

Autumn the perfect time to prepare your garden for spring

Although we've turned the page on October, I'd like to comment on how magical a time of year it is in the garden. The fall leaves are blazing in yellows and oranges, roses are flaunting their final flowers, fall bulbs have popped up overnight in full flower and perennials and annuals are overflowing their beds in a last hurrah.



Jennifer Mirosolin

Milton & District Horticultural Society

The early morning light enhances the enchantment — the heavy dew catches the slanting rays and begs for photographs. Even at high noon the light is fabulous — the coloured leaves against the clear, humidity-free sky beckon one to walk in the woods. We are so lucky to have easy access to the Niagara Escarpment to enjoy one of the best months of the year.

Often fall is thought of as a time of finality in the garden. I prefer to think of it as a time to prepare for spring. Before the first frost, you can still divide and redistribute perennials, as well as rip out and renovate gardens.

I am redoing the front garden, where a new tree has been planted — first rocks, then perennial divisions, new perennials (on sale!) and spring bulbs. If I run out of time, there is always next year.

I plan to remove the water lily leaves from the pond so

that they do not fall to the bottom and rot, depleting the water of oxygen for the fish. Then the pond will be covered with netting, held up with large wire staples, to keep the falling leaves from filling the water and smothering the fish. The covering stays on until sometime this month, when the trees are bare and all the fallen leaves are gathered into the compost.

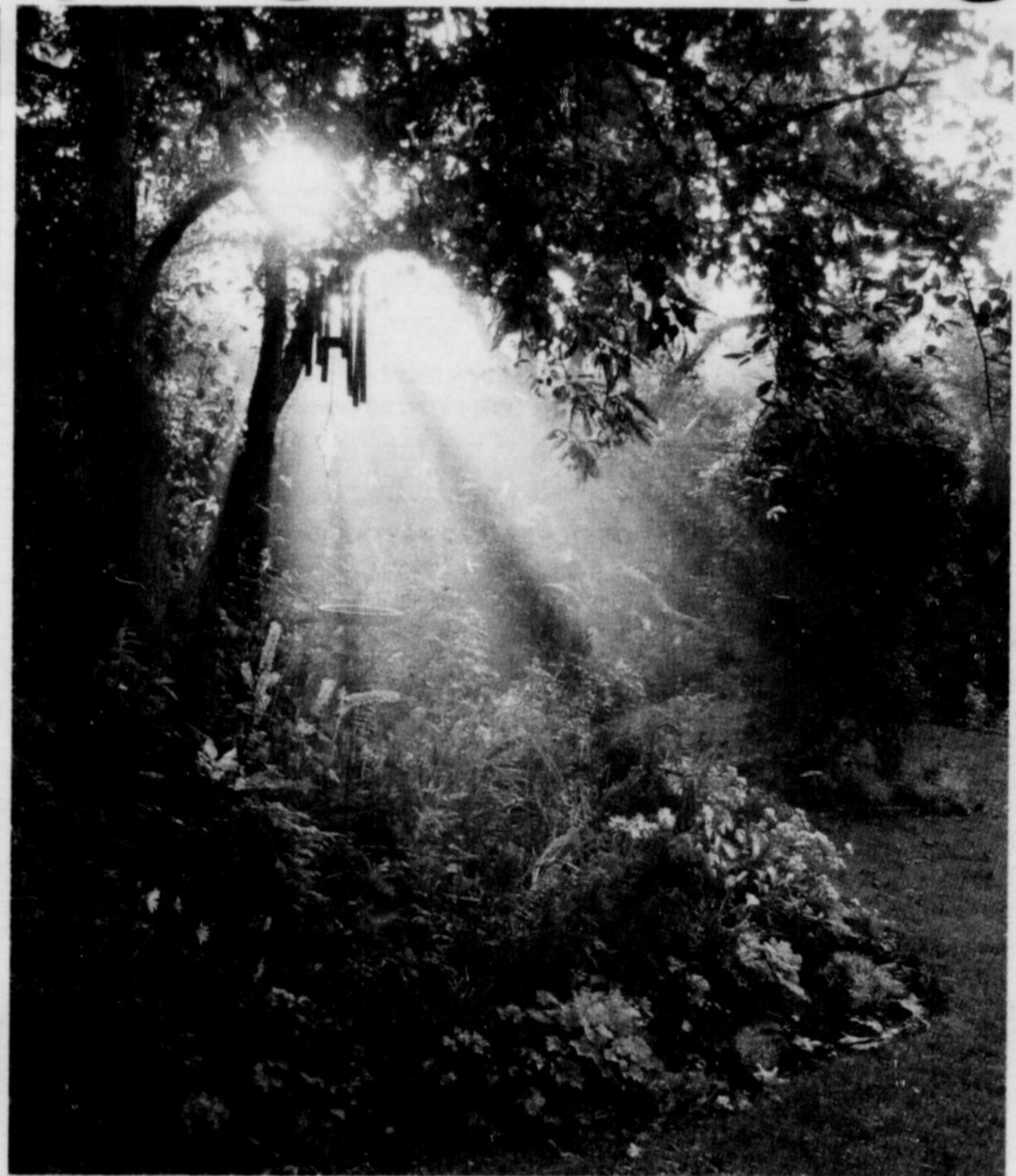
It is too soon to cut down most plants; wait until after the first heavy frosts of fall. Then start by digging up dahlias, begonias and cannas to save for next year. Shake or wash off the earth from the roots and lay the whole plant in the sun allow the nutrients in the leaves to be partially absorbed into the tubers and to allow them to dry out. If you put them away wet, they will rot over the winter. After a few days in the sun, cut off the withered foliage.

There are several ways of saving the tubers. I put each type into a paper bag marked with the name and colour and put these into a box of dry peat moss and store them in the coolest, driest spot I have in the house. A cold cellar is ideal.

Other methods involve wrapping in newspaper or simply tossing the tubers into a box open to the air. I think the key to saving them is dry and cool conditions.

Once your containers are empty wash them out and ...36

Fall is a magical time of year in the garden, says Jennifer Mirosolin, of the Milton and District Horticultural Society. The early morning light, paired with the heavy dew, is picture-perfect. *Supplied photo*



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