



Extension News Column

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From: Roxie Dinstel
Re: Pinching Pennies to run Monday on page A-3
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The weather is cooling off and the days are getting shorter. These are sure signs that summer is over and fall is near. Soon that wonderful blanket of white snow will hide all those projects that you should have done during the summer. But if you don't take care of your summer equipment and store it properly, you'll be replacing it next spring. It's time for annual fall cleaning and storage.

Fall is not the time of year to do an intense scrub down on patio furniture. Even when outdoor seating, tables and grill are covered, they will still get grimy and dirty over the winter months, so just do a quick clean to remove loose debris. Use a soft bristled brush to whisk away all loose debris from patio furniture tops, sides, legs and wheels. Next, dampen a large sponge with the soapy water and give the furniture and cushions a quick wipe down. Focus on removing any stains left behind by food, dried berries or bird droppings, then let the patio furniture cushions air dry before covering or storing.

If you have a deck or patio, clean it. Use oxygen bleach on wood decks. After the deck has dried, sprinkle a few drops of water on it. If the water doesn't bead up, it's time to reseal. Don't wait too long after cleaning to seal or you'll need to clean it again before sealing.

Compost any potted plants that you will not be overwintering indoors. You can empty the contents of the pot into the compost bin or pull up dead plants by the roots and dump the potting soil into a flowerbed or garden plot. Give your flowerpots a quick brushing with a soft bristle brush to remove any clinging soil, then stack and store the smaller ones. You can wash the pots with a 10 percent bleach solution to kill any bugs or fungus that may be on the pots. Be sure to store any clay or terra cotta pots in a dry place to prevent them from breaking. Turn large flowerpots upside down to prevent water from collecting in them and freezing during the winter. If a flowerpot is too large to turn upside down, leave the potting soil in it until next spring and cover to prevent the container from freezing and breaking.

Take a good look at your entryway. Is it inviting or are the hanging baskets wilted and scary. Have spiders and wasps taken over your porch? Give the front door and windows a wash, too.

Roll up and store the garden hoses. Cover the spigots, and if you have a sprinkler system make sure the water is blown out to prevent pipe ruptures.

If you're like many homeowners, most of your summer toys/sporting equipment, landscape equipment and gardening items have invaded your garage throughout the summer months and are in the way. This is the ideal time to reorganize the garage and store all those summer toys such as canoes, golf clubs and bicycles — although I see lots of bicycles year round. But storing these pieces of equipment will allow you area to access your winter equipment such as snow blowers, snow machines and snow shovels. It also frees up much needed parking spaces in the garage.

Rake up leaves that have fallen and clean out your gutters. No matter how much I seem to rake, there are always leaves on the yard when the snow melts. But getting a head start on the raking gives you leaves to pile up and protect your perennials from winter's fury. Also, for those who compost, it is a great source of brown material to add to your compost pile.

If you didn't have your snow blower serviced at the end of last winter, make sure it's ready for the upcoming winter weather. The white stuff will be here before you know it.

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