Now that we have had some hard freezes, we do need to wrap up winterizing our perennial beds (removing dead tops and mulching) and plan out our winter chores of pruning problematic limbs out of shrubs and trees, as well as applying winter dormant sprays where you had some insect or disease issues in the past. At my new home, I will be establishing new beds all winter long so I will be prepared to start planting at first signs of spring.

As with most perennials, cut faded chrysanthemums and aster plants to 3 inches above ground and then mulch around and up to the base of plants.

It's time to plant those spring-flowering bulbs you purchased earlier this fall, such as daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, and crocus. You can still purchase bulbs and gift them for successful planting up to January 1.

Begin inspecting your fruit trees. Be sure to remove any mummified remaining fruits, and rake up and dispose of old leaves and branches that may harbor diseases over the winter. Review needed winter cover sprays and take action if needed so your trees have the best opportunity to set and produce fruit for you next year.

The winter months when trees are dormant are excellent times to plant new ones into your landscape. Be careful that you do not plant them too deep or with too much soil amendment. If we have a dry period during the winter, newly planted trees will need some watering but don’t drown them. A good soaking once every 2 weeks by natural rainfall is perfect for winter water needs. You may need to pull the garden hose to accomplish this.

Drain the fuel from your string trimmer and run the engine until the amount left in the carburetor is depleted (the engine will shut off). This will help prevent “gumming” in the carburetor and will make your first start next spring a much more pleasant job. This is a good idea for any small engine tool that will not be used over the winter.

Now that your strawberry beds are dormant, push mulch up around the base of the crowns being careful not to cover too many leaves. Most any type of organic mulch will work including ground up hardwood leaves, wheat straw, or pine needles. If you choose to use wheat straw, shake wheat seeds out of the straw over a sheet otherwise you will have a nice wheat crop next spring.

Make a list of needed repairs on garden tools and equipment. Repair or have them repaired during the winter while repair shops are slow and will have your equipment fixed for you before spring gardening demands begin.

It has been an incredible fall for establishing winter annuals. On my deck I have two long boxes which I planted pansies in about a month ago. Now they are in need of additional fertility to keep them at peak performance all through the winter. Since I used composted manure at planting all that they need now is Nitrogen in the form of Nitrate. I use soluble fertilizer for containers and small beds but would use granular if I had large in ground beds.

As you purchase or receive blooming holiday plants, these seasonal plants will look their best if they are placed in an area of your home which is cool and free from cold or heater vent drafts. Often these plants are overwatered causing them to decline rapidly. Allow them to dry out using your index finger as your moisture meter. Use room temperature water, not chilled tap water when watering.