
The Great Tuck In

With Robin Beaton

How do you put your garden to bed?

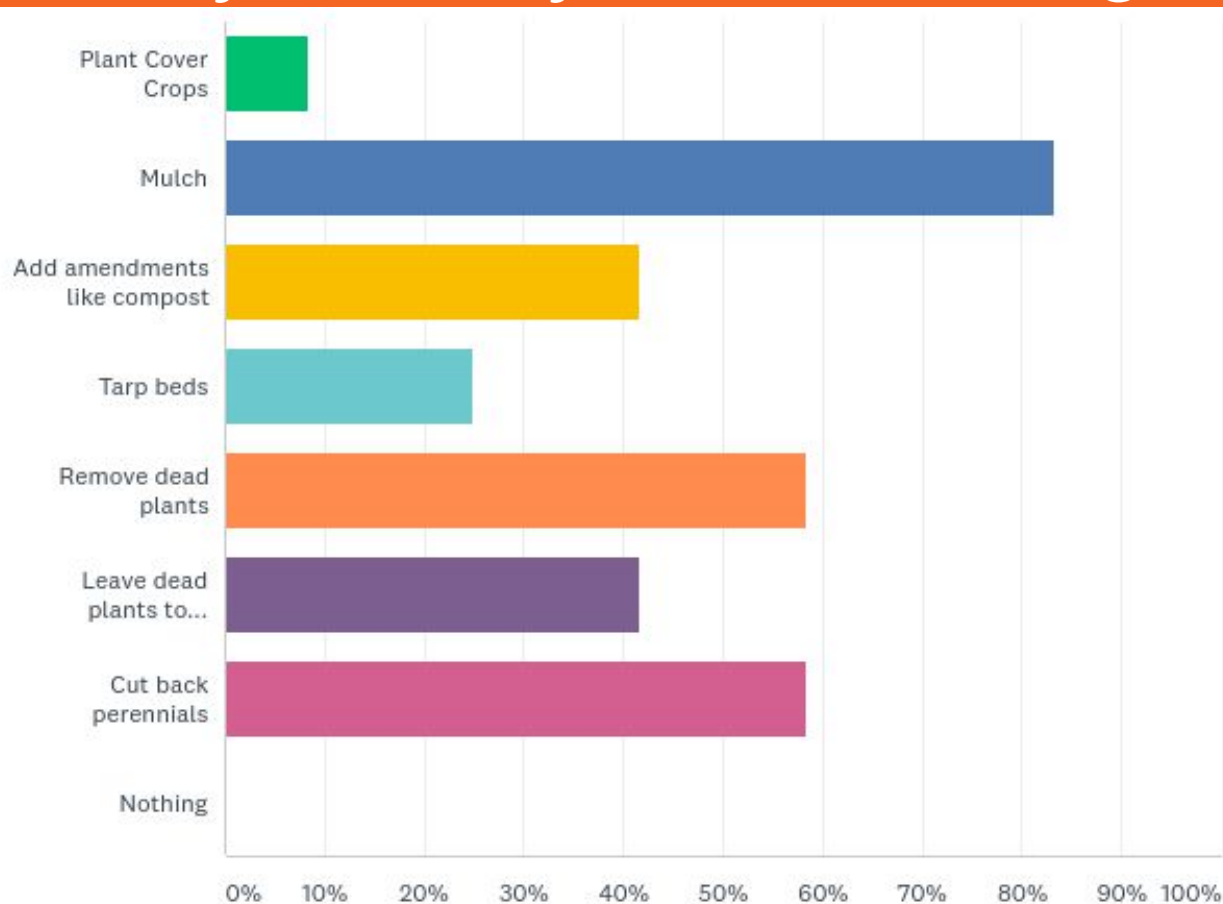


Some responses from Quadra gardeners:

