

5 essential tips for autumn gardening

Autumn is the perfect time to lay the groundwork for a gorgeous spring garden. Experts say this time of year is critical for how your yard will look year round.

"Fall is arguably the most important of all seasons for the garden," affirms Mark Wolle, broker-

owner at Royal LePage Wolle Realty in Kitchener, Ontario. "Work in the garden now will produce impressive results come spring." A lush and well-maintained garden also adds enjoyment and selling features to your home.

Wolle offers these five tips for taking care of your

garden this season:

1. Early in the fall, repair dead spots in the lawn by digging straight down and as deep as necessary to remove all soil containing the roots. Fill the hole with a loamy topsoil and tamp down to level with the turf. Seed the area with a mix that matches your existing turf grass. Cover it with hay or newspaper shavings to protect against birds. Water regularly while the seeds germinate and sprout.
2. Leaves are your biggest assets. After they fall off trees, they break down to create essential nutrients that feed your plants. Dig a big hole and pile them in. They'll break down eventually and give you wonderful leaf mould for mulching in the spring.
3. Combine one part blood meal, one part bone

meal, and one part wood ash to scatter over bulb beds for beautiful blooms come spring.

4. Fall is the ideal time to plant a deciduous tree — the soil is still warm and holds oxygen that will encourage root growth. Plant your new addition about six weeks before the deep frost. Be sure to prepare a hole large enough, about five times the width of the root ball. Retain the soil you remove from the hole and use it as backfill to allow your new tree to adjust to its natural soil as quickly as possible.
5. Add a little lighting to extend the beauty of your garden through the winter months. Light pale trees such as birches with back floodlighting. Sling tiny lights over a shrub or tree to give your winter garden a whimsical aesthetic.

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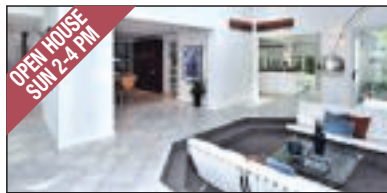
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