

Winterizing Your Landscape



Winter weather can take a harsh toll on the plants in your landscape. In our area winter is especially hard to deal with because our temperatures fluctuate instead of staying cold. Here are some tips that can help.

WATER, WATER, WATER!

You will improve a plant's ability to survive dry winter weather if you make sure that the plant has sufficient waterings until the soil freezes. This is important to all plants, but especially so to broadleaf evergreens such as azaleas and rhododendrons, and newly planted trees and shrubs of any kind. 'Newly planted' applies to any plantings you installed this season, from spring on through fall. Check your plants for dryness and watch the weather. If rainfall is insufficient you'll need to supplement. When you water, water deeply. Use a sprinkler for large areas. To be sure you are watering correctly use a straight sided container, such as a coffee can, in the area where you are running your sprinkler. When there is an inch of water in the can move the sprinkler. Water new plants individually by laying a hose that is running at a slow trickle at the base of the plant. Allow the hose to run for 15 to 30 minutes for shrubs and 60 to 90 minutes for trees.

Tips for Individual Plants

Roses: Begin to leave seed pods, known as hips, on rose plants towards the end of the growing season in early fall. This will signal the plant to begin to shut down for winter. It is very important to remove fallen leaves, as they can harbor disease spores, which can over winter. It is not necessary to prune roses in the fall unless there are long canes which will whip around in winter winds This can damage the root systems. Save major pruning until spring.

In late November treat roses with a lime sulfur dormant spray or dust the plant and surrounding soil with dusting sulfur. Apply a 6" to 8" layer of mulch or soil around the base of the plants after the ground has frozen to keep it frozen. The easiest and neatest way to

do this is with rose collars.

Perennials: Remove any leaves, which accumulate on perennial beds, as these can smother your plants. Remove any foliage or stems, which were infested by insects or disease at the end of the season. Mulch the plants after the soil has frozen. This can be any time from mid December through early January. You can use wood chips, soil, straw, or evergreen boughs as your mulch. If perennials beds are located under the eaves of your home, make sure that they are kept clear to keep overflowing water from drowning your plants.

Trees & Shrubs: First read 'WATER, WATER, WATER' if you haven't already! O.K., now you can go on. Established shade and ornamental trees can be fertilized from October through December. Newly planted trees that are located in windy sites can be staked to avoid root damage. Pull mulch at least 12" away from the trunks of trees and shrubs to discourage rodent damage. If rabbits and deer present a problem, wrap loose cages of chicken wire around trunks.

Evergreens & Broadleaved Evergreens: Read the WATER, WATER, WATER section if you haven't already! In addition to watering, an anti-desiccant or anti-transpirant spray such as Cloud Cover(tm) or Wilt Pruf(tm) may be used to seal in moisture. These sprays should be applied in late November or early December on a day when temperatures will be 40° or above until nightfall. The spray must dry before it freezes. Shrubs that flower early in the spring form their buds from mid-summer through fall. Do not prune them in fall; you will lose your flowers.

Ground Covers: It is very important to remove fallen leaves from ground cover beds. Leaves that are not removed will smother your plants and they often harbor disease spores that will cause problems the following year.

Lawns: Start mowing at lower heights when cool weather begins to set in. The last mowing of the season should be to 2". Fall is the best time to fertilize your lawn. The tip sheet 'Chemical Free Lawn Care' lists recommendations for fertilizer types and timing. Yes, fall is the time to rake up leaves...all of them! Any that are left will smother your existing grass, which will result in bare spots next spring. This would be a great time to start composting. Remember to take your mower to a mower shop for servicing and blade sharpening.

Vegetable Gardens: Start by cleaning up. The job is easier if you remove plants as they succumb to the weather. Add any that were in good health to that compost pile you just started! This is also a good

time to till the garden. Leave soil clumps to freeze and thaw over the winter. You may sow a cover crop at this time.