

## **Post Rock Answers**

**By Cassie Thiessen November 8, 2024**

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### **Time to Round Up Your Gardening Tools**

With the cooler temperatures and longer nights, our gardens have come to an end. That means it is time to round up our gardening tools and tuck them safely away for next year. It is important to take care of your favorite gardening tools, lawnmower, and garden hoses by bringing them inside for the winter. A few extra minutes on a nice fall day can help preserve your tools and keep them in top shape for years to come.

Once you are done mowing for the year, be sure to service your lawn mower before putting it away. For gasoline-powered engines, drain the gas tank or use a gasoline stabilizer. Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy. After removing the spark plug, squirt a few drops of oil inside the spark plug hole to help lubricate the cylinder. While you have the sparkplug removed, replace it with a new one. If your equipment has a battery, clean the battery terminals with a wire-bristled brush to prevent corrosion in the off-season. The battery can then be removed or connected to a battery monitor that will keep it charged over winter. If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter, such as a cool basement. Now is also an excellent time to sharpen mower blades so they'll be ready next spring.

Shovels, hoes and other common garden tools often have wooden handles that can deteriorate over time. Storing tools in a protected location can slow that process, but normal use will still expose the tools to the elements. The end of the season is a good time to clean up and protect the handles so they will last for many years. Weathering can raise the grain of wood, resulting in splinters. A light sanding can smooth the handle. Follow sanding with a light

application of wood preservative, linseed oil, or polyurethane to protect the wood. Wipe off any excess coating after a few minutes since oil-based products can attract dirt. Clean any dirt off metal parts and coat with a light application of oil to prevent rust.

Hoses and shallow irrigation lines may be damaged over the winter if water is not drained from them. If there is a main shut-off valve for the irrigation system, close it; then run through the zones to make sure any pressure has a chance to bleed off. Lawn irrigation systems usually have shallow lines. Though some lines may be self-draining, check to make sure there are no manual drains. If manual drains are present, they should be opened. Be sure to make a note and map them so you remember to close them next spring before the system is pressurized. Drain hoses by stretching them out and coiling them for storage. Water will drain as you pull the hose toward you for coiling. Store hoses in a protected place. UV light from the sun can make hoses brittle over time.

If you have any questions on how to prepare your equipment for the winter season, contact any Post Rock District Extension Office.

*Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at [cchiessen@ksu.edu](mailto:cchiessen@ksu.edu) or by calling Beloit (785-738-3597).*