

## **Fall Garden Chores**

I have seen a few fall gardens going in so far, but the dry weather seems to have some folks thinking about not planting a fall garden. There are some helpful garden chores that could be done now to help get ready for next spring. Should I say, help us get ready for Spring Rains!

Always pull up expired crops at the end of the season. Not doing so will create problems. Lots of diseases and insects love to overwinter in crop residue and will be out in full force in the spring if left unchecked. Another problem is that old, over-mature vegetables will die on the plants and disperse seed that will ultimately germinate next spring where you don't want them. This second generation of seed may well have cross-pollinated, producing plants that are inferior and different from what you actually planted.

When we don't plant a winter garden we tend to "leave the garden spot idle". This may not be the best idea. This can also contribute to increased disease and insect pressure in the spring. Consider tilling the garden to expose any insects, nematodes and soil pathogens to the cool, dry weather. This is a perfect time to add amendments such as compost or other organic matter like manures or fallen tree leaves over the garden and till them in.

You might also consider planting a "cover crop". Bob Westerfield, UGA Extension Horticulture Specialist says he typically plants a combination of at least two types of seed mixed together, such as wheat or oats as a grass with a few pounds of crimson clover. Cover crops help prevent erosion and add organic matter to the soil when tilled in early spring.

If you would like more information on Fall Gardening or a related topic, contact us at the Burke County Extension Office at (706)554-2119.