

# Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach

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## Sedum (Stonecrops)

Sedum is a large genus of flowering plants in the family Crassulaceae, members of which are commonly known as stonecrops. The genus has 400 to 500 species. The most recognized sedum, is the favorite, Autumn Joy.



### Autumn Joy

With an upright form, fleshy pale green leaves, and abundant large semi-domed clusters of flowers that appear late in the season when the rest of the garden is winding down, it's a stellar perennial. Autumn Joy can be 1 to 2 foot tall.

It's an excellent plant in mixed borders, lining walkways, in rock gardens, or when planted in masses. It does equally well in pots or garden beds. Plus, it's one of the least expensive perennials you can add to your garden!

Autumn Joy's flowers start light pink and deepen to mauve-red throughout the fall. The flowers are a great source of late-season nectar for pollinators, which flock to the profuse blooms. The blooms also last for weeks and weeks in a vase, and they dry very well, to be enjoyed in dry flower arrangements.

After the first heavy frost, the spent flower heads remain a handsome accent in the winter landscape. Autumn Joy sedum is very easy to grow. This is one of the most carefree perennials. No garden should be without it. It's suited for Hardiness zones 3 to 9, so you can grow it in most regions of the country.

It doesn't mind the heat and humidity, comes back reliably even after a very cold winter, and tolerates poor soil. Deer also tend to leave it alone.

### Caring for Autumn Joy Sedum

Find a spot in full sun, which is considered 6 or more hours of direct sunlight per day. If you give Autumn Joy too much shade, it will stretch toward the sun and become leggy.

When planting, dig a hole about twice as wide as the nursery pot it came in, then place the plant in the hole so that it's at the same depth as it was in the pot. Backfill the soil, tamp down, and water well. If planting in the fall, make sure to get it in at least six weeks before the ground freezes in order to allow it to get established before winter.

After a freeze, it's fine to trim off the foliage or leave it intact over the winter. Next spring, don't be too eager to pull your plant up if it seems dead. Look closely: Tiny green buds start pushing through the crown of the plant in early to mid-spring.

It's not totally necessary, but you can give it a handful of all-purpose fertilizer in early spring, if you like, when you're feeding all your other perennials. In very hot, dry summers, water it occasionally.

### Dividing Autumn Joy Sedum

When your clump gets too large, or if you want to make another plant, simply use your garden spade to take off a piece from the edges.

It's one of the easiest perennials to divide, so don't be shy about cutting through the roots. Replant elsewhere in the garden, and water well. It's best to divide perennials in spring or fall, not in the heat of summer.

Other varieties that are similar include more compact types such as Pure Joy, densely-mounded

Pride and Joy, and Superstar, which boasts nearly turquoise foliage.



**Pure Joy**-Bubblegum pink blooms, Grows in a low rounded mound, just under 1 foot tall.



**Pride and Joy**-Bright pink blooms. Same as Pure Joy, growing in a low rounded mound just under 1 foot tall



**Superstar**-This compact turquoise-green, succulent foliage has a misty gray overlay. Rosy-pink starry flowers smother the dome-shaped mound. Superstar is also just under 1 foot tall.

## Different Varieties

If you enjoy Autumn Joy, you should try other sedums. There are 3 main forms: mat forming, creeping and upright sedums. Autumn Joy, Pure Joy, Pride & Joy and Superstar, all belong to the upright form group. All these stonecrops come in various sizes, from minis to large. Bloom times and colors also vary. All are easy to grow. They are drought and heat resistant, low maintenance and attract pollinators. With the right conditions outdoors, you'll enjoy these beautiful and reliable plants for many years.



## Fall Lawn Care Tips

As fall grows closer, we need to think about fall lawn care. Here are a few tips and things you should be doing with your lawn.



### Remove the leaves

A carpet of colorful autumn leaves may look nice and be fun to play in, but they're no good for grass. They block the light and trap moisture, potentially fatal for the turf underneath.

When the leaves are falling, blow or rake them away as often as you can. Even after the trees are bare, continue raking out the corners where the wind piles leaves up. If you don't, come spring, the grass under that wet, decaying mat of leaves will be dead.

