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IF-14 Winterizing Your Landscape

Your plants and landscape go through many changes during the fall and early winter. Beginning in late summer, plants are transferring energy to their root systems, developing cold hardiness, preparing for winter and getting ready for spring growth. For healthy plants we need to encourage them to follow their seasonal cycle, being careful not to force perfection.

Fall is for planting

- Plant now for a healthy tree next spring. Fall is the best time of year to plant. Plants will develop roots in soil well into the colder months with very little stress to the plant material.
- Plant your spring flowering bulbs: crocus, narcissus, tulips, peonies, iris, and many more.
- Plant your garlic and repel garden pests for next year.

Lawns

- Mow to a height of two to three inches. Research shows that mowing to less than two inches can result in decreased drought tolerance and higher incidence of insects, diseases and weeds.
- During extended winter dry periods, it is good practice to water the lawn once per month, if the ground is thawed and will absorb water. Pay particular attention to exposed slopes and west-facing exposures.
- "Winterize" your lawn by applying a quality fertilizer; either one of our organic lawn fertilizers at the recommended rates. Be cautious not to over apply or to apply around trees and shrubs.
- Aeration improves the root zone by relieving soil compaction while controlling thatch accumulation. Aeration should also be done in April. Be aware that aeration increases the evaporation water loss so your lawn will need to be watered after the procedure.

Trees

- If you compost yard waste, consider saving some raked leaves to add to your compost pile in the spring. Whole leaves are better than leaves that have been shredded or mulched with a lawn mower because finely chopped leaves may restrict air circulation needed for effective decomposition.
- Dispose of diseased leaves, especially if you had insect or disease problems this summer. Left on the ground, they can harbor fungal diseases such as powdery mildew over the winter and re-infect your plants in the spring.
- Avoid fertilizing with any fertilizers which are not one hundred percent organic based. Many trees will react to those non-organic fertilizers and will begin to grow in the middle of winter. This will cause die back or total death of the plant.

Perennials

- Perennials often provide winter interest or seeds for the birds. They should be left standing until early spring, which also protects the crowns from winter kill. Coneflower, coreopsis, Shasta daisy, Russian sage, lavender and yarrow are a few examples of plants that can be enjoyed during the winter months.
- Ornamental grasses add texture as well as food and cover for birds. Plan to cut all of these plants back in early spring, before new growth emerges.
- Avoid fertilizing with any fertilizers which are not one hundred percent organic based. Most perennials will react to those non-organic fertilizers and will begin to grow in the middle of winter.
- Dig up tender bulbs such as gladiolas, begonias, and dahlias. Store them in a cool, not cold, dry place over winter.
- Bring your tender patio plants indoors. Citrus, bougainvillea, geranium, fuchsia, jasmine and gardenias need to be brought inside for the winter. Spray the plants before moving them inside with a general insecticide of your choosing, organic or synthetic. Often insects are suppressed by cold weather, but if

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brought inside their population will very quickly grow into an infestation. Spray them while the plants are outside.

Mulch and Weed

- With roses, it is important to protect the crowns where the main canes emerge after the first hard freeze. **Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Compost** or a mixture of soil, leaves or pine needles covering the first six to eight inches above ground works well.
- After the soil has frozen, mulch other flower beds and specimen plants. Shredded wood products or leaf compost are the best mulches. Be sure to keep mulch three to six inches away from the trunks of trees and shrubs.
- Remove any weeds that are still left. Remaining annual weeds will provide a seed source for next year. Perennial weeds will winter over and be much more difficult to control next year.

Watering

- In dry winters, all plants benefit from supplemental watering, but those planted less than a year ago are still establishing themselves and need more frequent watering than plants that have been fully established for four years.
- Water applied every two to three weeks is a good rule of thumb for a newly planted shrub. Established shrubs less than three feet tall will do fine with once a month watering. Be sure to apply water within the plant's drip line and around the base.
- Water your established trees and shrubs every thirty days if it has not snowed a foot, or rained an inch of water. Water only when air temperatures are above 50 degree and the ground is **not** frozen. Finish watering by mid-afternoon to allow adequate saturation before freezing at night.

Tools and Planters

- When your fall planting and winter preparation are finished, take time to clean, oil and sharpen your gardening tools. Wash them with water, using a wire brush to remove stubborn soil deposits. Steel wool is useful to remove rust.
- Sharpen pruners and shovel blades. This is also a good time to remove and sharpen mower blades. For your convenience, Moana Nursery provides sharpening services.
- Before storing your tools, wipe them with a lubricating oil to prevent rust.
- Remember to empty ceramic and terra cotta pots to prevent cracking caused by freeze and thaw cycles. Moana Nursery's black clay pottery does not need any special treatment since it will not break during the winter due to water absorption.

Water Features, Ponds and Waterfalls

- Before the snow falls and after the leaves drop, your fountain or pond will need to be cleaned of fall debris. You may cover your pond with a net to prevent more leaves from entering.
- Clean your filtering equipment regularly. In the fall, this can mean daily cleaning depending upon the equipment.
- Drain your concrete water feature and cover it to prevent water from accumulating. Moana Nursery stocks a full line of fountain covers.
- Install a pond heater and a small circulating pump for your fish.

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