

Preparing Your Garden for Winter

8

easy, simple steps

Less is Best. Leave the Leaves!



1. Clean Up diseased plants. Leave the rest.

Spent plants can be left to decay adding nutrients back into the soil and can also provide habitat for overwintering pollinators such as **Mourning cloak butterflies, Comma butterflies, Question mark butterflies** who hibernate under bark and dried leaves.



Mourning Cloak



Comma butterfly



Question Mark butterfly

.....as well as ladybugs and bees such as the solitary, docile
Leaf cutter bee.



2. Remove Invasive Weeds such as Dog Strangling Vine (DSV)



Invader of the Day: Garlic Mustard



First-year plants grow as basal rosette with kidney-shaped leaves. Garlic mustard over-winters in this stage; an advantage over other plants as it photosynthesizes earlier in spring.



Clusters of flowers, each with four petals, bloom throughout late-spring/early summer, and begin to die-off towards mid/late summer.

Flower stalks develop early to late May of the second-year.



In July (sometimes as late as November) seeds are dropped from seed pods (siliques), up to 150 seed pods, with up to 22 seeds per pod.



Ragweed



3. Amend the soil for Spring

Fall is a great time to amend your soil.

Manure,compost,organic fertilizer such as bone meal. Doing so in the Fall means they have time to start breaking down to enrich the soil and become biologically active...which also means less work in the Spring!

Organic Soil Amendments



Compost



Shredded tree bark



Sphagnum peat moss



Manure (cow/sheep/horse/rabbit)



Leaf mold



Wood ash

<Although organic it is not sustainable.

4.Prune perennials

Focus on flowering plants like roses and herbs like Rosemary,Sage and Thyme .I Cut my roses back in late winter..

Resist the urge to cut back perennial flowering plants. The seeds make for winter food for overwintering birds and add winter interest (**Winterest!**)

Fall is also a great time to divide,transplant and plant bulbs.

No need to fertilize..Late fertilization will stimulate new growth not allowing enough time to harden off making it subject to winter damage.



Orange coneflower in winter

5. Replenish mulch for Winter

Winter mulching has the same benefits of Summer mulching (reducing water loss, protecting from soil erosion and inhibiting weeds)

Adding a thick layer of mulch to the soil surface will regulate soil temperature and moisture and ease the transition into winter. As the mulch breaks down it incorporates fresh organic material into the soil.

BUT....

What kind of MULCH to Use?

LEAVES!

Are Nature's Gift and they are ***FREE!***

Think of them as a down sleeping bag.

Leaves are light and fluffy which adds insulation value.

As the leaves break down, they add the benefit of :

Adding nutrients to the soil,

carbon-rich matter which aerates

and conditions the soil to facilitate root growth.

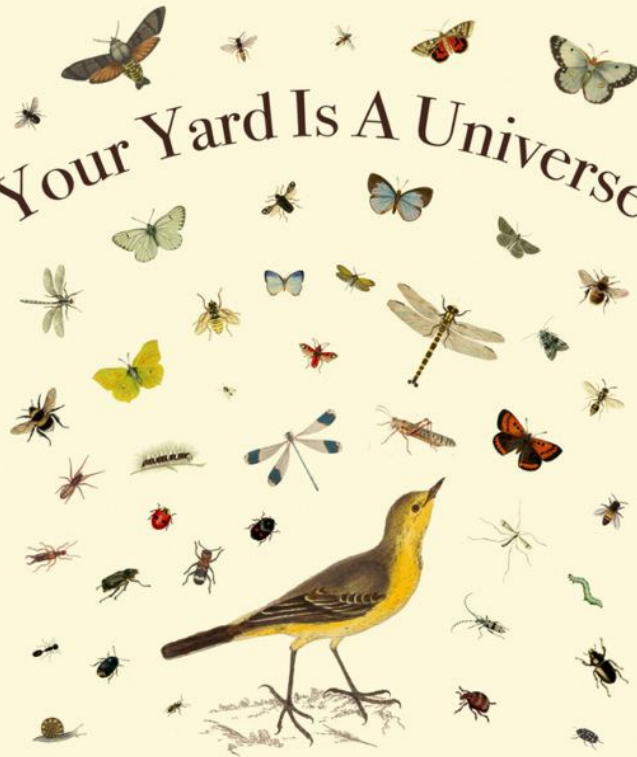
Tip: *add a thin layer of soil on top so that they don't blow away*

but not too much as you don't want to compact them.

And you will be providing protection for the overwintering pollinators.



Your Yard Is A Universe



Many small creatures can spend their whole life within the perimeters of your yard. Their lives depend on you.

No Toxins - Plant Natives - Leave The Leaves

To learn more about sustainable landscaping visit: www.healthyyards.org



Picture source: Biodiversity Heritage Library

6. Drain Hoses, Empty Rain barrel

Turn the water off at the source, empty the hose, coil it up and store away from the elements.

If you use a rain barrel: drain it, detach the downspout. You can either store the rain barrel on it's side or just turn it upside down so that snow cannot settle inside and cause cracks in freezing temps.



7. Clean and Sharpen your Tools

It's good practice to keep tools clean and well oiled throughout the gardening season and at the end of the season do it again before hanging them up /putting them away for winter. How bittersweet.

***Washing tools with soap and water** to remove dirt and debris. If rust is present, remove with white vinegar, sandpaper or a wire brush.

****Sharpen** hoes, shovels, shears with a basic mill file.

A whetstone works well for pruners.

*****Lastly, Oil** using a rag to rub down the tools.

This will help seal the metal from oxygen, extending your tools' lives for another year.



If you have the space set up a cleaning station. I love this sand/bucket method. Less Work!



8..That's it!

There really isn't anymore to do except let Mother Nature take its course.

Please Don't be in a rush to clean up in Spring.

Wait until the temps are 10+ degrees for at least 3 days in a row to start tidying up the garden to make way for new life and new growth.

In Toronto this usually works out to about second week of April...even 3rd week.

This gives our pollinating friends a great head start to do what they do best.

When you have tucked the garden to bed for the winter it is perfect downtime opportunity to dream and make garden plans for the future.

TO PLANT A GARDEN IS TO
BELIEVE IN TOMORROW.

~AUDREY HEPBURN



“To be a catalyst is the ambition most appropriate for those who see the world as being in constant change, and who, without thinking that they control it, wish to influence its direction.”

-Theodore Zeldin

