

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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November 2022

Fall Gardening Chores

Strawberries

Let's start with strawberries. We all know how tender strawberry plants can be. From a newly planted patch, to an old established bed. We want to protect the delicate plants from the harsh winter winds and conditions

Strawberry plantings should be mulched in fall to help prevent winter injury. Cold winter temperatures may kill the flower buds and damage the roots and crowns of un-mulched plants. Un-mulched plants also are susceptible to being heaved up out of the ground by repeated freezing and thawing of the soil. These heaved plants may be seriously damaged or destroyed by cold, dry conditions in winter.



Before you mulch, first allow the strawberry plants to harden or acclimate to cool fall temperatures. Then begin mulching the bed. Strawberry plantings should be mulched in early November in northern Iowa. Gardeners in central and southern Iowa should mulch their strawberries in mid- to late November.

Excellent mulching materials include clean, weed-free straw and chopped cornstalks. Apply three to five inches of material. After settling, the depth of the mulch should be approximately two to four inches.



Since it has been so dry, it is a good idea to deep water the entire bed before mulching. The moist soil will then keep the cold air from getting to the roots



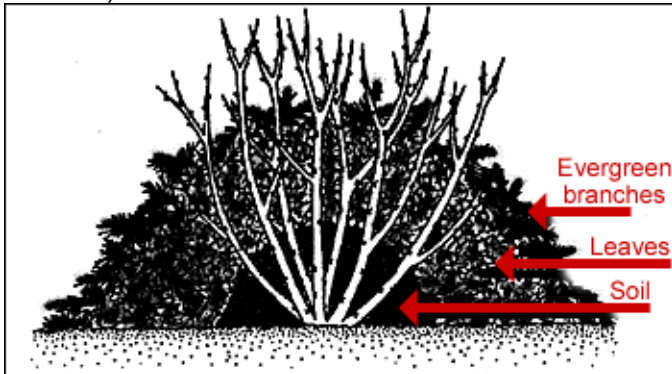
Over Wintering Roses

Many of the roses that are classified as old garden roses are extremely tolerant of cold temperatures, while others like hybrid teas experience considerable damage. Modern, bush-type roses (hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras) require protection during the winter months. Iowa's low winter temperatures can severely injure and sometimes kill unprotected roses. We worked too hard all summer protecting our roses from Japanese beetles along with black spot and other diseases, to lose them now to the harsh Iowa winter. There are many methods to provide winter protection for roses. The whole idea of winter protection is to keep the plant uniformly cold and frozen all winter and prevent the damaging effects of alternate freezing and thawing. Whatever method is chosen, don't begin covering plants too early. Wait until a hard killing frost has caused most

of the leaves to fall. You may also want to wait until the temperature has dropped into the teens for several nights. Normally, this is early November in northern Iowa, mid-November in central areas and late November in southern counties.

Hilling or mounding soil over the base of each plant is an excellent way to protect bush-type roses.

Begin by removing fallen leaves and other debris from around each plant. (Removing diseased plant debris will also help reduce disease problems next season.)



Before covering, some tall roses may need minor pruning to reduce their height, and tying of the canes together to prevent wind whipping. Pruning, however, at this point should be kept to a minimum. The majority of the pruning will be done in the spring to remove dead and diseased canes. So, loosely tie the canes together with twine to prevent the canes from being whipped by strong winds. Next, cover the bottom 10 to 12 inches of the rose canes with soil. A variety of hilling materials can be used, but the key is to be sure that the material is well drained. Wet and cold is far more damaging than dry and cold. Place additional material, such as straw or leaves, over the mound of soil. A small amount of soil placed over the straw or leaves should hold these materials in place. After the mound is frozen, it can be covered with evergreen boughs, hardwood leaves, or straw to help insulate and keep the soil frozen.

