Fall is one of our favorite seasons for decorating. This year, though, go beyond the traditional orange gourds and dried cornstalks.

**Porch Looks**

If you’re lucky enough to have an open porch, fall is its time to shine. The weather is gorgeous, making porch-sitting a prime autumn idea. And you can decorate your outdoor room just for the occasion. Make it memorable by selecting a color scheme that accentuates your existing palette, but don’t be afraid to kick it up with bright colors. Think a punch of orange and fiery red heirloom pumpkins. Don’t be afraid of bright yellows, as Pantone picked a sunny yellow as one of the top colors for this fall.

**Good Gourds**

Speaking of pumpkins, let’s get out of the orange pumpkin rut. Pumpkins come in a huge variety of colors, including neutral creams and whites, deep jewel greens, blazing reds and hot yellows. Group your pumpkins in complementary colors and pick a variety of shapes so that your pumpkin patch really shines. Bonus points: Decoupage or paint faux pumpkins in any color scheme you like for a personalized peck of pumpkins.

**Cozy Up**

Come fall, there’s literally no space that couldn’t use an extra blanket. Elevate your cozy game by displaying throw blankets in a variety of textures and colors that complement your existing decor. Also consider using blankets in new ways, such as draped over tables as table cloths.

**Terrific Tartans**

Plaid is back this fall, and look for it on throw pillows, blankets, tableware and more. Go beyond the traditional buffalo check, though, and hit plaid patterns in warm jewel tones. Don’t be afraid to play with pattern and mix and match, using neutral plaids as your base and working up from there.

**Foraged Foliage**

Create gorgeous centerpieces, posies and other arrangements by going no further than your front yard. Sprays of limbs festooned with colorful leaves, fall grasses and seasonal blooms are all perfect for bringing the outside in this season. Also look for seasonal fruits in jewel tones, such as pears and apples, to dress your table and kitchen.
Get Those Gutters Cleaned

When gutters are working as they should, they provide a largely unnoticed defense against rain intrusion, foundation erosion and water damage. As they fail, however, these very serious issues can begin to quietly take root. You may find yourself with a hefty repair bill when all that was needed in the first place was more regular maintenance. There is also an acknowledged lifespan for these systems, based on the material they’re made of.

How They Work

Properly installed, well maintained gutters keep rain from entering eaves and exterior walls. They also keep water away from your foundation. Without this important drainage system, water intrusions can lead to mold and rot, stain siding and brick, and potentially even destabilize your home. Water that hasn’t been rerouted may collect around the perimeter of the structure, creating the ideal condition for interior flooding and foundation cracks.

What to Look For

Blockages and dislodged joints are the most common problems associated with these systems. It’s critical to make regular inspections since overflows lead to all of the same issues as having no gutters at all. That’s particularly true in the fall, since wetter weather is ahead. Overflows may also be caused by poorly designed systems that do not have enough downspouts to handle average rain showers.

Look for signs of rust, since that’s a sign that you’ve reached the end of the system’s natural lifespan. The average galvanized steel or aluminum guttering system is meant to last about 20 years, according to the National Association of Home Builders. If it’s time for a major repair or replacement, seek out a licensed, insured contractor.

Proceed with Caution

Inspecting your gutters will obviously involve time spent on a ladder, and that can lead to a dangerous situation if you don’t proceed with caution. Use a spotter to ensure that the ladder is sturdy and secure. The International Association of Certified Home Inspectors also recommends that you constantly reposition your ladder, rather than reaching beyond your immediate grasp. Working in that position potentially creates an imbalance issue. Wear gloves since there may be loose fasteners or sharp debris lodged in the gutters. If you plan to inspect your gutters from the roof, be sure to wear footwear with proper gripping.
The Perfect Fall Centerpiece

Autumn’s vibrant colors are a creative way to make any gathering in your home warm and inviting.

Foliage, plants, traditional items and candles in the shades of autumn can provide just the right season-focused touch for your next table setting. Complement your fall centerpiece with handpicked accessories to complete the look.

Bring the Outside Indoors

Look for leaves, branches, vegetables and flowers that reflect the traditional colors of fall—from rich reds to bold oranges to warm yellows. Weave them together into a circular or oval shape to create the foundation of your centerpiece, or craft a free-form garland. You could also paint a plain woven bread basket to create a cozy place to collect it all. If you’re not necessarily that crafty, you can also purchase an autumn-themed centerpiece and use these handpicked items to personalize it. Cornucopias are a classic choice that will provide timeless memories for a new generation. Place fall-colored and scented flowers around the arrangement. Complete the centerpiece with wheat sprigs, small pumpkins and squash, or other seasonal foods like apples.

Finishing the Look

Select napkins, placemats and a tablecloth that fit into the color palette you’ve created with the centerpiece. Then get creative: Paint leaf patterns by hand on wooden napkin rings to give them a sense of homemade charm. A hollowed-out pumpkin can also be used as a vase. Large fallen leaves from outdoors can serve as fall focused place cards. Rinse them first, then allow each to dry before carefully inscribing them with the names of friends and family. Go around the table, placing one in front of each plate.

