Winding Down For The Season

It’s time to start thinking about winding down for the season. Especially if you live in a cold climate like me.

You’re probably thinking: “Wait. Isn’t it too early?”

True! It’s too early to be shutting down the garden just yet. You’re probably still harvesting. And maybe you’ve even planted some cool-season crops that you plan to harvest in the fall.

So that’s why I’m talking about winding down and not closing up shop.

It’s time to start thinking about winding down, which means it’s time to think ahead. It doesn’t mean you need to do everything all at once. By starting early, you can do a gradual cleanup of the garden. This strategy is a whole lot less overwhelming than a complete cleanup at the end of the season.

Winding down for the season: How to do it

Here are some things to think about as you walk about in your garden this September.

Get rid of any dead plants. Do this now. Wait too long, and the ground will freeze, making it tough to pull out plants completely. Pulling plants now also decreases the chances that pests will make a home out of the dead foliage for the winter.

Add organic matter to empty slots in the garden. Start amending the soil now in preparation for the spring. You don’t need to wait to do it all in one fell swoop, though. As you toss dead pepper and tomato plants, add compost to those spots.

Put away spring-specific tools. Tidy up tools and supplies you

don’t need anymore. This includes seed starting stuff. Many gardeners keep these supplies hanging around because they’re in ‘growing mode’ throughout the summer season. But now it’s time to put those things away. Clean them up now, so they’re ready to use in the spring.

Plant bulbs. Some flowers and perennials do best when planted in the fall. You don’t want to plant too early, but now is the time to start thinking about what you might want to plant and where.

Collect other supplies. Already bought your fall planting bulbs? Great! You’re right on track. You might need other supplies for your garden wind down, though. Grab things like mulch and soil amendments now, so you have them on hand when it’s time to use them for things like protecting perennial and tree roots from freeze-thaw cycles.

Ask someone for help. Tree leaves are still bright green, but they’ll start turning vibrant colors and dropping like flies when fall arrives. If you have many leaf-shedding trees around your garden and home, enlist some leaf raking help now. Ask family and friends if they’ll help you when the time comes and offer some fresh produce in exchange for a helping hand.

Catalog your seeds. Take stock of what you have on hand for next year and make a note of what needs replenishing. I like to take a break from gardening in the winter, so I try not to think about seeds or other garden-related things when it’s cold outside. But I always make sure to check my seed collection before closing up shop. You might decide to save some seeds from plants in your garden if you’re running low.

What’s your take on winding down for the season? Do you do it all at once, or do you take it slow like I do?

I know not all frugal gardeners like this kind of piecemeal approach to closing up the garden. But for gardeners with limited energy stores, taking it slow can be a real help. As a

gardener with a chronic illness, sometimes small tasks can feel insurmountable. Breaking them up makes it possible to get them done and reserve energy for cooking all the lovely produce I harvest.