

## **WINTERIZING THE GARDEN**

Putting the garden 'to bed' for the winter season is often one of the most rewarding tasks for the gardener. It's a great time to remember with pride the successes of the season, and at the same time, assess any problems you may have encountered regarding the setting of individual plants or their general vigor.

Generally in the autumn, we suggest that most perennial plants be cut back, leaving 2"-4" stalks or stems. This will prevent an excess of dead and decaying foliage in your garden that can, as it decomposes, create a disease problem. Plant material that is disease & insect free may be shredded and composted. Remove annuals as they finish blooming. Tender summer blooming bulbs (Canna's, Dahlias, Gladiolus) should be dug for winter storage. Please ask for our handout on Harvesting and Storing Summer Bulbs.

Mulches may be applied to garden areas after the soil cools, usually around November 1. Leaves may be used if they are small in size or shredded if they are large. Small or fine bark will also work. Other options are straw or pine needles. Avoid applying mulch directly over the crown of plants, but apply around the perimeter. Remember that mulch is used in the winter to keep the soil cool and prevent root damage from fluctuating temperatures.

Roses should have all leaf debris cleaned from around the plants. The canes should not be pruned lower than 3'-4'. In windy or exposed areas, the canes may be bundled loosely to prevent wind and snow breakage. Protect the crown with mulch, either in a rose collar or a mound. Water well in late fall and during prolonged dry periods during the winter. Climbing roses should not be pruned. Water well and remove any winter damage in mid spring.

Butterfly Bush, Hydrangeas and Blue Mist Spirea should not be cut back in the fall but left to winter over and pruned in early spring when new bud growth shows at the base of the plant.

Remember to note at this time changes you may wish to make next year. Since soils are warm and workable in the autumn, this is a perfect time to renew a small area or amend the soil for a new planting next spring. One final reminder: Fall is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs (tulips, daffodils, crocus, etc.) that will add color and interest to your garden in the spring.

***Happy Gardening!***