Another popular method of winter protection for roses is the use of Styrofoam rose cones. If these are used, they need to be used properly. First, don't cover the plants too early. Follow the timing guidelines as for other methods of covering roses. Second, cones need to be well ventilated to prevent heat build-up on the inside during sunny winter days. Cut four to five 1-inch holes around the top and bottom of the cone.

These holes will aid in ventilation and keep the air inside the cone from heating up, causing the rose to break dormancy. It is also advisable to mound soil around the crown of the plant before putting the cone in place.



For extremely tender varieties, some rose growers cut the top off the cone and stuff it full of straw for added protection. It is also a good idea to weight the cone down with a brick or stone to keep it from blowing away.

Climbing and rambler roses offer challenges with regard to winter protection. In very cold climates and for marginal varieties, climbers may need to be removed from their supports and bent to the ground, then covered with six inches of soil and mulched.

When laying climbers on the ground for covering, one needs to be very careful not to injure or crack the stems. As the weather gets colder their long stems are not as pliable, and they are easily cracked resulting in the loss of that cane.

Another method that can be used is to physically pack straw around the canes while they are still attached to the trellis or support.

The straw is held in place with twine to keep it in place over the winter. Burlap can then be used to wrap the entire plant, providing protection as well as holding the straw in place.

Finally, always remember that healthy roses



are much more likely to make it through severe winters than are roses weakened by disease, drought, insects, or nutrient deficiencies.



Prayer Plant

Maranta leuconeura, also known as prayer plant, is a species of flowering plant in the family Marantaceae, native to the Brazilian tropical forests. It is a variable, rhizomatous perennial, growing to 30 cm tall and broad, with crowded clumps of evergreen, strikingly-marked oval leaves, each up to 12 cm long.



This low-maintenance plant is famous for its flat leaves, which come in various colors and fold up at night, appearing like hands in a prayer position. Prayer plants can grow indoors year-round, making it an attractive houseplant for any time of year, but especially during the cold winter months. Prayer plants do best in high-humidity, low-light conditions (partial to full shade), and moist but well-draining soil. They do produce blooms in early spring, although rarely when kept as indoor plants. There are countless prayer plants, many of which have vivid coloring, interesting leaf patterns, and leaves that fold and unfold depending on the time of day.

Black prayer plant



Featuring silver-blue leaves with areas of purple and olive green, the black prayer plant resembles

other veiny prayer plants, like those with herringbone patterns and lemon-lime colorways, but with a dark purple, almost black background to its leaves.

Herringbone prayer plant



Also called a red prayer plant or *Maranta leuconeura* var. *erythroneura*, the herringbone prayer plant has bright red veins on green leaves in a herringbone pattern. The herringbone plant prefers to grow in pots and develops relatively few diseases or pest issues indoors.

Lemon lime prayer plant



The cultivar *M. leuconeura* 'Lemon Lime' looks similar to a red prayer plant except that the veins on the leaves are a bright green color as opposed to red. Lemon lime prayer plants grow well in hanging baskets.

Rabbit's foot prayer plant



Also called a rabbit tracks prayer plant, *M. leuconeura* var. *kerchoveana*, has bright green

leaves with patches of a deep reddish-brown or red-orange rust color. It's a trailing variety, making it a good option for hanging planters, and likes bright, indirect light and periodic misting to create a humid environment.



Tips for Prayer Plant Care

All varieties or cultivars of prayer plants require more or less the same type of care. Here are tips for caring for a prayer plant, whether you're growing one indoors and outdoors:

Don't overwater. While prayer plants like their soil moist, don't overwater them. Water during the growing season when the top of the soil becomes dry, and don't let the soil completely dry out. Overwatering can cause the leaf tips to yellow and fall off, as well as lead to root rot and fungal problems. Additionally, never water with cold water. The water should be room temperature or warmer, but not warmer than 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Tap water usually works just fine.

