

Cleaning Up the Vegetable Garden By Charles Marr, Kansas State University



For the last several years we've heard a lot of speculation about problems of overwintering pests. Some of the problems we've experienced are probably a result of overwintering, and some are not. The best way to prevent overwintering problems is to clean up all garden areas as soon as production is finished. With the early freeze this year, many crops in the garden have already

been killed. Chop and shred the crop residue with a lawnmower and till the area to incorporate the organic residue into the soil.

This will destroy most common insects and curb disease problems that may carry over in debris or residue in the garden. Remove stakes, cages and other plant supports, pulling off any adhering plant debris, and store them in an outside location. The temperatures and sunlight will disinfect the supports before next year. If you want to store them inside, treat them with a bleach-water solution of 10 parts water to 1 part household bleach. Soak the surface and allow it to dry before moving to an inside storage location.

If you choose to compost crop residue, be sure to do it properly. Composting generates heat to disinfect any disease or insect pests in the process. If you end up with a pile of crop debris, spread the residue on the soil and incorporate as soon as possible. With dry days in our autumn forecast you should be able to do a good job of incorporating garden residue allowing a complete decomposition before spring.

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The TGOA/MGCA national web site thanks the author for submitting this article on October 18, 2000. Tracking number: WSP2000101800026