

tip sheet: **Top 10 Supplies and Tools** to Prepare the Garden for Winter

overview

The end of the gardening season is an important time to prepare for the next season. Efforts made at this time will prepare the garden for the harsh winter season ahead and put your school garden in a great position to get a good start on the spring season to follow. Below are recommendations for supplies to have on hand and some tools that will prove useful.

objectives

Participants will learn how:

- to recommend basic steps for overwintering a school garden.
- to introduce the vocabulary and tools for preparing the garden for winter.

suggested supplies:

1. Mulch – Mulch is used as a barrier to the sun and wind and helps to suppress weeds and limit soil erosion. Many different materials qualify as mulch: straw and salt hay, wood chips, grass clippings, tree leaves, etc. We recommend visiting your local plant nursery to find out what is in stock. Apply mulch as a top dress to the surface of your planting beds, particularly in beds with exposed soil.

2. Ornamental and Edible Bulbs – Ornamental bulbs, such as tulips, daffodils, alliums, and hyacinths and edible bulbs, such as garlic, are planted in the fall at the end of the growing season and before the ground

freezes. Flowering bulbs provide a nice jolt of color to the early spring season. Be sure to label the plantings and save room for planting cool season crops in the spring.

3. Cover Crops – Planting cover crops in the fall is a great way to improve the health of your garden soil AND prevent erosion. Cover crops include clovers, wheat, rye, vetches, and alfalfa. Nutrients in the biomass of most cover crops are released into the soil when the crop is turned over in the spring. Legumes, release nitrogen into the soil while they're growing. The roots of cover crops help to keep soil particles in place despite the harsh, drying winds of winter.

4. Compost – Top dressing the garden beds with a layer of compost is a smart way to add organic matter to improve the soil structure of your garden. Spread a 1" layer of compost prior to mulching the garden and after dead and decayed plant matter has been cleared from the garden.

suggested tools:

1. Leaf Rakes – School gardens likely accumulate leaves from nearby tree cover. Leaf rakes are ideal for collecting this material. Rakes are made with a variety of materials and are scaled for adults and children. Save the material for mulch or add to your compost pile.

2. Wagons – The volume of material collected at the end of the gardening season is usually substantial. Wagons are particularly helpful this time of year for moving organic material to the compost pile and other garden items (signs, stakes, tools) to storage for winter.