



## WINTERIZING THE GARDEN

There are many added benefits to preparing your garden for the winter. It will promote long-term health and stamina of your plants and give you visible results and satisfaction with your investment.

### DEEP WATERING

Mature trees and evergreens tend to be deep rooted. When drought conditions are present going in to late fall, the plants roots and branches take a beating. Extended water loss causes the plant to go into stress and the visible signs are not noticed until the damage is already done.

Rapid temperature changes and fluctuating moisture levels in the fall contribute to plant stress. Deep watering can help reduce these effects. Sufficient watering should be done so that penetration levels reach a depth of 12-16". A shovel probe into the ground can easily check this. Soak around the dripline of the plant in late Oct. – Nov. Let the hose run at half speed for a few of hours, depending on soil type. This will ensure good moisture at the root level.

Evergreens are durable plants and do well when exposed to natural, consistent rainfall. However, when they prepare for dormancy in late fall, they desiccate water from their foliage. Their needles respond to temperature changes by opening and closing their pores, releasing water. When roots cannot keep up with the demand the needles turn brown and die. Added moisture at the root level compensates for water-loss.

Flowering shrubs, low-growing evergreens, perennials, vines and bulbs also benefit from thorough watering in fall. Drought stress can cause serious damage to their smaller root mass. The duration of soaking time is less than large trees but the water penetration should still be at least 10" deep.

A thorough watering may need to be done, now and again on warm days in February or March. This can help to minimize winterkill that results from drying winds and bright winter sun.

### SOIL AMENDMENT/MULCHING

Over the spring and summer months, soil conditions can alter quite dramatically. Old, established plants can be heavy feeders, depleting the soils nutrients. Heavy rains, foot traffic and gardening can cause the soil to become compacted, hard and infertile.

Top-dressing beds, beneath trees, shrubs, evergreens and perennials has several advantages. It acts as a sponge, which suspends moisture for the roots during drought periods. It helps to break heavy clay or compacted soil into a friable loam. Organic matter has high concentrations of oxygen, water and nutrients. Adding it to your soil creates the perfect growing environment for your plant material.

We recommend adding 2 - 3" of amendment to your soil in the fall. Different soils require different amendments. Triple mix is great for sandy soil and compost and manure are excellent for clay soils.

Mulch is also a wonderful organic conditioner for your soil. Covering the ground, 2 – 4" deep, beneath trees, shrubs and perennials can help prevent deep freezing and can help keep water from evaporating from the soils surface. It allows the soil to maintain high moisture levels going into the winter. Overtime the mulch will begin to decompose and add nutrients to the soil.

### TRANSPLANTING

Newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials require watering until the ground freezes. Many of the roots at time of planting can be damaged or severed and water stress is a common problem. Ample amounts of moisture will prevent further stress going into winter. Newly planted perennials can heave out of the ground in their first few year, be sure to secure them into the ground and water to prevent heaving.

### ROSES

The bulk of pruning should be done early spring however; branches that overhang or may be broken by the weight of snow should be pruned. Deep watering again is crucial going into the winter. Make sure a proper fall clean up of any leaves or debris is done beneath the rose bush. It is important also to protect the bud union (also known as the grafted union) at the base of the bush. In late fall, when temperatures are consistently cold, "hill" up soil around and over the canes surrounding the bud union. Approximately 8 - 10" of soil should be used. A helpful tool to do this is called a rose collar. Wrap the collar around the base of the bush and fill the area inside with enough earth. This helps protect the rose during the very cold and windy winter months.

## **PERENNIALS**

It is a myth to clean up and remove the decaying material that is left by perennials after frost. No cutting back is necessary. The leaves and wilted material make an excellent insulator and prevent newly planted material from heaving and severe exposure.

## **UPRIGHT EVERGREENS**

Most upright evergreens have rigid, ascending branches. During the winter months it is advised to bind these branches because heavy snow can cause them to bend, crack or break. Begin by attaching twine at the base of the tree on a strong limb, gather the stems as they naturally grow and wrap around until you reach the top. Secure the end of the twine at the top. Netting and plastic mesh can also be used to gather the branches. Be sure to know snow off of trees and evergreens and shrubs to prevent breakage.

## **SCREENING**

Many evergreens, Japanese maples and small tender plants require winter protection of another kind. Burlap is a permeable material that allows air and moisture to travel through its layers and is very useful in screening out harsh winter conditions. Secure a framework of stakes (numbers depend on size of plant material) into the ground surrounding the plant. The stakes should be 18" taller than the plant itself before putting them in the ground. Once the stakes are in the ground they should be the same height as the plant. Begin wrapping the burlap, tightly; from the base of the plant towards the top, ensuring the burlap reaches the top of all the branches. Be sure not to use more than two layers of burlap. Too many layers can cause poor air circulation and when temperatures fluctuate plants can suffocate. Allow the top of this framework to be uncovered and exposed. This allows moisture and sunlight to reach the inside of the plant.

## **TRUNK PROTECTION**

For your fruit trees, young shade trees, or tender young trees it is best to use a tree guard around the trunk. Small calliper trees are very susceptible to rodent attacks. Moles, mice and deer feed in the winter months on the tender membrane that covers the tree. Wrapping with a tree guard prevents them from chewing and damaging the base of the tree.

Sunscald, or frost cracks can also occur if the sun warms the trunk to above freezing, followed by a quickly dropping temperature after sunset. This causes cells on the trunks and limbs of thin-barked young trees to die. To prevent this, wrap the trunk with tree wrap or strips of burlap, starting at the bottom of the tree. One of the best materials to use for a wrap is weather-resistant vinyl. This material requires no taping or tying, and, because it is ventilated, air can reach the bark.

## **GYPSUM**

Applied in a five-foot wide band along walks and in a ten-foot wide band alongside roadways will minimize damage from snow and ice-melting compounds. Gypsum loosens the soil so that salt brine can leach through quickly ... leaving less on top to injure grass.

## **FALL GARDEN CLEAN UP**

A tidy yard often promotes a healthier garden. Many of the common infestations and diseases are further aggravated when debris, leaves and other decomposing material is left unattended, waiting for mother nature to take care of it. Breeding areas for disease and pests are often a problem in unattended areas. Fall is an opportune time to take note of disease and pests in your yard and take action in prevention. Rake and dispose of any fallen leaves or fruit. Compost healthy leaves or use them as leaf mould for winterizing. Other debris should be discarded and monitor the health and vigour of plant materials.

## **OTHER HELPFUL FALL REMINDERS**

- Bring in any non-outdoor pots and containers that may break during freezing weather.
- Turn off the outside water and drain pipes. Roll up hoses and store away.
- Clean, sharpen and oil tools so you are ready for garden work in the spring.
- Keep all chemicals, insecticides, and herbicides away from freezing temperatures.
- Clean mowers and lawn trimmers and do a routine check-up and maintenance.
- Clean out your eaves troughs.