



WINTERIZING YOUR GARDEN

GENERAL CLEAN UP

Two stages - before frost and after 1st hard frost.

Keep a notebook handy.

Use your county extension office or internet to identify plants or diseases.

A friend who knows plants can also go through your garden with you to identify plants.

Spread Preen or corn meal to keep down winter weeds. Put down Preen/corn meal as you weed.

No diseased plants in compost pile.

Collect seeds (gravel box for seeds or plant in pots).

Keeping seeds on some plants for birds and winter interest.

Take cuttings of tender plants like coleus, begonias before frost or temps drop into the low 40s.

Trimming plants that can be trimmed in winter and mark ones for spring trim (Keep plants away from foundation of house for air circulation). Do not trim hollow stemmed plants. They will collect water in the crown and die.

Cut back grasses now if you are returning in spring. Pink Muhly should be cut back in December.

Some can be trimmed to ground, others only 1 third etc depends on plant type.

Limb up any trees like oaks or maples that create too much shade. Plants are always growing and changing light conditions. Winter is perfect time to trim those big limbs. This creates better air circulation for your house and yard.

Trim interior branches on shrubs or trim them so they don't touch the ground. This creates more area for annuals or other flowering perennials and better air circulation and disease prevention. Trimming interior branches also helps prevent die back.

After disturbing the soil sprinkle soil with corn meal or preen to prevent winter weeds from sprouting (Preen should last 4 months if the soil is not disturbed). This can also be applied to gravel driveways to keep weeds from sprouting in winter.

Mulching (keep away from trunk of shrubs cut low branches to discourage voles).

VERY IMPORTANT - we have had a very dry fall. Your plants/trees need a deep watering before you leave for warmer climates especially any new transplants. Even if you are staying for winter your plants need a deep watering before winter sets in. Do it now and in late December for those who are still here.

Write down any activities/jobs that you want to do during the winter and spring because you will forget if you don't write it down.

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CHECKING FOR DISEASE

Mark plants for late winter spraying, trim away disease. Keep that note book handy. Check leaves for fungus etc. Dormant oil spray, Neem - The dormant oil spray can be done now and again in the early spring. Milky spore for Japanese beetles put in garden as well as lawn cuts down on voles and moles as there will be less grubs for them to eat. You want your plants close to keep out weeds but not so close that you cause disease from poor air circulation. Poor condition or growth of particular plant could also be from soil condition (too wet, dry, acid etc), location (too shady sunny) overcrowding, not to disease.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR PLANTS FOR WINTER

Windy sites spray with an anti-desiccant will have to be reapplied in February (Wiltproof)

Mulch (fresh manure and cardboard and mulch).

Wrap and screen and use branches (not always necessary in this area).

Protection from wind is more important here than protection from cold.

Water those areas that tend to be dry in December especially the ones under your house overhang.

PREPARE NEW GARDENS OVER THE WINTER.

Use garden hose for outline.

Soil additives/amendments.

Cover with black plastic or tarp to kill as many weed seeds, viruses and bugs etc as possible.

8 weeks at least remove in early spring for planting.

Make a diagram of plants for new garden and mark plants to move into new area from other parts.

A pile of pine bark, double/triple shredded mulch/shredded cardboard/paper in early fall if covered with a black tarp for heat will become compost for late spring.

Place those new bird houses stepping stones etc. Perfect time to add stone borders,

Best time for building arbors and other hardscapes.

GETTING PLANTS READY FOR SPRING TRANSPLANTING

Mark the ones you want to move and write down the new location in your notebook

Cut around roots of any shrub you want to move 6 months to 1 year before to increase root growth

Prepare the soil now for the transplant and mark the spot. In the spring you will be able to move plant into an easily dug area that has settled. If done right you should be able to just move the dirt aside with your hands and place the plant

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GARDEN PESTS

Voies/Moles - Sprays, granules and poison pellets

Remove mulch and check for holes and tunnels

Spray soil with dish soap/castor oil combination will last months and discourages digging good for lawn too used by golf courses

Apply vole scam and Sweeney's peanuts or a mixture of Baar Castor oil/detergent or Murphy's oil soap, 2 t to a gallon of water or 2 oz of each in a hose end sprayer

Check weekly or every other week for new holes and activity. You can do this by placing a slice of apple in the hole and covering the hole with a plastic container and then check in two days to see if the apple has been eaten or nibbled on. If it has you have an active trail. Place Sweeney's pellets in the hole. If not, move on to another hole. Bait stations are available on the internet.

Keep mulch away from roses, hostas as voles use it as cover to hide from hawks and other predators.

Wrap young trees or shrubs with tree wrap to protect from nibbling rodents.

Look up Richard Merritt on Youtube for castor oil method.

Plant new plants with Permatil/Vole block that can be purchased at the Garden Patch in Columbus NC.

Owls eat voles and rabbits so build owl nesting boxes to encourage owls in your garden.

Don't forget to sprinkle ant killer on any ant hills.

TOOL MAINTENANCE

Clean your tools in soapy water with Clorox

Sharpen shovels and clippers, primers and oil the blades to prevent rust

Wash clay and decorative pots

Empty the gas out of weed whackers etc.

Decide if any need to be replaced

Best time to get mower ready for spring. The repair places are not busy and your mower will be ready to go as soon as that grass gets growing.

RELAX

Get out those garden catalogs and magazines and your notebook.

Sit in front of the fire and plan your spring garden.