

Preparing Your Yard for Winter

Though many gardeners would love to avoid it, every year winter comes our way. When the snow flies, any work in the garden comes to a halt, so take advantage of our warm fall days to prepare your garden for winter. In doing so, you're eliminating many spring tasks, preventing insect and disease problems, and protecting plants for winter.

Fertilize Your Lawn

The best time to apply lawn fertilizer is when grass roots are building up natural sugars to store over the long cold Canadian winter. A winterizing fertilizer should contain a moderate level of nitrogen that will aid in storing sugars and a high potassium content (the last number in the 3 number analysis) to help build a strong root system to help grass survive our winter. CIL 12-0-18 is a good choice.

Note Timing is key! Nitrogen must be applied late enough that the lawn has slowed growth, however not late enough that the nitrogen will go unused (when the lawn has gone completely dormant). The best time for fall application of fertilizers is late September to mid-October.

Wanting an organic option or concerned about timing? Green Acres 5-1-5 is a great organic fertilizer that can be applied at any time from late summer to freeze up.

Water Water Water!

All plants require plenty of moisture in fall, so the roots don't dry out through the winter. Deep root watering is the easiest and most economical way. Use a Ross Root Feeder or a slow drip from your garden hose. The block of ice that will form around your roots will ensure they stay hydrated during fluctuating winter temperatures.

Eliminate Overwintering Insects and Diseases

Horticultural Oil is a product that will suffocate overwintering insects. Once leaves have fallen from trees and shrubs, simply mix with water and spray onto branches. Note that temperatures need to be above Celsius.

If you had any problems with fungal diseases such as powdery mildew this past summer, apply lime sulphur spray for great clean up results. As well, any leaves affected by insects or disease this season should be raked up and discarded to prevent problems next season.



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Protect your Plants

Newly transplanted Cedars and Evergreens (as well as tender shrubs such as Rhododendron, Azalea and Boxwood) will require a protective barrier to prevent winter winds from drying them out.



Be sure to secure stakes in the soil to support the burlap so it is at least 6" from the outer foliage. This same 'shelter' can be created with a large tomato cage with burlap wrapped around the outside.

Tender roses should be mulched in after the ground freezes hard. Cut your tender roses to 7" from ground level. You can use Stryfoam Rose Huts or Rose Collars to protect plants. There is no need to mulch hardy roses.

For mulch, simply mound peat moss, compost or clean leaves over the plants then place Rose Hut or Collar around the plant.

SOIL

Any soil that needs replenishing should be amended with Soil Booster or compost. As well, dig in bone meal or kelp so plants are provided with minerals first thing in spring.

ANIMAL REPELLANTS

These should be applied prior to freeze up.

No Bite - Available in aerosol can. No Bite is effective against dogs, cats, rabbits, and mice. Deters pests from chewing bark/plants with its extremely bitter taste.



Bobbex - Available in ready to use or concentrate. Bobbex is sprayed on bark and foliage of plants. Contains a grouping of proteins (eggs, fish meal etc) along with garlic, dried eggs and more to repel pests by scent and taste.



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