

## **7 Simple Steps To Winterize Your Garden**

Give your growing space a little TLC now so it will really thrive come springtime.

### **Step 1: Clean out all the weeds.**

Dead leaves, plant parts, and any invasive or diseased plants. Pretty much anything you wouldn't want in your garden during growing season, it's important to get out now. If you suspect a plant might be infected because it was infested with bugs, didn't grow well, or had odd coloring, now's the time for it to go.

### **Step 2: Protect your new garden beds.**

When you're trying to establish plants—especially perennials—the first season is often the most important. As the plants are getting established, it doesn't hurt to add a little extra coverage over the winter, try a garden cloth. If you want to try to continue growing veggies like lettuce or radishes, install a cold frame to continue growing even in winter.

### **Step 3: Plant your bulbs.**

This doesn't fall in the "clean-up" category, but it's still important-list item to get done before the ground freezes. Plus there's a reason it's on the winter list. Many times, gardeners have trouble planting bulbs. Either the ground is too hard or they have clay soil, and they never seem to get the hole deep enough. You need it several inches deep, in most cases, so it has good protection over winter and is ready to bloom in spring.

### **Step 4: Give your plants one last drink and then turn the water off.**

Water is a plant's best friend, and when you're trying to establish new ones, it's very important! Before you turn off your water for the winter—no one wants busted pipes outdoors—you'll want to give your garden a nice long drink. This is especially the case for new trees, shrubs, and perennials. You don't have to worry about keeping the watering up through frost time, but you can give your plants a little extra help when you remember to do a final watering of the season. For timing, try to do this about a week or two before the ground freezes in your area. When you turn your water off, be sure to empty and store hoses, rain barrels, and other gardening supplies so they don't crack from the cold

### **Step 5: Put a winter jacket on your trees, shrubs, and rosebushes.**

When you're trying to establish these trees, shrubs, and rosebushes in your backyard or garden, they often need extra protection from those harsh winter winds.

### **Step 6: Dig up your tender plants.**

If you have cannas, dahlias, elephant ear, or other sensitive bulbs and tubers like these, then you need to dig them up before winter. You'll want to place them in a dark, cool location like the basement—but research the best storage recommendation based on plant.

### **Step 7: Add some extra mulch.**

Mulch feels like a spring task, but there's a reason to put it on the fall list, too. Having good mulch in your garden is one of the single best things you can do as a gardener. It adds organic matter to the soil, naturally deters weeds, and further insulates and protects the plants. The purpose of mulch is not to keep plants warm, the purpose is to keep them cold. A blanket of insulation (mulch and snow) actually helps keep the ground frozen until spring, which is what you want so your plants don't try to thaw out and grow prematurely. If you have areas of your garden that are looking a little bare, add mulch before those cold temperatures hit. Even if you don't jacket your plants, this can help so much because it will protect the roots and the area of plants that are most vulnerable. On a budget? Instead of wood chips, try using your leaves as mulch.

### **PREPARE HERBS FOR WINTER**

Herbs are a mixed bag when it comes to needing winter protection. Some are very hardy and can easily tolerate a cold season, while others will need some extra help:

- **Sage** is a perennial in most areas and does not need special treatment for the winter. Before frost stops its growth, cut a branch or two to dry and use in stuffing at [Thanksgiving!](#) (Try our delicious [stuffed turkey recipe with sage.](#))
- **Rosemary** is a tender evergreen perennial that should be sheltered outside (Zones 6 and 7) or potted up and brought inside (Zone 5 and colder) for the winter. Read more about [overwintering rosemary.](#)
- **Thyme** is fairly indestructible. A perennial, it will go dormant in the fall, then revive by itself in the spring.
- **Parsley**, a biennial, will withstand a light frost. In Zone 5 or colder, cover it on cold nights. It has a long taproot and does not transplant well.
- **Chives** are hardy perennials. Dig up a clump and pot it, then let the foliage die down and freeze for several weeks. Bring the pot indoors to a sunny, cool spot. Water well and harvest chives throughout the winter.
- **Basil** is a tender annual that won't survive winter outside in most regions of North America. Dig up small plants and bring them inside to extend their season.
- **Oregano** is a perennial that is somewhat hardy, but will appreciate some winter protection in the form of a layer of straw mulch.

### **WINTERIZE ROSES**

- You may water [roses](#) regularly through the fall; refrain from fertilizing starting 6 weeks before the first fall frost.
- Remove any dead or diseased canes.
- After the first frost, mulch plants with compost or leaves to just above the swollen point where the stem joins the rootstock.
- In areas where winter temperatures are severe, enclose low-growing roses with a sturdy cylinder of chicken wire or mesh and fill enclosure with chopped leaves, compost, mulch, dry wood chips, or pine needles.
- Before daily temperatures drop well below freezing, carefully pull down the long canes of climbing and tea roses, lay them flat on the ground, and cover them with pine branches or mulch.

### **HELP YOUR GARDEN HELPERS!**

Be proactive! Keep bird feeders topped up. Birds especially appreciate fatty, high-energy foods (such as suet) during cold months. Establish a feeding routine, offer water, and clean feeders and bird baths regularly to maintain good hygiene.

Make sure to consider your garden “helpers” while you go through your fall garden checklist!