

Home and Garden Tips for Fall

*By the Water Quality & Health Council
September 7, 2018*

For home gardeners, late summer brings a happy burst of activity around the fruits—and vegetables—of their labor. Many gardeners can and store foods to prolong the enjoyment of their home-grown staples. Some are preparing the garden for a fall crop, benefiting from the last of the mild weather.

At this time of the year, it may be helpful to know about a handy product that can increase the success and enjoyment of the backyard, the garden and its bounty. Dilute chlorine bleach solutions can be used judiciously to help destroy harmful microorganisms on surfaces. Bleach is a great example of “chemistry in a bottle.”



Here are some fall tips for the backyard gardener/farmer/canner/birder:

- Sanitize garden tools before storing for winter
 - Soak garden tools and shears in a solution of 9 parts warm water to 1 part chlorine bleach to help avoid spreading plant diseases. Rinse, dry and oil tools to prevent corrosion.
- Sanitize terra cotta pots between plantings
 - After removing all soil and plant debris, wash pots and saucers, and then soak them in a solution of 9 parts warm water to 1 part chlorine bleach to reduce the spread of plant diseases. Rinse and allow to air dry.

- Sanitize food contact surfaces before canning fruits and vegetables
 - Before canning summer fruits and vegetables from your garden, clean then sanitize kitchen work surfaces with a solution of $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of water + $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. of chlorine bleach.
- Sanitize bird feeders
 - Sanitizing is for the birds too: Clean and sanitize feeders once or twice per month. Immerse an empty, cleaned feeder for 2-3 minutes in a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part chlorine bleach. Allow the feeder to air dry.
 - Our feathered friends need clean drinking water too: Once every two weeks, scrub bird baths with dish detergent, rinse, then fill with a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part chlorine bleach. Let stand for 2-3 minutes. Pour it out and allow to air dry, then rinse it well and air dry again before filling the bird bath with fresh water.
- Keep cut flowers fresh
 - Cut flowers last longer when the stems are cut at a 45 degree angle immediately prior to putting them into a vase containing a solution of $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. of chlorine bleach to one quart of water.
- Keep Halloween pumpkins and jack-o-lanterns fresh
 - To keep your Halloween pumpkin or jack-o-lantern looking fresh longer, wipe away any soil on the pumpkin surface and then dip the gourd into a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part chlorine bleach. This will help reduce post-harvest rot.

Here's to a bountiful home garden and an enjoyable fall!

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