Fertilize regularly. Every two weeks or so during the growing season (typically late spring to early fall), fertilize your prayer plant with a water-soluble houseplant fertilizer. The plant needs fertilizer only about once a month in the winter. Keep in mind that too much fertilizer can cause brown leaves or even possibly the death of the plant, so you may want to dilute the fertilizer to half strength.

Use the right soil. Regular potting soil usually works just fine for prayer plants, but make sure the pot has drainage holes and the potting mix is airy and well-draining. To make your own ideal soil for a prayer plant, combine peat moss, perlite, loam soil, and coarse sand. Note that too much perlite could result in fluoride burn, which can lead to browning leaves.

Keep the air humid. Outside of its native growing areas and hardiness zones, prayer plants might require a humidifier to keep the indoor growing area moist. An environment that's too dry can cause brown tips on the leaves. Bathrooms are good spots for prayer plants because they are naturally more humid than the rest of a home.

Know when to re-pot. Repotting is necessary when the roots of the prayer plant start to grow out of the drainage holes in its pot. Additionally, if the plant stops growing or needs constant watering to keep the soil moist, it's time to repot. However, prayer plants like being somewhat root-bound, so you shouldn't need to move them often.

Manage sunlight. Prayer plants prefer indirect sunlight as opposed to direct sunlight and thrive in shady but warm areas. Since they are native to rainforests, you should provide the plants with lower light, controlled by either location or some type of cover. However, the leaves won't fully open during the day if they don't receive enough light, so don't place them in completely dark areas, either. If the plant's leaves fade in color, it's a sign the plant is receiving too much sun.

Pruning is not required. Even though prayer plants don't require pruning, you can create a bushier appearance by clipping the leaves just above the leaf node to change the plant's growth pattern. Pruning in this way encourages new outward growth.



Take advantage of propagation. To capitalize on a healthy prayer plant, create multiple plants by propagating the original. You can propagate prayer plants by dividing the whole plant or taking stem cuttings. When it's time to repot the prayer plant, pull a section of the plant away, gently separate the roots, and then plant the new plant in its own pot. For stem cuttings, cut the stem below the leaf and place it in a glass of water. Replace the water every few days until new roots develop.

Treat pests and diseases. With prayer plants, you want to watch out for mealybugs and spider mites. Treat an infestation by spraying the plant lightly with neem oil. Fungal disease is the most common affliction in prayer plants because of the moist soil and humid environment. To prevent issues, use well-draining soil, avoid overwatering, and keep the prayer plant's leaves out of standing water.





American Goulash

YIELD: Serves 4 PREP TIME: 20 mins.
METHOD: Stove top TOTAL TIME: 30 mins

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 ½ cups chopped onion
1 pound lean ground beef
2 large cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground pepper
1 (14 ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained
1 (8 ounce) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
1 cup low-sodium beef or chicken broth
1 ¼ cups whole-wheat elbow macaroni
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS:

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion and beef; cook, breaking up meat with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, paprika, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and their juices, tomato sauce and broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook for 5 minutes. Add macaroni and cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until tender, 6 to 9 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with Parmesan, if desired.



Do You Remember When?

The air was getting colder. Dad was still picking corn. Yes, picking ear corn, two rows at a time with the corn picker on the Farmall Super MTA. Sometimes Dad would let me ride in the wagon he pulled behind the picker so I could help him change wagons. My brother would take the full wagons to the corn crib, empty the ear corn in the crib, return to the field, switch out wagons and repeat the process. It was a slow compared to the combines and grain carts we have today. But Dad didn't mind, since he grew up picking corn by hand. Throwing the ears of corn into a wagon pulled by a team of Belgian horse, was much, much slower! Growing up, we all learned time management, so no one ever had to wait, to be efficient. We learned how to drive at young ages, to be able to hook up, back up and drive equipment and wagons down the road safely. The entire family always helped. After all, this is what we worked for all year!

