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## **November Garden** Brian Crumblehulme

### **Woodpeckers will always tell you when your apples are ripe.**

Fall is the perfect time to assess your landscaping needs. In this time of transition you can compare the foliage-rich summer with the leaner winter. Given the increasing likelihood of increased winter storms and drier summers, it might be safer to keep the forest away from your house. Big forest trees like fir and cedar can come down in a strong wind and their high resin content makes them especially flammable if ignited. The provincial forest service recommends a thirty-foot clearance between the forest and the house but this does not imply that you blitz the area.

Our house is in the forest so I have been gradually thinning out the coniferous forest giants while encouraging maple and arbutus. On the south side we also have fruit trees and a rose and kiwi covered pergola for appearance and produce, none of which are likely to pose a wind or fire threat. On the contrary, deciduous trees provide summer shade to keep the house cool and allow weak winter sun to shine through.

Further down the driveway I recently planted two dogwoods and two ornamental maples. Dogwoods (both the eastern, C. Florida, and the western, C. Nuttalli, species) grow well on all but dry rock and marsh. Pink varieties make spectacular specimen trees while the white ones look well and flourish on the forest edge backed by native green trees.

As I write a hundred shades of maple-gold shine around the house. These are mostly big-leaf maples, Acer macrophyllum; so for variety I have added two more deep red maples for summer contrast. Maples are drought and fire resistant although when it comes time to prune the seasoned branches they do make an excellent, clean stove fuel.

Speaking of maples, wait until all the leaves are down before raking and collecting them for mulching, and don't forget to clean out the gutters as well. In our relatively damp maritime climate fungal infections can show up on leaves as dark or white patches. Cleanliness is the simplest way to deal with this by raking and burning any infected leaves.

After the first killing frost, clean up the flower beds and gently turn over the ground to let some air in. A sprinkling of bone meal and wood ash doesn't hurt either and will encourage strong root growth through the winter. This too is the time to lift and divide any old and crowded beds of perennials such as iris and lilies. Deep rooted plants such as poppies are best left undisturbed. Speaking of lilies, anyone fortunate to have an established bed of Lily of the Valley might want to select a few of the larger crowns for potting and forcing gently into flower for Christmas. The white short stemmed flowers are very fragrant and make a great show on the windowsill.

I cannot over emphasize the value of mulching with compost or manure. Plants need micro-nutrients and moisture, and mulching will provide both with very little effort. Fruit trees, roses, ornamental plants and all those vegetables benefit from this age-old technique.

In 1583 Richard Hathaway, father of William Shakespeare's wife Ann, made out his will, allotting his small farms to his three children in perpetuity, who:

'shall have the use, commodity and profit... thereto belonging with the appurtenances to be tilled, mucked and sowed...'

### **Recipes**

#### **Pumpkin Pie**

Prep: about 45 minutes, Cooking: about 45 minutes, Serves 4-6  
1 short crust pie shell, 2 cups pumpkin or yellow squash puree

1/2 cup diced ham, 1 medium chopped onion,  
3/4 cup sour cream, 1 beaten egg, 6 rashers chopped bacon  
thyme, oregano, anise, pepper & salt to taste

Pre-bake the pie crust until dry. Pre-fry the bacon until transparent, then remove the bacon and saute the onion until soft, add the ham and spices and brown slightly. Add the remaining ingredients, except the bacon, and stir well. Place the puree mix in the pie crust, top with bacon pieces and bake at 350°F for 20 minutes then raise the baking temperature to 425°F, or place under a broiler to crisp before serving.

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This 18th century New England recipe combines traditional European techniques with a new world vegetable. With crisp salad it makes an excellent lunch or side dish for dinner.

### **Tarte Tatin**

Prep: 15 minutes, Baking: 30 minutes

At the close of the 19th century, the small family-owned l'Hotel Tatin in Lamotte-Beuvron was inherited by two sisters, Carolina and Stephane, who became renowned for their home baking. The sisters are now long gone but the Hotel and their memory lives on in this most perfect dish.

'The logical end to a traditional fortifying restorative meal for men, eaten in the stuffy and smelly atmosphere exhaled by boots and damp jackets hanging out to dry... Tarte Tatin is a country girl who's seen a thing or two... she can laugh a merry laugh and take a joke, but never assume she's a nobody.'

—*The Hundred Glories of French Cooking* by Robert Courtine

Take ¾ lb sweet butter, ¼ lb powdered sugar, 2 lbs chopped pippin apples (Kings are ideal but you might want to take a pinch out of the sugar first. Granny Smiths also work well but need all that sugar). Crust: ½ lb flour, 1 egg, and a pinch of salt

Take a 10-12 inch diameter cast iron skillet and gently melt about half the butter. Add half the sugar and stir well. When the sugar begins to caramelize, add the chopped apples and toss well to coat all the pieces with sugary butter. Sprinkle the remaining sugar on top and cook for 5 minutes until hot. Meanwhile, pile the flour into a basin, add the egg, salt and remaining butter and work this together with your fingers until you achieve a fine soft pastry. Add a little cold water if necessary. Roll out the pastry and flop it over the hot apple mix still in the skillet. Trim the edge and bake in the skillet at 350°F for about 30 minutes or until golden.

To serve, gently shake the skillet to loosen the pie, cover with a serving plate and flip it over. Serve warm with lashings of whipped cream and cognac while you pretend to be bourgeois country folk returned from gathering truffles. ☞

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