

Fall is Here - Winter is Near - Lets Clean Up!



The air is getting cooler, the garden is winding down and a year's worth of leaves beaten and battered by storms and sun are ready for a long winter's rest. Falls leaves are brown now and ornamental grasses are turning tan, and flower heads turning into seed.

- Fall Clean-Up
- Clean-Up 101
- Leaves = Free Compost & Insulation
- Fall is a Great Time to Plant!
- Work Now - Enjoy Later

It's time for some fall clean-up!

Before you fire up your weed eaters and hand trimmers and rampage through your yard cutting down and removing everything in sight - Stop and take a step back!

It's time to reconsider your winter clean-up protocol!

Fall Clean-Up & Winter Prep!

The late fall landscape can seem a bit bleak and lifeless. The glory of fall color has faded and now you just wait for the snow to fall and cover it all until spring. But in reality, there is so much there for you and your wildlife!

Migratory and over-wintering songbirds hungry for seeds can be seen flitting from shrubs and perennials, squirrels seeking out winter stores scurry about hunting through the fallen debris for food, pollinators looking for that last sip of nectar before migrating,



beneficial insects laying those last few eggs for next spring, and butterfly chrysalis and cocoons cling to leaves ready for a long winter snooze...All are hiding among your leaf litter and the browning foliage! It would be an absolute shame if you disposed of this essential habitat!

It's time to change your perspective on what leaf litter really means and change your view of the impending winter landscape in a new way. Granted also hiding among those leaves are some nasty pests, molds, and diseases too! But you don't need to cut everything down and whisk it off to the landfill!

Leaf litter and dormant plants provide:

- Winter interest
- Seeds for birds & winter protection/cover/shelter
- Hollow stems are nests for solitary bees and beneficial insects
- Egg cases and cocoons of over-wintering pollinators & beneficial bugs
- Winter cover for beneficial insects and songbirds
- Free insulation in the form of fallen leaves & leaf mulch
- Great composting material
- Winter outdoor container decor and indoor dried botanical arrangements

New Fall Clean-Up 101

Getting the landscape ready for winter is an essential part of garden and lawn care. With some mindful garden planning and proper timing, you can keep the impending winter from looking like a bleak sea of dead brown leaves and endless vistas of white snow.

Ever steady green Evergreens, swaying Ornamental grass seed heads, colorful and useful Rose hips, and the big dried mopheads of Hydrangeas - all certainly offer winter interest and texture throughout the fall and winter landscapes! Asters and Rudbeckia are still blooming until frost, and several shrubs and trees are still holding onto their fall wardrobes!

Perennial seeds feed birds and also have persistent seed heads to add interest and food. such as Coneflowers and Coreopsis, Liatris, Sedum and Goldenrod, which can also add interest to the winter landscape!

So don't be too quick to cut them down just yet!

When planning your garden design, or before you break out the shears, study your plant's shapes, colors, and forms. Do you have any perennials or other plants that may offer winter interest if you left them untrimmed until after winter? Any branches and seed pods that will catch and hold the snow in an ornamental way if left until spring?

Some regions have lighter snowfalls that can highlight and sculpt the snow, creating something pretty to look at on those cold winter days. But, not all cold winter regions get dumped with snow either! You'll need something to look at during these 'brown days'!

- Leaving last year's growth gives songbirds a place to snuggle in for some protection from the cold and wind.
- The tops of the perennials catch the snow to insulate the ground over the top of the plants.
- Leaving some of your natives and perennials up for the winter gives the beneficial insects a place to overwinter.

If you simply cut your perennial garden down to the ground in fall, you don't have much to look at beyond stubble until the snow flies. Leaving no way to catch the blowing snow, no cover for songbirds and wildlife, no place for beneficial insects, and no seed heads left to feed the birds.

Remember though - If you know you have a plant that exhibited disease, lots of a certain pest, or you had powdery mildew that year, it is advised to nip those down to the ground to prevent harboring those pesky issues over to next year.

1. Vegetable Plants & Annuals

Did you know viruses can overwinter on the leaves and stems of vegetables and annual



plants that only live a single season?

For veggies and annual plants, dig up and remove the entire plant to lessen the risk of disease and improve sanitation. Compost them or put them in your Yard Waste containers.