I remember helping Mom cook those warm comfort food meals. All those wonderful vegetables we grew and preserved were lovingly turned into hearty meals. Everyone would stop what they were doing at noon and come to the house to eat and warm up! We always made cookies, cake or pie for an afternoon snack that Mom and I would take out to those who were harvesting. It gave them a break and a chance to warm up in the car or pickup. Often the harvest was still going on through November into early December. Many times, Dad was still picking at Thanksgiving. So after our traditional family dinner, Dad and Grampa would visit with all the family for a few hours, then head back out to the field.

We had a traditional self-sufficient farm. Alfalfa, corn, wheat and oats. Soybeans were fairly new back then. We feed almost all of the hay, corn and oats to our livestock. Our cash crops were the wheat and soybeans. Nothing was wasted. Cattle were turned out into the stock fields after harvest to clean up any fallen corn. The garden scraps were tossed into the chicken yard. The ear corn was ground cob and all for the feedlot cattle. If we had any corn shelled, we keep the cobs and burned them in the water tank heaters during the winter. Best of all, it never felt like work, it was just living! There is no better life than one lived on the farm!



November UP COMMING EVENTS



- **November 9, 2022** – Native Seed Saving Webinar, with Bill Johnson (Iowa Department of Natural Resources) - Wednesday, November 9, 2022 - 7:00pm to 8:00pm follow link to register. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/home-gardening-webinar-native-seed-saving>
- **November 24, 2022** – Thanksgiving
- **March 25, 2023** – **Save the Date** - Mills County Master Gardener “Spring into Spring” garden symposium, Malvern, IA More information to come
- **April 15, 2023** – **Save the date** – **Master Gardener Class on Campus** Save the date. Open to trainees and Interns from 2022 Master Gardener classes. There will be a \$50 fee. For more information; <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/class-campus-ames>
- **June 17 – 22, 2023** – **Save the Date - International Master Gardener Conference** – Overland Park Convention Center, Overland Park, Kansas. Registration opens in November. For more information, follow the link <https://imgc2023.com/>
- **Iowa Master Gardener You Tube** – Follow the link below. You will find many ISU educational gardening webinars and videos here for educational hours. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoyB28Aj3qOovjpwkSiLBg>
- **Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page** <https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- **Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page** <https://www.facebook.com/iamastergardeners/>
- **The Plant Sleuths Facebook Page** – Check this page for any insect or plant problem. Download clear pictures and the group will help with answers. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/291895194628196>

November GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Garden** – Continue to clean the debris. Clean all your tools and put away for winter.
- **Water** – If possible, as you are cleaning off your beds, water your tender plants to help keep from dying over the winter. (When it is dry, the freezing air reaches the roots, killing the tender plant.)
- **Drain Garden Hoses** – To prevent them from splitting. Put an insulated cover on any outdoor faucets. Around the outside of the house

- **Newly Planted** Trees and shrubs. Continue watering until the ground freezes. New trees need moist ground to freeze. This keeps cold freezing air from getting to the roots during the winter and killing the tree or shrub.
- **Pumpkins & Squash** – Harvested pumpkins, gourds and winter squash should be stored in cool dry place. Check often to check for rot.
- **Bird Waters & Feeders** – Put a frost free bird water, a heated dog water bowl, a heater in your birdbath a heavy cement birdbath. Do not use a ceramic one as it will break. Clean and hang your winter bird feeders. Put limited amounts of feed in your feeder every day.
- **Plant Garlic** – Your garlic should be up and 4 to 8 inches in height. You should mulch it before the ground freezes solid. Check link in ISU pubs below.

Resources for Horticulture information

Iowa State University Publication

HORT 3087	Cole Crops
PM 1894	Garlic
PM 1892	Melons
PM 731	Harvesting and Storing Vegetables
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries
PM 534	Planting and harvesting times for Garden vegetables
HORT 3086	Potatoes
HORT 3085	Onions
PM 1072	Establishing a Lawn from Seed

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>

ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883

Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)
Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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