

Winterizing Trees and Shrubs

Although, Mother Nature has given our trees and shrubs excellent mechanisms to cope with cold winter weather trees and shrubs are major investments that can greatly benefit from a small amount of extra care for winter. Therefore, for the sake of your tree's quality of life and your own, take a few minutes to winterize your trees and shrubs. Remember beautiful springs come from well-tended winters.

First, note that Mother Nature has provided our deciduous trees and shrubs with an excellent mechanism to protect their valuable water and sugar reserves in that they drop their leaves and go into hibernation until spring. Our evergreens are a different story. They have developed a coping procedure that allows them to slow down their metabolism and endure the winter cold. However there are steps we can take to aid our conifers and broadleaved evergreens and help them make it through cold months without damage and remain as healthy as possible. Here are some tips to help you make sure your trees are ready for winter:

- 1 - Remove visible damage and dead wood. Try to make small pruning cuts that minimizes the exposure of the central heartwood on the branch.
- 2 - Prune branches that will touch the ground when loaded with rain and snow. Foliage and branches that are in contact with soil can invite undesirable pests and problems.
- 3 - Remove damaged and declining twigs, branches, and bark. Do not leave food and shelter for pests during the winter.
- 4 - Remove any sprouts or suckers growing at the tree base or along stems and branches. Pruning should conserve as many living branches as possible with only a few selective cuts.
- 5 - Spread a thin layer of mulch to blanket the soil. Cover an area at least as large as the branch spread. Mulch is nature's way of recycling valuable materials, but be careful of pests hitching a ride.
- 6 - Properly wrap new trees that have not developed a corky bark and could be easily damaged. Injury from the environment, including chewing and rubbing by animals, must be prevented.
- 7 - Loosen soil if it is compacted and poorly drained. It is critical not to damage tree roots in the soil. Saturated and dense soil can suffocate roots. Adding coarse builders sand or Gypsum to the soil is the best way to loosen our heavy clay soils. Aeration is often not very effective as the holes created often close up within 48 hours and the soil re-compacts quickly.
- 8 - Fertilize with all the essential elements, if they are in short supply within the soil. Be sure to go lightly with nitrogen, especially under large, mature trees and around newly planted trees.
- 9 – MOST IMPORTANTLY Watering your plants generously in late Fall (Early December) and, if possible, during the Winter where soils are cool but not frozen, and there has been little precipitation. Winter droughts needs treatment with water the same as summer droughts, except it is much easier to over-water in winter.