



Northumberland County Extension  
Office, PO Box 400  
Heathsville, VA 22473  
(804)580-5694  
[www.nnmg.org](http://www.nnmg.org)

Northern Neck Master Gardeners (NNMG) offer free advice and solutions for all your gardening questions. This includes diagnosing plant, insect and disease problems; promoting safe use of pesticides and fertilizers to protect water quality and our environment; and teaching proper care of lawns, trees, shrubs and vegetables.

**Mission:** Trained and supervised by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), volunteers provide the community with research-based gardening and horticultural information through educational projects and programs. Services include Help Desks, Plant Clinics, seminars and workshops.

#### HELP DESKS

Call or bring in samples:

##### Northumberland Extension Office

Tuesdays, 9am – 12noon  
January through December  
(804)580-5694

##### Lancaster Extension Office

Thursdays, 9am – 12noon  
April through October  
(804)462-5780

##### Westmoreland Extension Office

Wednesdays, 9am-12noon  
April through October  
(804)493-8924

#### PLANT CLINICS

Bring your questions and samples:  
May through October

##### **Irvington Farmer's Market**

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month  
9am – 1pm

##### **Heathsville Farmer's Market**

April through October  
3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month  
9am – 1pm

#### **Gardening in the Northern Neck:**

*A Handbook for Responsible Gardeners* - Written by local Master Gardeners, this is an invaluable reference for successful gardening in our area. Available for \$10 at offices, Plant Clinics and MG events.

Please visit [www.nnmg.org](http://www.nnmg.org) or call for more information.

# Green Sleeves

## Northern Neck Master Gardeners

October - December

### NOW'S THE TIME

## A Gardening Checklist for the Northern Neck

***Our average first frost is October 25<sup>th</sup>. In preparing your garden for winter, the aim is to ensure the health and vigor of plants in the next growing season and also to improve the aesthetics of your landscape during the winter months. Two tasks will contribute to these objectives: pruning and mulching. Winter mulch should be applied after several frosts and a lowering of the soil temperature. If applied too early, the warmth from the protected soil can stimulate new growth that can be frozen back, possibly causing severe damage to plants.***

### October

#### Vegetables & Herbs

☀ You can direct sow clove garlic, scallions, lettuce, mustard and radishes during all of October, turnips until mid-October, and onion sets until the first week of December.

☀ Cut back perennial herbs to encourage well-branched growth next year.

#### Perennials

☀ Clean up around roses and peonies; if left on the ground, leaves and stems can harbor diseases and provide convenient places for pests to spend the winter.

☀ As you clean out your flower beds, mark spots where late-starting perennials will come up next spring to avoid damaging them while working in the beds.

#### Lawns

Continue to mow so the grass will not grow so high that it mats down under snow. Remove leaves from the lawn, compost them or save for next year's mulch.

☀ **Cool season grasses:** Apply fertilizer and lime according to your soil test. As necessary, water deeply. Control broadleaf weeds and diseases if needed. Broadcast overseeding after surface preparation until mid-month. Sod damaged areas.

☀ **Warm season grasses:** Apply lime according to your soil test. As necessary, water deeply. Overseed as necessary.

#### Trees & Shrubs

☀ Thoroughly water evergreens *before* the ground freezes.

☀ Trees and shrubs that have shown signs of weak growth should be fertilized after they are dormant, but before the soil temperature drops below 45 degrees.

☀ Light pruning of both needled and broadleaved evergreens is recommended in late fall to encourage a strong framework and to help the plants overcome any snow damage.

## November

### Vegetables & Herbs

☀️ You can direct sow clove garlic, spinach, mustard and radishes until mid-November.  
☀️ In perennial vegetable gardens, cut plants to the ground, remove weeds and pull up dead or nonproductive plants and place on the soil to be tilled in. Remove anything diseased or insect infested and either burn it or haul it away. Ash from burning can be put back on the garden. Add compost to your garden, then rotary till or plow. You can mulch the bed.

☀️ Clean your tools: Clean, oil and repair hand tools, paint or repaint handles. Sharpen blades and remove rust. Power tools should be cleaned, replace parts such as spark plugs, and sharpen. Store your tools inside or under cover.



### Lawns

☀️ **Cool season grasses:** Apply fertilizer and lime according to your soil test. As necessary, water deeply. Continue to mow throughout growing season. Sod damaged areas.

☀️ **Warm season grasses:** Apply lime according to your soil test.

### Trees & Shrubs

☀️ Continue deep watering of evergreens until the ground freezes.

☀️ If you are planting roses, do so before the ground freezes and water well. The preferred season for pruning roses is in the spring before active growth begins.

☀️ Cut away suckers from the base of lilacs, forsythia, and crepe myrtle.

## December

### Vegetables & Herbs

☀️ You can direct sow onion sets during the first week of December.

### Lawns

☀️ **Cool season grasses:** Apply lime according to your soil test. Continue to mow throughout growing season. Sod damaged areas.

☀️ **Warm season grasses:** Apply lime according to your soil test.

### Trees & Shrubs

☀️ When cutting evergreens for holiday decorations be careful not to damage the plants. Distribute pruning over the entire plant. Limit cutting to mild shaping and thinning. Do not trim boxwoods when the temperature is below 40 degrees.

☀️ Promptly remove snow from evergreen shrubs to prevent suffocation and breaking. Tap the branches gently or use a broom to sweep upward while the snow is fresh. Do not let snow ice over.

### WHAT'S GROWING ON?

*Previous generations of gardeners subscribed to the neat and tidy garden cleanup in the fall. Now, a more natural look is popular which includes leaving spent seed heads and bedraggled leaves in place to benefit both plants and wildlife. Birds gain food and shelter, over-wintering insects perhaps essential to the plant's life cycle are protected, and the plants themselves enjoy valuable insulation. An added bonus is that the presence of last year's growth reminds us of the location of the plants that will reemerge in the spring.*

*Research shows that certain species (chrysanthemums in particular) will sprout earlier and more vigorously if the old foliage is left in place until early spring. As a general rule rake up most of the leaves but leave the previous year's growth on the plant until late winter, unless there is a specific reason for practicing vigorous sanitation around the plant to protect it from pathogens or insect damage.*