- Nothing too involved - a layer of shredded maple leaves; some beds remain in use for kales, chards, lettuce etc.
- Weed it, lime, horse manure, dig it under, add seaweed and maple leaves.
- Pull up all dead plants and compost. Trim back raspberries to keep from breaking in snow (if we have some) mulch with maple leaves or straw. If I can find some manure in bedding I'll put that on too .
- I mulch with leaves.
- I start by cutting down all my perennials and then mulching around them. I have a huge maple in the garden so I mostly use the falling leaves as mulch. I dig up the house plants that I put out for the summer and pot them back up and bring them in. In the vegetable garden I cover everything with straw to keep the weeds down .
- Simply weed it, cover with maple and magnolia leaves ... but first plant the garlic.

- A lot of the garden is planted in winter veg, but blank spots get a winter mulch like leaves, seaweed, or compost.
- Clean up plants to compost except any with pests and tomato plants. Lime any areas that need it. Cover with leaves and any other soil enhancing vegetation. If any area is really weedy, perhaps cover with a dark tarp. Clean all poles, tomato supports and tools and store inside. Write down what worked and what didn't and any thoughts for next season.
- Remove all weeds that will go to seed. Compost all plants that have done their thing for the year. Spread some lime or wood ashes on the soil. Cover with all the previous year's partially composted maple leaves and top with seaweed if I can find some .
- Compost plants. Cover beets and potatoes and leeks with leaves. Seaweed on the beds. Leave sunflowers for the birds until seeds are gone then mulch the stems.
- Remove weeds and add them to compost. I cut down what remains of vegetable plants and leave them on the vegetable beds and add mulch. Mid-winter I tarp my beds.

Do you do any of the following?



**And now over to our presenter,
Quadra Gardener
Robin Beaton**



Yikes! The garden can look like chaos at this time of year.

**Have you considered planting
a cover crop?**

Benefits of a green manure cover crop

- Adds organic matter to the soil.
- Reduces soil loss from water erosion.
- Maintains soil surface infiltration, so it does not compact.
- Improves soil tilth (structure).
- Scavenges nutrients that might otherwise leach from the bed.
- Feeds and provides shelter for birds, wildlife, and beneficial insects.
- Fixes nitrogen in the soil.

Tucking in your beds with a cover crop in 14 Steps



#1 Thoroughly weed and lightly rake to loosen soil.