### Keep cutting, but to the correct height

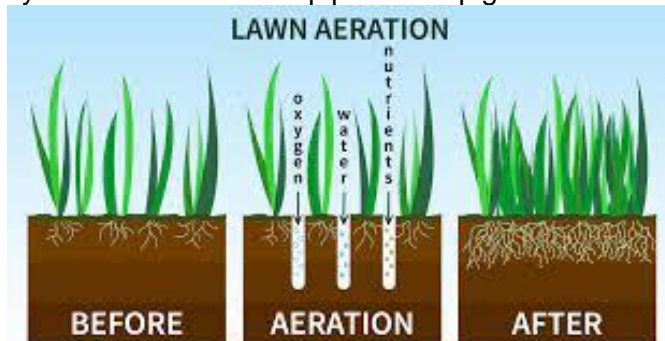
Don't put that mower away yet. Grass continues to grow up to the first hard frost. Your lawn will need regular cuts to keep it at an ideal 2½- to 3-inch height. If you let it get too long, it will mat and be vulnerable to fungi like snow mold.

Cutting grass too short is just as bad, because it curtails the root system. Root depth is proportional to cutting height, and impedes the lawn's ability to withstand winter cold and dryness. Regular mowing also gets rid of those pesky leaves, chopping them up and leaving behind a soil-enhancing mulch.

### Continue watering

People tend to let up on watering in the fall as the weather gets cooler, thinking nature will take care

of it. While it's true that there's more rain, more dew, and less evaporation at this time of year that may not be enough to keep the grass roots well hydrated and healthy going into the winter. If your lawn isn't getting at least an inch of water a week, then keep the sprinklers or irrigation system running until the end of October. By that time, you'll want to disconnect hoses and flush the irrigation system to avoid frozen pipes and spigots.



### Loosen the soil

Regular aeration once every couple of years, prevents soil from becoming compacted and covered with thatch (that thick layer of roots, stems, and debris that blocks water, oxygen, and nutrients from reaching the soil).

A core aerator corrects both problems by punching holes through that thatch and pulling up plugs of soil. Aerating the lawn right before fertilizing will let the fertilizer go right to the roots where it will do the most good.

Do not aerating in the spring! It will cause you more problems than good. Spring aeration just makes it easier for weed seeds to get established. Aerating lawns should always be done in the fall.



### Add fertilizer

Just as grass roots need water to last the winter, they also benefit from a shot of the plant sugars that protect roots from freezing and give the entire plant the energy to bounce back in the spring. Those sugars are produced by chlorophyll, which grass produces in abundance when there's enough nitrogen.

That being said, a late-fall application of a slow-release granular 24-0-10 fertilizer is recommended. The numbers indicate the percentage by weight of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, respectively. Potassium is also important at this time because it aids in root growth, disease protection, drought tolerance, and cold resistance. A soil test can tell you how much of each nutrient your lawn actually needs.

Please remember to use caution when spreading fertilizer close to waterways or areas where you can have run-off. You should always stay at least 5 feet away from where ever water is present.

### Spread seed

Having a lush dense lawn also is good protection against weeds. This is another good reason to over-seed existing turf. Not only does that fill in thin spots or bare patches, it allows you to introduce the latest in resilient, drought-tolerant grasses. Fall is the best time to over-seed because the ground is still warm, moisture is more plentiful, nights are cool, and the sun is not as hot during the day. But even then, "over-seeding is a challenging lawn-care chore. You can't just broadcast seeds over an established lawn and expect them to grow. They need to be in full contact with the soil, kept moist until they germinate, and get established before it gets too cold. Renting an over-seeder machine is a better option than broadcasting, but those machines can tear up existing turf. So do your research first and ask questions before renting.

### Stay on schedule

Each of the steps above has to be done at the right time for the best results. Otherwise, it's wasted effort. For instance, over-seed too late and the seedlings will be too tender to survive. Fertilize too early and the grass will send up tender blades that will get hammered by the cold. Fertilize too late and the grass roots won't be able to absorb all those nutrients you're feeding them.

If sticking to the schedule during the fall is proving too difficult, a lawn care service can handle the jobs that aren't getting done. Most often, those are the ones that require renting heavy machinery like core aerators and over-seeders, which are hard to transport and some are hard to operate. They can also be in short supply at the rental yards at this time of year. Delegating one or two of those chores to a pro during this busy season will ensure the work gets done when it should and leave you enjoying a thick carpet of green grass next year.



