Also, make sure to incorporate the manure into the soil.

For the flower garden. If you have any spring blooming bulbs still sitting around, make sure to get them in the ground while the soil remains manageable. Lift or harvest tender bulbs and corms that are desired for next season. These can include gladioli, dahlias and tuberous begonias. Dig up carefully and place bulbs in an airy, sheltered spot to dry for a 2 to 3 week period. Bulbs will overwinter well in a dark, cool place (45 to 50°F), stored in a vermiculite, peat moss or similar material. It is recommended to dust with a fungicide and insecticide to minimize disease and insect development while in storage. Bulbs, with the exception of daffodils, are considered premium food for rodents, so be sure to store them in an area where they cannot be easily accessed by rodents. Protect roses after a deep freeze by cutting the canes back to about 6 to 12 inches and mound the plants with topsoil. For complete protection, cover with cones or bushel baskets.

For the yard. Continue mowing the lawn so that it is no higher than 1.5 to 2 inches going into the winter (during the growing season, lawn height should be maintained higher). A lawn should only be 1.5 inches tall where the snow tends to accumulate. Snow mold or powdery mildew might be a problem in taller heights. Prevent leaves from packing down and smothering the grass by mulching with a mower or raking and removing leaves. Protect young, recently planted, and/or thin-barked trees (cherry, crabapple, honey locust, linden, maple, mountain ash and plum) from sunscald during the winter months. This can be done by applying tree wrap from the base to the second or third branch. The tree wrap prevents sudden and damaging temperature fluctuations that occur during the winter months. Tree wrap material should not absorb water, as water conducts both cold and heat, and should be removed in the spring after the last frost.

For more information on winterizing your garden and yard, refer to NDSU Publication H-1033 (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/plantsci/hortcrop/h1033.pdf>) or connect with NDSU Extension Service 797-3312.