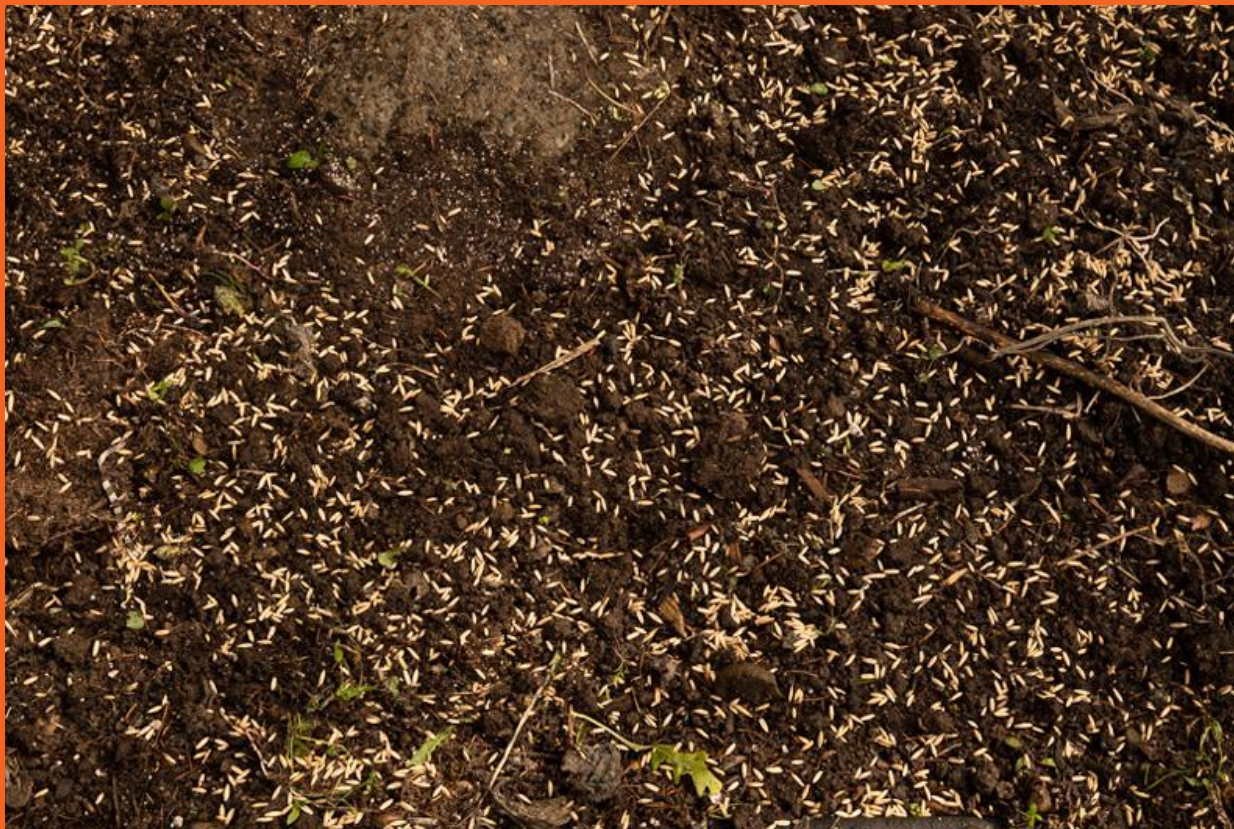
_____Weeds without seeds can go in the compost pile._____



#2 Water to prep the soil for seed



#3 Feed oats available from places like Shar-Kare



#4 Scatter the oats relatively densely



#5 OPTIONAL: Sprinkle a few inches of shredded leaf mulch on the oats. Although oats will sprout & grow without mulch, this is a good opportunity to add leaf mulch to your garden bed.



#6 This is the last of our leaf mulch from 2020. In the fall we gather leaves, mow them and put them in wire bins.



#7 Water thoroughly after adding the mulch



#8 Birds love oats! Cover with a permeable cover of some sort, anchor it down & water again. Continue to water as necessary until sprouted.



#9 The cover can be thick or thin, just enough to keep the birds off. Once you can see green growth remove the cover cloth.



#10 In September, as veggie beds are harvested, I weed and plant oats. I like to get all the oats sown by the first week of October while the soil is still warm.



#11 These oats are a month old, sown August 25 following the potato harvest. Oats sown in October might only grow 6" or so before winter.



#12 A sea of oats



#13 All tucked in until spring. I prefer to cover the oats with tarps once they have attained significant growth so I can get better decomposition. You can also leave the oats uncovered and over the winter the soil is protected by a covering of 'oat' litter.



#14 Temperatures below -7°C will kill the oats. By spring, the roots have rotted away and the old tops can be turned in, raked up and composted or used elsewhere in the garden as mulch. This is the benefit of using oats over a more robust green cover crop like Fall Rye which does not die back.

Some more info:

- Plants need a minimum temperature of 5 degrees to germinate and grow best above 10 degrees.
- Planting oats where veggies have been harvested can take advantage of fall temperatures still warm enough for germination and growth.
- Green manure cover crops are especially good for enriching the soil in new beds and replenishing beds where heavy feeders like brassicas have been grown.
- Once 6" to 8" of oat green growth has been attained you can accelerate decomposition by tarping. This also protects the bed from weeds and will help to warm the soil quickly in the spring.
- Lumber wraps, available for free from Quadra Island Builders , make good long lasting tarps.

Questions?



Thanks to our presenter,
Robin Beaton

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