## Dividing Plants

The best time to divide most plants is either in the spring or fall. So, how do you know? Here is an easy way to remember:

Divide fall blooming perennials in the spring.

Divide spring and summer blooming perennials in the fall.

### Reasons for Dividing

Perennials grace our gardens year after year with their variety of brilliant colors and unique foliage forms.

After a few years in the garden, these perennials may start to produce smaller blooms, develop a 'bald spot' at the center of their crown, or require staking to prevent their stems from falling over. All of these are signs that it is time to divide.

Reduced plant performance may not be the only reason to divide perennials.

- Dividing or splitting a single perennial into multiple plants helps the plant perform better.
- When perennials are divided, there is more space for roots to grow and absorb nutrients and water.
- Dividing perennials can help manage the size of the plant.
- You will have more plants of the same kind to add to your garden when you divide a perennial.



### Guidelines for Dividing Perennials

#### When to Divide

Divide perennials on a cloudy, overcast day as dividing on a hot sunny day can cause the plants to dry out.

Water the soil a day in advance if the area to be worked on is dry. Ideally, divide plants when there are a couple days of showers in the forecast to provide enough moisture for the new transplants. Divide when the plant is not flowering so it can focus all of its energy on regenerating root and leaf tissue.

#### How to Divide

Dig up the parent plant using a spade or fork. Gently lift the plant out of the ground and remove any loose dirt around the roots.

Separate the plant into smaller divisions by any of these methods:

- Gently pull or tease the roots apart with your hands;
- Cut them with a sharp knife or spade;
- Or put two forks in the center of the clump, back to back, and pull the forks apart.
- Each division should have three to five vigorous shoots and a healthy supply of roots.
- Keep these divisions shaded and moist until they are replanted.

**Fall Dividing** is considered just after Labor Day.

Common plants that we normally divide in the fall are Allium, Aster, Astilbe, Black eyed Susan, Blanket Flower, Coneflower, Daylily, Hardy Hibiscus, Lamb's Ears, Peonies, Sage, Shasta Daisy, Siberian Iris, Oriental Poppy, Phlox, and many more.

The most important thing to remember is that the plant needs at least 4 to 6 weeks before the ground freezes to establish their roots.

**Spring Dividing** is as soon as the plant begins to sprout from the ground. New growth is emerging and it is easier to see what you are doing. Smaller leaves and shoots will not suffer as much damage as full-grown leaves and stems. For example, Hostas do much better when divided in the spring when their foliage is small.

Plants have stored up energy in their roots that will aid in their recovery.

Rain showers that generally come along with the early season are helpful.

Plants divided in spring have the entire growing season to recover before winter.

It is easy to locate the plants that need dividing. Perennials with fleshy roots such as Daylilies, peonies, Oriental poppy, and Siberian iris are best divided in the fall.

Dividing your plants also allows you to share plants with friends and neighbors, perhaps opening the door for them to share their plants with You!





## Cinnamon Apple Pie Bread

YIELD: Serves 8-10    PREP TIME: 15 mins  
OVEN: 350° 30 mins TOTAL TIME: 45 hour

### INGREDIENTS:

1/3 cup light brown sugar  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
2/3 cup white sugar  
1/2 cup salted butter, softened  
2 eggs  
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 3/4 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 cup milk  
1 apple, peeled and chopped - Granny Smith

### DIRECTIONS:

Grease and flour a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan.  
Mix brown sugar & cinnamon in a bowl & set aside.  
Beat white sugar and butter in a bowl with mixer until smooth and creamy.  
Beat in eggs, 1 at a time; add vanilla  
Combine flour and baking powder together, then stir into creamed butter mixture.  
Mix milk into batter until smooth.  
Pour half the batter into the prepared loaf pan. Next add half the apples and half the brown sugar cinnamon mixture. Lightly pat apple mixture into batter. Pour the remaining batter over apple layer; top with remaining apples and remaining brown sugar/cinnamon mixture.  
Again, lightly pat apples into batter  
Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted in the center of the loaf comes out clean, 30 to 40 minutes.

