

Winter Landscape Care Checklist

It's snowing outside, a difficult time to think about gardening when all you want to do is curl up by the fireplace and read a good book. While we cut back our gardening activities in winter there are still a few things we need to do.

The first and most important item is to turn off our automatic sprinkler systems and disconnect our watering hoses once we get consistent freezes. We still need to water plants in the winter, but typically that is once a month on warm days, after the valves have thawed out. Trees in particular need to be watered in the winter – from the drip line out in a circle.

When shoveling snow from your driveway try to dump it around trees. They can always use the extra moisture. However, if we get lots of snow sitting on the branches of trees and shrubs, be sure to knock this off. This holds especially true for Mediterranean plants like lavender, rosemary, and curry plant that don't like sitting snow and develop unattractive gray holes in them.

Weeding is still important, especially pulling London Rocket or mustard. It's the weed with dark green foliage and a yellow flower that we see around the end of the year. The beet leaf hopper which causes curly top virus on tomatoes overwinters on London Rocket. When the soil is soft and "fluffy" from freeze/thaw cycles, it's easier to pull all the weeds. Plus it's fun to see your footprints all over the garden.

Winter is a good time to dry those seed heads for use in arrangements - which you have the time to create because you are not out working in the garden.

It's also a good time to plan next year's projects and if you have a greenhouse like environment, start seeds. Or you can create a coldframe and grow your own lettuce. I'm designing an area for a new fountain.

Don't forget to plant a few bulbs for spring. Crocus, daffodils, iris, and some dry climate tulip varieties are always fun to watch when they pop up out of the snow.

And take this time to purchase and read some interesting books on gardening. Or you could sign up for the Master Gardener classes. The application deadline is November 15 and classes begin in January.