- Completely remove and dispose of annuals and vegetable plants
- Remove missed weeds so they can't reseed next year

2.Fall Perennial Prep

Also remove any perennials that had leaf spotting, mildew or disease problems of any kind. Cut them down to the ground after the frost has killed off the tops of the plants, bag them up and remove them from your yard for best sanitation practices.

One perennial that does need to be trimmed down early fall of each year are Peonies. Peonies can get mildew and botrytis. Cut every Peony stem to the ground and bag them up for removal. This can eliminate the carryover of the problems that might re-infect the plants the following spring. Another is Daylily foliage. Gently pull away or prune to the ground to avoid issues next year. Cover the tops of these perennial plants with a 3-4 inch pile of mulch and/or clean shredded leaves.

Remember, you don't have to cut all of your perennials down to the ground each fall, just any that showed some problems this past growing season.

- Remove spent leaves & stems, leaving seed heads for winter interest or bird food
- Peony, Daylilies & Hostas - Let die down from a heavy frost or two & then remove all of the old foliage. Discard for sanitation purposes
- Pile shredded leaves over the crowns and mulch the crowns well

3. Ornamental Grasses

Ornamental Grasses begin to be showy in late spring and summer and remain showy all the way through winter. Grasses are outstanding in the winter landscape! These



blooms are fantastic motion, sound, and

Tie up the bunches to keep them from flopping and getting squashed by snow. This will also make pruning in spring much easier and keep the bundles together. Cutting grass down in fall can allow water to get into the hollow stems and into the crown and rot the plants if it stays too wet. Leaving the blades intact keeps the crowns protected and drier all winter.

Fall is the time to help your winter interest plants be ready to become the "bones" of your winter landscape. Landscape architects will always talk about structure in the garden and ornamental grasses are perfect for winter interest. Plus this structure not only looks great all fall and winter but also feeds hungry birds!

- Water well
- Bundle/Tie up mounds for strength against heavy snow and wind
- Leave seed heads and plumes for fall and winter interest, texture & motion

4. Rose Care in Autumn

Today's modern Roses are much easier to care for and with just a bit of planning, your Roses will slumber throughout the winter like a baby, emerging in spring with an explosion of refreshing growth! Even old-fashioned Roses are easy to get prepped for the chill!

Gardeners in cold climates and those in warmer zones, both have to contend with a range of concerns their gardens must endure each winter. From drying winds, moisture, humidity, cold and fluctuating temperatures.

It is very important to leave your Rose bushes untrimmed for the winter months. Do not cut your Roses until February - March! After last freeze and just before they bud.

However, Roses love to have additional insulation in colder regions! It's a good idea to protect the crown of the Rose and its roots from the impending winter's chills, but most gardeners cover their Roses too early. In the rush to beat the cold they accidentally trap moisture, green leaves with potential molds, fungi, and diseases within the shrubs to struggle with all winter long. This also wreaks havoc on your plants during the fickle autumn months that waver between freezing and thawing.

Wait until your Rose plants have been exposed to several killing frost and consistently cold temperatures to help them completely go dormant before covering, and only if winter protection is needed in your Hardiness Zone.

- Mound shredded hardwood mulch about a foot high directly on the stems of the plants
- Tie and secure Climbing Rose canes with chicken wire, twine, or something similar

5. Tree & Flowering Shrub Care in Autumn

Water your trees and shrubs well before winter and do not let their roots go into winter dry and water at least weekly right up until the ground freezes if needed. Add a 3-4 inch layer of arborist mulch to the soil surface (avoiding having it pile up on the crown and against the trunk) to insulate the roots and hold in moisture.

For shrubs in areas with heavy snowfall, or in the path where you need to shovel snow throughout the winter, you can wrap loosely with burlap or tie up the branches gently so

that the weight of winter snow doesn't squash them and break them.



Avoid pruning many types of shrubs now so you and your wildlife can enjoy the fruit and seeds all winter long!

- Plenty of water until ground freeze
- Mulch well
- Remove fallen fruit and leaves from the area
- Protect the trunks from rodents and deer with hardware cloth or white trunk protectors.

6. Evergreen Care For Autumn

Like trees and shrubs above, Evergreens can dry out if not prepared well for the coming cold. Evergreens give off moisture all winter long so if you are in an area where the

ground freezes up, be sure to water the roots well until the ground does freeze for best results.