**Tip:** If you notice it getting too brown on the top, cover it loosely with tin foil and continue baking until the inside is done. Enjoy!

## Do You Remember When?

School was starting. It was the first of the new school year. You were up early to get ready. Your clothes had been laid out the night before. Mom always had breakfast ready when you came down stairs. Anxiously you waited for the bus to arrive. When we got off the bus at school, we felt a pride of self-worth with all the new school clothes and the new school supplies! I could hardly wait to write in the new note books!

It was always exciting to see your friends again. This was when you saw new faces of families that just move in, and missed those of the families that moved away. It was exciting to hear what everyone did over the long summer vacation.

The last days of summer were still very hot. There was no air-conditioning, but the rooms all had large windows with some fans to move the air. We still played outside in the heat during recess, no such thing as water bottles, but we sure hit the water fountain when we returned back inside.

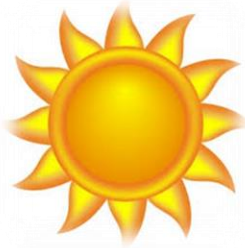
We did not take our lunch, we ate the hot lunch that was cooked from scratch by the wonderful lunch ladies. I can still see their faces. Smiles and giggles as we walked down the line. I remember it was basic simple foods that nearly everyone liked. A balanced diet. Usually the meal had a meat, vegetable and a cup of fruit or pudding. Often we were offered a choice of a bread & butter or a peanut butter sandwich. White or chocolate milk. There was no pop! The food didn't have preservatives. It was wholesome fresh made foods. We had a punch meal ticket and a punch milk ticket. If we lost is, we were in trouble, cause Mom would have to buy another.

I enjoyed the lower grades of school. They seemed so care free. If the teacher told you to do something, you did it, or you were sent to the principal's office, who in turn call our parents. And we all know what would happen then! So it was behave or suffer the wrath of Mom and Dad!

**Just a reminder to slow down driving in town!  
Watch out for those young students walking to  
or from school! ☺**



## September UP COMMING EVENTS



- September 4, 2023 – Labor Day
- September 5, 2023 – Master Gardener Fall Classes begin
- September 11, 2023 – Patriot Day
- October 9, 2023 Columbus Day
- October 31, 2023 Halloween
- 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/UCoyB28Aj3qOovjpwnkSiLBg>
- Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/iamastergardeners/>



## September GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Divide plants** that flower in spring and summer.
- **Garlic** can be planted mid-September.
- **Start pulling up** your plants as they finish producing in the garden. You should burn your plants to help control blights and insects
- **Continue to water perennials** as needed.
- **With the moist Humid conditions** watch for mold and mildew. Air circulation is key to prevention. Peonies are very susceptible.
- **Mow lawns** regularly to keep grass at 2 1/2" height
- **Look for pests** and other problems; spotting early can mean less chemical controls. Note: slugs and caterpillars can be removed manually.
- **Control slugs** near your hostas by putting out slug bait. Sprinkle the bait around the hostas. Put out small amounts, replenish as needed.
- **Cut perennials herbs**, and hang them to dry in a warm, bright spot (no sun!) with good ventilation.
- **Fertilize Established Roses.** Use an organic 5-10-5 fertilizer.
- **Water newly planted** deciduous trees and shrubs, to help them establish their root system.

- **Weed and Water** your garden. Keeping it weeded helps your plants with no competition for nutrients and water. Mulch will also help.



## Resources for Horticulture information Iowa State University Publication

SUL 5	Pruning Trees: Shade, Flowering, and Conifer
PM 780	Pruning and Training Fruit Trees
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries
PM 873	How to Construct a Cold Frame Or Hotbed
PM 820	Garden Soil Management
RG 209	Organic Mulches
RG 201	Integrated Pest Management
PM 534	Planting and Harvesting Times of Garden Vegetables
PM 731	Harvesting and Storing Vegetables
PM 666	Weed Management in the Home Garden
PM 1894	Garlic
RG 319	When to Divide Perennials
HORT 3108	Late Season Perennial Flowers
HORT 3068	Top 13 Vegetables to Donate to Food Pantries
PM 823	Watering the Home Garden – Trickle Irrigation
HORT 3109	Growing and Overwintering Tender Perennials

## 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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