

On this dry and windy day, I definitely see Fall in the air. Now is the best time to plan ahead for next summer's garden and to plant native plants and trees.

If you dread digging up the soil and tackling all those weeds, you can sheet mulch an area of your yard. Place layers of cardboard on top of grass or weeds followed by layers of newspaper. Wet it down thoroughly and cover it with three to four inches of commercial mulch. If you have compost from your backyard bin put it down before the paper layers. The paper will slowly biodegrade while killing the weeds.

To plant, cut a hole through the plant, put in your plant and adjust the mulch around it. Instead of commercial mulch, you can use a combination of shredded leaves mixed with grass.

Another method is called Lasagna Gardening. Our library has a copy of Patricia Lanza's book. You start out the same way with layers of wet cardboard and newspaper, but continue to layer with grass, leaves, vegetable or fruit waste, and finished compost to make a mound at least twelve inches high. Let it sit a month to compost a little and plant directly into this mound.

Fall is also the time to think about planting a cover crop. If you have a vegetable or annual flower garden, planting some green manure will keep that area weed free throughout the winter while keeping the soil alive. Some legumes actually fix nitrogen in the soil so you will not need as much fertilizer for the next growing season.

I generally plant, or rather broadcast and cover with finished compost, a combination of the following plants: Common mustard will grow almost anywhere with little attention. It is pretty, keeps weeds down, and is easy to turn into the soil or pull out for the compost bin.

Purple vetches echo the mustard above but are vines. These legumes have the ability to fix nitrogen from the air into a form that is readily available to plants.

I plant fava beans in areas of my yard that water doesn't drain well. They thrive on extra

water and are one of my favorite vegetables.

My last crop is winter wheat (my Kansas connection). It is planted in the Fall and matures the following June. The birds generally hang from the wheat stalks and eat the seeds when it matures and I get the straw for mulch or my compost bin.

Clovers and other crops can be planted at different times of the year with similar benefits to our organic and drought tolerant gardens.

For more information about cover or compost crops, visit [www.VALCOREcycling.org](http://www.VALCOREcycling.org) and download that flyer on the composting page or drop by the site for a copy.

Seeds and instructions are available from these companies: [www.bountifulgardens.org](http://www.bountifulgardens.org) in Willits (707 459-6410), [www.harmonyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyfarm.com) near Sebastopol (707 823-9125), or Peaceful Valley Farm Supply in Grass Valley ([www.groworganic.com](http://www.groworganic.com), 888 784-1722).

#### Master Gardeners Plant Exchange

There will be a public plant exchange on Saturday, October 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the UC Cooperative Extension office located at 501 Texas Street in Fairfield. Master Gardeners will share seeds, plant cuttings, bulbs and small potted plants. The public is encouraged to bring in plants to share. For information call Jennifer at 707 784-1321.

#### America Recycles Day is November 15

Celebrate at VALCORE Recycling from 9:00 a.m. to Noon on November 15. Activities will include a plant and seed exchange, a member group garage sale, U-Waste drop off, Scouting for food and more. Call 55-EARTH for more details

*VALCORE Recycling Board Member Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit [www.VALCOREcycling.org](http://www.VALCOREcycling.org).*

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