

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

Backwards gardening, fall tidbits

BY SIOUX ROGERS



Sioux Rogers

Before you jump under your sheets for a long winter's nap, give your wonderful garden some survival attention. The following tidbits will ensure an ever-so-grateful garden—happy and full of big fat red worms.

After your morning cup of java, share the grounds or the stale coffee (without cream or sugar) with acid-loving blueberries, ferns, rhododendrons, azaleas, hydrangeas, etc.

If you had eggs for breakfast or made a cake with eggs, try sharing the crushed

eggshells with the garden. Aside from fluffing up the soil, eggshells provide calcium and minerals. In my garden, red worms congregate the most where I have added eggshells.

If you feel like you're "slipping" on a banana peel, just pick it up and bury it anywhere in the garden. As the skin breaks down in the underworld of soil, it gives forth potassium, calcium, sodium, magnesium, and phosphates. That banana peel is the soil's vitamin "gummy" in one long brownish-yellowish limp skin.

But fall activity is mostly "backwards garden time," when you actually remove more than you plant.

You could start by digging up and dividing any overgrown perennials, such as

gargantuan clumps of daylilies. You can also prune, rather severely, the soft-and-hardwood perennials, even though there are pros and cons to pruning in the fall versus the spring. If you prune in fall, your garden is all tidy and ready for spring. However, sometimes—depending on the weather—spring growth starts on the pruned plants, and then there is a late freeze in spring. If you wait until spring to prune, the old sloppy growth from last year will protect the new spring growth. On the other hand, spring is so busy with other garden chores, I prefer to do as much as possible in the fall.

Pruning has several functions, including aesthetics, stimulation of next year's growth, and removal of diseased growth. If a large bush that normally does not need pruning is blocking a walkway, whack it!

Speaking of bushes, fall is the

perfect time to plant bushes and trees—any type appropriate for zone seven, which is the Applegate Valley.

Concerning water and weeds, the WW duo: continue to water until the ground freezes, and (sorry) keep weeding as best

you can. If you can only do a little bit, don't fake it—you still need to pull out the weeds, roots and all.

If you have flowers that spray seeds all over your garden, you should at least cut off the seed heads—unless you like lovely flowers spreading all over your garden. In that case, go for it, and let the seeds blow anywhere.

Oh, here is a "non-task." Stop fertilizing, with the exception of the coffee, eggshells, and banana peels.

The rest of this article is a weird tidbit: propagate a rose using a raw potato. Cut a small to medium supple rose stem, six to eight inches long, from a rose branch that has had at least one healthy rose. Gently rough up the bottom of the cut stem where new roots will grow. Rub the eyes off a potato, make a small hole in it, and stick the rose stem snugly into the hole. Place the potato with the rose cutting in a large enough container to cover the potato with soil. As with any plant, good soil and good drainage are required.

Cover the container in plastic or use any large plastic container as a mini-greenhouse over the "rose-potato." Keep it in a warm, not hot, place with light. (This may work best in the early spring, but I am trying it now.)

I would love to hear any success or failure stories.

Dirty Fingernails and All,
Sioux Rogers

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Fall is the time to divide your daylilies (thevermontgardener.blogspot.com).



Propagate a rose using a potato (gardeningknowhow.com).



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