

#2 Winterscape

The last of the fall color is drifting off the trees and the winter months are upon us. In Northern Nevada our landscape goes dormant as our temperatures drop. There are still many ways to capture the beauty of our high desert gardens by focusing on our winter landscape. Once you've removed fallen leaves and spent plant material it is time to prepare and think about the winterscape.

The key to creating an intriguing garden is to have areas of visual interest. Designate areas in your garden to place evergreens. Try using a variety of tree shapes from columnar to prostrate to weeping. There are a variety of plants that can add hues of green to your yard from the dark jade of the yew to the blue sparkle of a spruce tree. The Evergreen trees will also capture snow on their branches, creating color contrast and beauty in the stark winter surroundings.

Don't stop with evergreen trees; there are many shrubs, groundcovers and deciduous trees that can provide winter beauty in the yard. To add some holiday color and festiveness think about adding plants like cotoneaster, holly, witch hazel, bearberry, and mountain ash some of which will have bright red berries in the winter months. Berries from these plants will also attract birds to your yard.

Our Deciduous trees provide us shade and color during the warmer months play a role in the winter season too. Trees like crabapples and hawthorns, can provide texture in the yard with a variety of barks and branch structures and many of these trees will hold snow on their limbs.

Ornamental grasses are a favorite of the winter interest plants. There is a variety of grasses that grow well in this climate leaving large bunches of stems with slender leaves that will billow and sway in the winter winds. Remember our fall season is a good time to plant while day temperatures are cool and our soil is warm. With the onset of winter our trees go dormant and can be successfully moved in the garden. Take advantage of the season to change your garden by adding or relocating interesting plants to more appealing positions.

Hardscape features in the yard also provide a point of interest in the winterscape. In the desert landscape of northern Nevada many yards have gazebos, trellises and arbors to provide shade and unique open air retreats in the yard. These structures will maintain their attractive appeal throughout the winter months. Stone and paver walls also add interest as they protrude from the snow covered ground creating depth in the yard.

Another popular landscape feature in this region is the drycreek bed. These rock lined features can be enhanced with large boulders placed alongside. Rock gardens are also an opportunity to add permanent color and texture to the landscape. Rocks offer a variety of hues and shapes that can cheer up any winterscape.

A big part of our winter landscape is influenced by the holiday season. Along with the plant material and placement, lights can brighten our winterscape. Landscape lighting can be placed to frame architectural features or highlight the wintry landscape.

Now is the time to prepare for a living Christmas tree. This is a great opportunity to decorate inside your home for the holidays while later adding a great evergreen to your existing landscape. A hole for the living tree will need to be dug now before the ground freezes. The average living tree is between 4 and 5 feet tall and will need to be placed in a hole with a 3' diameter by 2' deep. Once the hole has been dug fill it with straw, burlap, or cover with a board to avoid a hazard in your yard. Keep enough soil in the garage or shed to ensure there is unfrozen soil for planting the tree when it is time. Think about the placement of the hole and the tree in the landscape where the evergreen can be enjoyed in the winterscape now and at its full maturity.

To add some winter and holiday color to your home and accent your landscapes too don't forget about adding planted pots to your landscape. These welcoming accents can be made from a variety of colors and shapes of frost proof pots that can be placed to create a vibrant welcome. Evergreen shrubs, trees, and interesting twigs can be used to fill the pots and even lights can be added. These pots of color can work well inside and out and they can be placed to highlight an exterior door or used as festive color in the house.

A well thought out landscape can provide intrigue, beauty, and visual interest throughout the year. Now is the time to accent your yard for the holidays and coming winter months as well as to start planning your new yard for the seasons to come.