

## Save Money with Wool Dryer Balls

By Holly Miner

*Laundry products can be costly and a household expense that really adds up over a year. Wool dryer balls may be one solution to reduce spending on laundry products. Use of wool dryer balls can also reduce the amount of time needed to dry clothing, reducing energy costs while helping save on softening supplies*

**W**ool dryer balls are all natural, free of chemicals, perfumes and dyes. The balls reduce drying time by quietly bouncing between clothes and allowing air to circulate more efficiently. Dryer balls absorb moisture from clothes, and the moisture in the balls keeps the air in the dryer humid longer, thus, lowering the build-up of static electricity in clothing.

Wool dryer balls also soften clothes without leaving pills on clothing. The wool balls should last for years. The number of balls used depends on preference. Balls need room to move in the dryer, so a full load of clothes

may not dry as efficiently as a medium-sized load. Start by using three balls and add more if needed; more than six and they are hard to keep track of at the end of a drying cycle.

Wool dryer balls are made from sheep's wool or other sources such as Alpaca. Montana has several places that sell wool dryer balls, with prices around \$7-9 per dryer ball. With a quick internet search, one can find wool dryer balls made in Montana to help support local wool growers.

Holly Miner is the MSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H agent in Big Horn County.

BIGSTOCK



TOP: JEANNE MCCORMICK, BOTTOM: TOBY DAY

### MASTER GARDENER SPOTLIGHT

## Alice Siebecker and Jeanne McCormick

By Josh Bilbao

*Any successful Master Gardener program is only as good as the volunteers who dedicate their time and passion to it. Because of that, the Gallatin County Master Gardener program is in great hands. Many volunteers contribute to make this program a success, but two individuals really stand out.*

**A**lice Siebecker and Jeanne McCormick, both Level 3 Master Gardeners, have taken to heart the intended purpose of the Master Gardener program. They have shared their talents and expertise in our communities and have taught many individuals a bevy of garden-related topics.

Their list of involvement in Gallatin County is not a short one. They were crucial members in the formation and success of the Southwest Montana Master Gardener Association. They have had their hands in numerous volunteer projects and clean up days, most importantly, the planting and maintenance of annual flower beds at the Story Mansion.



They planned, implemented and maintained the Plant Select garden that was located at the Bozeman Public Library. That garden has since been moved to the Gallatin County MSU Extension office and is thriving. The most important contribution to the program is that these two excellent volunteers co-teach the Level 1 Montana Master Gardener course. Their sharing of expertise and knowledge as professional gardeners has been a privilege for students who have been lucky enough to take the course with them.

Without the dedication and sacrifice of Siebecker and McCormick, the Master Gardener program in Gallatin County would not be where it is today. These two individuals have made a tremendous impact on the program. We cannot say it enough: thank you Alice Siebecker and Jeanne McCormick for all that you have done for the program!

---

Josh Bilbao is an MSU Extension Agriculture Agent in Park County.

## ASK STEWARD

# How Should Gardeners Prepare for Fall Weather?

By **Abiya Saeed**

*Fall weather in Montana comes on hard and fast. Many gardeners struggle with where to begin and how much to do at the end of their growing season. Fortunately, Montana State University Extension has a new Horticulture Specialist on staff to help us answer these questions. Abiya Saeed, who prefers Abi, joins Montana State University from Colorado State Extension. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge, particularly regarding pollinators and pollinator conservation.*

**Abi, how should gardeners be preparing their beds as they begin harvesting and cold weather sets in?**

Montana has such a short growing season, compounded by varying growing conditions around the state. I would recommend fall to be the time to prepare garden beds for spring planting so you are ready when the weather gets warm. Soil testing and adding compost, organic matter and other amendments can help garden beds be ready for spring.

**What is the best way to overwinter some perennial plants?**

For overwintering perennial beds and preparing for the snow, it's a good idea to mulch over perennial beds with weed free straw, about 4-6 inches deep. Straw mulch will eliminate the risk of weeds. This will keep the crown and root from freezing during very cold weather and keeps plants dormant during the occasional warm snaps. It will be important to wait until after the first hard freeze before mulching to keep the plants from being smothered. Because of dry weather, be sure to maintain watering through the fall and taper water to the end of the season so plants can harden off. Hardening off allows the plants to slow their growth, thicken cell walls, store vital nutrients and generally prepare for cold weather.

**What is the best way to remove and store bulbs for next year's planting?**

Tender bulbs and rhizomes that can be especially susceptible to cold conditions, such as caladium, calla Lillie, dahlias and begonias should be the first plants to be dug out and stored. Wait until the first hard frost before digging the plants, cut the stems with 2-4 inches above the soil remaining. Remove any excess soil from the roots. Be gentle with the roots so that you don't cause nicks or scratches on the bulbs. Do this on a warm fall day, around 50 degrees, to keep from shocking the bulbs if the weather is too warm. It is important that if you find any damaged or oozing bulbs to remove them from storage. Bring the bulbs indoors and store them in a place that is going to be above 60 degrees and allow the bulbs to set out for 2-4 weeks so they dry out. Once bulbs are dry, store them in a place with a steady temperature between 40-50 degrees in paper bags or boxes. Using paper bags/boxes allows the air to circulate around the bulbs. If you are packing bulbs in a box, be sure to use newspaper or straw to promote air circulation.

---

Abiya Saeed is the new MSU Extension Horticulture Specialist.