

Winterize your Garden

October is the time of year when spending a few days in the garden preparing it for winter can ensure that everything comes through the winter in the best possible shape. Here are some suggestions for different areas in the garden:

1. Keep leaves raked up from the lawn. Don't allow the lawn to go into winter with masses of leaves on it. Leaves will knit together to form a dense mat which will smother your grass. Be sure to continue with a fall fertilizer, such as Parkwood 6-8-14 and lime application. Also be sure to mow if the lawn gets more than 2 inches long.
2. If your annuals have been killed by a frost, pull them up and compost them. Do not leave dead plants around the garden, as they provide a good spot for insects and diseases to overwinter.
3. Most perennials such as peonies, lilies, and hosta can be cut down to within 6" of the ground - be sure to remove their dying foliage to prevent diseases from overwintering in the perennial bed. If you are going to put a mulch of fir boughs down over the bed to catch snow and prevent early thawing, wait until the ground has started to freeze, usually in November. Fall is also a good time to spread a layer of compost or bagged manure over the soil in which your perennials are growing, and turn the soil over lightly so that the perennials will start to grow quickly in the spring.
4. If you have fruit trees, protect their trunks from rodent damage with tree guards. Evergreens such as cedar and yew as well as rhododendrons, holly, and euonymus can be protected from the drying effects of winter winds by wrapping in burlap. Large cedars or yews can be wrapped with a mesh net to prevent heavy snow loads from breaking their branches.
5. Roses can be left until spring before they are pruned back. Only vigorous roses which have grown more than 4' can be cut back to 2-3' to prevent ice damage. Hybrid teas, Floribundas, and Grandiflora should be hilled up 10-12" above ground level. A rose collar can be used to hold soil firmly around the plant base. This should be done just before the ground freezes solid. The addition of leaves or boughs gives extra protection to all roses. Climbers can be taken down and covered with boughs, as their long stems may die back in a harsh winter

