

Putting Your Landscape to Bed

By Sally Hanrahan

With winter just around the corner, now is the time to prepare your lawn and plants for our typical stretch of drying winds, temperature fluctuations, critter attacks and potential lack of moisture. Winterizing your landscape is very important for the health and longevity of your plants.

Lawns:

- Mow your lawn until it stops growing, not shorter than 2" to 3".
- Rake all leaves, pine needles, twigs and grass clippings; remove weeds. Debris left on your lawn can cause mold, or other lawn diseases.
- Apply slow release Dr. Earth Lawn Fertilizer now to encourage turf to grow healthy roots.
- Water every three weeks if there has been no noticeable precipitation and the ground is not frozen.

Trees and Shrubs:

- Prune dead, diseased or broken branches. Wait until late winter for more pruning.
- Because evergreen trees and shrubs do not go dormant during the winter, they lose moisture naturally and are subjected to further drying by wind and chill. . This dehydration causes winter burn which can kill tender new growth. Proper watering throughout the winter and using an anti-desiccant like Cloud Cover will offer the best protection.
- Remove dead or diseased leaves from around roses so they do not overwinter and cause new disease in spring.

Perennials:

- Remove any die back and prune away dead flower stalks and heads.
- Add a 2-3" layer of Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Compost to protect them from our freeze-thaw cycles and it will automatically improve your soil giving the plants a headstart in the spring.

Bulbs:

- It's not too late to plant spring flowering bulbs, even if the ground is frozen. It's really easy to create a spring bouquet by layering bulbs in a container and placing it outside in a protected area; all it will need is water. This makes a great Christmas gift! Visit your local independent garden center to find high quality bulbs and get further instructions.
- Feed existing bulbs with Dr. Earth Bone Meal if you haven't done so already.

Watering:

- All plants in the ground -- especially newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials -- need the equivalent of one inch of precipitation per month. If we have a dry period lasting longer than two to three weeks, you'll need to water according to these guidelines – if the ground is not frozen:
- Water during the day when temperatures are at least 50 degrees F to allow water to percolate through the soil.
 - Finish watering before 3:00 PM so water can drain away from the surface before sunset.
 - Water the soil around the plants, trying to avoid the trunk and crown of the plants. You can use an oscillating hose sprinkler for larger areas or open end hose with water turned on low for smaller areas.
- For potted plants, assuming they are in a quality frost-resistant black clay pot and have well drained potting soil, water approximately every two weeks.
- Be sure to thoroughly drain your hoses and store inside your garage so they will be easy to use.

Taking time now to put your landscape to bed will save you time and money in the spring, allowing you more time to enjoy the warm weather when it arrives.