- Water on a weekly basis until the ground freezes so the roots have moisture access
- Mulch with 3-4 inches of arborist bark chips

7. Fall Fruit Tree Care

Once harvest is over and your leaves have fallen, it's time to clean up around your fruit tree to get it ready for winter. Clean away all fallen fruit and leaves and do not allow any to remain and potentially harbor disease and pests for the next growing season, disposing of them away from your yard. Provide plenty of water until the ground freezes.



Apply a 3-4 inch layer of mulch over the roots.

- Plenty of water until ground freeze
- Mulch well
- Remove fallen fruit and leaves from the area
- Protect the trunks from rodents and deer with hardware cloth or white trunk protectors

8. Preparing Your Lawn For Winter

Preparing your lawn properly for the fall and winter months takes planning. Learn proper lawn care maintenance for the fall and winter months. Over the next few months, things are going to start cooling down. Leaves are going to begin to fall. And we want to make sure we are ready and prepared to go into the cold snowy months.

Keep mowing your grass until the leaves are chewed up and shredded. Provide your lawn a good winterizing lawn fertilizer, or eliminate broadleaved weeds with a good weed-and-feed in September, so the roots continue getting stronger all winter and have that boost they need once the temperature warms up in the spring and can get a jump start on growth.

For established lawns, start thinking in terms of your lawn going dormant and allowing the grass to go a little bit longer than you have in the past. So as the season goes on, the grass is going to start slowing down. Simply mow as needed until it stops growing.

Leaving the lawn too tall into winter can cause the snow load to crush and mats the blades - causing disease or rot in some cases.

Put on a fall fertilizer if you did not use a weed-and-feed in September. And I'm going to start rolling up garden hoses and putting them away for the winter. It's just not going to need as much moisture as it has during the hot and dry summer. The leaves continue to fall onto your lawn. Remember too that if you only seed and fertilize your lawn one time a year...now is that time!

A Better Way to Handle Leaves in the Fall

Deciduous plants are shutting down at this time and it's time to prune if the leaves have fallen off. You can either spend time raking them up and bagging them, or you can use this free form of insulation! Rake up these leaves and compost them, don't throw them away! Put those leaves to good use!

- Compost leaves after shredding them
- Use as mulch around your garden
- Leaves on the lawn should be removed, to prevent smothering the grass
- Pile shredded leaves over the crowns of Perennials and Roses
- Allow piles to remain out-of-the-way areas for habitat and cover for beneficial insects

With the exception of leaves from a diseased or sick plant, in this case, it is best to dispose of them to prevent disease or overwintering insect eggs from transferring to the new year.

Pile clean, shredded, disease-free leaves over the crowns of Roses, Perennials, and over bare spots of your garden now that you've removed old vegetable plants and annuals. This free mulch is the perfect habitat for beneficial insects and a place for birds to forage. While breaking down and adding nutrients back into the soil, the leaves also trap moisture for your plants to use slowly.

Fall Planting of Container Plants

Fall is a fantastic time of year to get planting new shrubs and trees! Especially plants that are already dormant and ready for winter temperatures.

Establishing containerized plants in the fall is easy because the tops will not grow until the following spring. But the big secret is those fall-planted ornamentals will produce new roots in the fall before winter comes!



There is a good reason that fall planting is so great - the most obvious one is the warm soil. This includes container trees, shrubs and perennials that are dormant establish fantastic when planted in the autumn. In the fall the warm soils coax those new roots to form almost immediately. Keeping even moisture at the roots is the key to a successful transplant right up until the ground freezes for the winter.

Container plants continue to form new roots very late into the fall or even early winter. It takes a long time for the chill to creep down into the soil and those newly planted root systems are going to take advantage of that long extended root-producing season.

With the lack of growth above ground, all the energy and focus goes to establishing a strong, healthy root system!

A Little Work Now for Long-Term Enjoyment!



Get the most out of your Autumn landscape and make winter a season to look forward to with just a bit of prep work and planning this year! The garden of your dreams should look great year-round and Elkin Lawn and Garden is here to help you achieve the four-season enjoyment of your landscape with ease!

Do not forget the importance of adding some of the new LED and SOLAR landscape lights that take so little energy and last for years without needing to be changed.

Landscape lighting to highlight walkways or uplight trees and shrubs to make those impending cold, shorter days much more enjoyable! Reach out to us for more information on how you can find plants that create low-maintenance fall splendor and get them delivered to your door today. Happy Planting!