Other Helpful Tips

Make sure your centerpiece isn’t so large that there isn’t room for glasses, condiments and serving platters. It also shouldn’t be so tall that guests struggle to see each other. Don’t light the candles, since that may interfere with the scrumptious aromas associated with the meal you’ll serve at this fall gathering. Don’t be afraid to keep it simple: Arrange a grouping of mismatched gourds and pumpkins to very easily transform your tabletop. Focus on varying sizes and colors. Rather than worrying with formal floral arrangements, collect dried branch stalks in a variety of vases. For more pops of color, wrap the branches with wool and fleece, creating a sculptural conversation piece.

EVERY DROP COUNTS

Our Water Conservation Rebate Program pays you back when you install water-wise appliances, landscaping and rain barrels at your home or business. Contact us today to find out how it works.

Email us at mywater@epcor.com
S

pring and summer are perhaps the

busiest times of year for gardeners. However, fall

also is a prime time to tend to

your gardens.

The tree and bare root

retailer Bower & Branch

advise that soil temperatures

in many regions of the
country may still be warm

enough to encourage root
growth well into the start of
winter. Furthermore, fall is

often the ideal time to plant,

fertilize and keep a garden

going or to get a head start on

next year’s bounty.

Here are some helpful tips

to make the most of the fall
gardening season.

To begin fall planting, keep

a few things in mind:

- Think about fall annuals

and bulb planting. Near

the end of September, start

planting cool-weather-loving

pansies and violas for pops of

color as summer flowers fade.

Also, it’s a good idea to stock

up on bulbs that will bloom

in the months to come before

they sell out in stores. Wait

until the temperatures really
cool down before planting

them in desired spots for

spring sprouts.

- Sow salad seeds. Lettuce,
spinach, radishes, and

arugula tolerate the cooler

temperatures. Try new and

interesting lettuce varieties

and enjoy salads well into the

fall season.

- Take inventory of the

sun. Positioning a garden

carefully means maximizing

hours of sunlight, which

begin to dwindle in the fall.

Experts say gardens grow

best in sunny locations that

receive six hours of direct

sunlight each day. This is

where container gardens can

be helpful, as they allow

gardeners to move plants

into spots that will get ample

sunlight.

- Fill in landscaping gaps.

Some fall plants can add

color around the landscape

and brighten up homes to

add curb appeal. In addition
to pansies and violas, asters,

kale and chrysanthemums are

fall blooms. Keep in mind

that mums can come back

year after year. So take

them out of those flower

pots and get them into

the ground. They can be

enjoyed next year as well,
sprouting in early spring

and developing leaves and

buds through late summer.

- Clean up unwanted

growth. Fall is an ideal time
to cut back spent vegetable

plants and get rid of errant

woods. Rather than digging

leaves, mow them with

a grass catcher and then

add the mix to a vegetable

garden as an excellent soil

insulator. The nitrogen

and carbon will fertilize the

soil, enhancing growing

possibilities and limiting

weeds growth.

- Propagate plants in the

fall. As temperatures

gradually begin to cool,

start taking cuttings from

perennials, gathering seed

pods from annuals and

rhododendrons and dividing

hardwood cuttings, says the

resource Gardening Know

How. Consult with a garden

center or horticulturist on

the proper ways to propagate

stems using rooting hormone

and other techniques.

- Continue to water plants.

Water is essential in the

fall and winter as roots can

still be growing. Gradually

reduce watering duration as

plants go dormant.

- Plant and maintenance

can extend the gardening season

and improve the chances of

growing a healthy spring

time garden.

Time to Winterize: Prepare Early

S

ave money now and in the future by winterizing your

domain now, before the worst

of winter arrives. Drafty doors and

windows, failing furnaces and leaky

roofs should be addressed or

they risk becoming a much, much bigger

issue as temperatures drop. In some

cases, winterizing your home takes

nothing more than a bit of sweat

equity.

Windows and Doors

Inefficient doors and windows

make it more difficult to warm

your home, sending energy bills

soaring. The danger doesn’t end

with uncomfortable drafts, however. Leaks that let in winter

temps also allow in condensation,

which can lead to rot in the wood

frames that surround your doors

and windows. Caulking or weather

stripping is often all that’s needed.

If you decide to entirely replace

them, consult local professionals

to find out more about the most

efficient new models. Then hire a

licensed professional to make sure

you receive a warranty-protected

installation.

Furnace Issues

Electric and gas furnaces need

annual service checks in order

to operate optimally. Most are

projected to work efficiently for

around 10-15 years before they

need replacement. You don’t want

that term to end when there’s snow

on the ground. The good news is,

it’s easy to monitor any system’s

age. A sticker with the model

number, date of manufacture

and date of installation should be

found on the unit. If your system has been in

place for more than a decade, it

may be time to consider a complete

overhaul or unit replacement. Even

if your furnace manages to limp

through the looming cold season,

an inefficient system can still have

a huge impact on your bottom

line. Residential costs have been

skyrocketing lately, and the U.S.

Energy Information Administration

predicts that trend will continue.

Other Trouble Spots

Check your roofing each fall for

damaged shingles and leaks. If you

do n’t feel comfortable with doing

this inspection yourself, hire a

professional. They can help head

off serious issues. Pour water

all siding and decks so remaining
dirt doesn’t promote mold and

mildew. Add a new coat of sealant

to the exterior of your home to

help minimize the impact of winter

precipitation.