



Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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Greetings,

Pumpkin Brook is busy this month amending the soil based on results of the soil tests we took earlier this year and leaf shredding. This newsletter will let you know what we are doing to put your gardens to bed. There's still time to have us help if you need any assistance but let [me](#) know right away.

Winterizing Beds

It's time to put the last finishing touches on this season in the garden. Here are few tasks that are necessary at this time of year to get your gardens ready for their long winter's nap.



Beautiful fall shrub foliage surrounded by fallen leaves.

Rose care

Once the ground has frozen we will mound compost around the plant crown and 6 to 12 inches up the canes of hybrid teas and David Austin roses. This will insulate the soil to prevent alternating freezes and thaws. The snow will help do this as well but when there is no snow cover, the compost will act as a backup as well as adding nutrients and microbial life to the soil.

Pruning

If any of you remember how devastating last winter was to trees and shrubs, it is important to be preemptive about falling snow. Creating air holes in shrubs will allow space for the snow to enter and distribute weight rather than sitting on top. Now is the time to double check trees and shrubs close to the house, especially boxwoods and arborvitae as these seem to be more prone to splitting.

Shrub Protectors

If you have shrubs that are prone to splitting from snow and ice or are situated under a roof line or awning, your best line of defense may be a shrub protector that can bear the load of winter elements. We can custom fabricate these for you from long lasting cedar.



PBOG's custom made shrub protector

Pest Protection

If you are worried about gnawing critters getting to young tender bark, we can wrap the base of these trees with hardware cloth or biodegradable tree shelters. Also deer can cause damage from rubbing against bark higher up the tree so tree shelters can be used for this use as well. Our deer spray application will repel deer for the entire winter season using a garlic based spray that is odorless within 24 hours.

Plant Health Care

An anti-desiccant application will slow transpiration (water loss via evaporation from leaves) by coating the surface of leaves with an all-natural pine pitch based spray. This is crucial to prevent winter scorch and drought stress at a time when plant roots are limited in their ability to take up water due to frozen soil.

Leaf Mulching

Fallen leaves are nature's very own mulch. They contain nutrients that can be recycled back into your landscape. We have a leaf shredder that can finely grind up fallen leaves creating a mulch that will act as a buffer preventing temperature fluctuations over the winter. Perfect for woodland gardens!

Winter Containers

Evergreen containers make great additions to the garden over the winter months. They can add color to front entryways when it is much needed and enhance holiday decorating.



Container filled with branches and twigs from your garden

Here are a few tips:

Use the proper container. The larger the better as increased soil volume equates to more insulation between the roots and the air. The ideal sized container should be at least 18 inches tall and wide. Also avoid terracotta or plastic as these can crack in the freezing temperatures. Instead opt for fiberglass, metal or wood containers. Finally, make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom as you never want to have standing water.



Boxwood with Spring plants to be added next year

Choose the right plants. A general rule for winter containers is to use plants that are rated as hardy in 1-2 USDA Hardiness zones lower than the zone you are gardening in. This will give your containerized evergreens the best chance for survival after the winter is over. East of Rt. 128, in zone 6, this means using plants rated as hardy in zones 5 and 4. The reason for this is that container plantings have roots that

are less insulated and therefore subjected to widely fluctuating temperature and moisture levels, so hardier plants than usual are required.



Twigs with red berries are eye catching

Choose plants that work well together with variations in height and texture. Some plants to consider are ornamental cabbages and kale (although these will not last the entire season), dwarf junipers, hollies, boxwood, Alberta spruce, winterberry, winter pansies, yellow and red twig dogwood, and yucca.

For a low cost option, consider using only cut evergreen branches highlighted with berried branches or Christmas lights. Don't be afraid to use natural materials from your property (or Christmas tree) to add some more variety. Branches from spruce, pine, red twig dogwood, winterberry, and holly can all be used. Cut greens will not last as long unless sprayed with an anti-desiccant.

Protect your container plantings by siting them away from roof lines where snow and ice can fall on top. Consider spraying the planting with an anti-desiccant that will slow water loss from transpiration. Just don't spray it on blue spruce or any other evergreens with blue tinted foliage as this can change the coloring of the needles and be harmful to the plant.

Keep soil moisture evenly moist and water only when potting medium is not frozen. Sometimes this takes a bit of probing as the surface crust may be frozen but just underneath in the root zone, the soil has not yet frozen.

I hope these tips have given you some inspiration and guidance in planting your winter containers. If you would rather that we plant your containers for you during this busy holiday time, we would be more than happy to oblige.

Plant Pick - Beautiful Conifers

When the landscape turns to shades of brown, grey and black at year's end, we certainly welcome the contrasting color and texture of green needles. In September I travelled to northern Vermont to attend a meeting of the American Conifer Society's New England chapter. A highlight of the weekend was visiting local gardens and nurseries to study the use of conifers in the landscape. What an inspiration!



Conifers come in many sizes - large...

The photos show a long view of Rocky Dale Gardens in

Bristol, Vermont. The mature specimens massed together form a striking backdrop to the array of subshrubs and perennials. This area had been recently renovated to put more of an emphasis on the smaller plants. Some larger specimens were removed, but you'd never know it now.

Across the way is their newest display garden, shown to the left in the photo, with stonework. Here smaller conifers are highlighted along with companion plantings. The second photo shows a detail of this bed. I like the use of evergreen groundcovers that don't die back with the first frost such as heuchera, hellebore and ajuga.



...and small.

There is a new conifer display garden to visit this fall (or any season) at Wellesley College, designed by my colleague Mary Coyne. [Follow this link](#) to find the article entitled "Celebrating the New Educational Garden at Wellesley College" for more information.

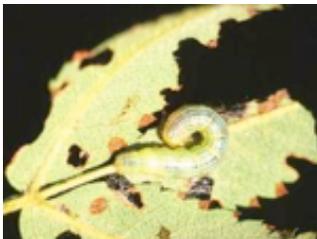
Pest Alert - Winter Moth



Adult Winter Moth

You may start seeing male and female winter moths soon as they begin to emerge around Thanksgiving time and may continue to emerge well through December whenever milder temperatures prevail during that time period. The male moths usually appear first, and are light brown to tan in color. All four wings are fringed with small elongated scales that give the hind margins a hairy or fringed appearance. Male moths are strongly attracted to lights and can often be found on the side of buildings. The female is gray, almost wingless and, therefore, cannot fly. Females are usually found at the base of trees or scurrying up tree trunks, but can be found almost anywhere. After mating, the female deposits loose eggs on bark, in bark scales and on lichen or elsewhere. No treatments are known to be effective for the adult moths.

However to control winter moth caterpillar damage next Spring, there are some things we can do now.



Caterpillar feeding in Spring.

Horticultural Oil Spray

The egg stage is the target stage for treatments in very late winter or very early spring. Horticultural oil sprays are quite effective when good coverage is achieved. Horticultural oil can be applied to small sized trees. Consult a tree company for coverage of large overstory trees.

Barrier Methods

For medium to large sized trees not being sprayed, we can apply a physical barrier which can prevent the wingless adult



Typical winter moth damage to a tree.

female winter moth from climbing up trees and depositing her eggs. This can be done now.

Winter moth caterpillars will feed on all maples, oak, apple, crabapple, fringetree and blueberry. They may also drop from trees to feed on roses and perennials. We saw evidence of this damage last April and May in Weston, Lexington, Concord and surrounding towns.

Please [e-mail](#) Carmine to discuss treatment options.

November Is the Time for....

- Draining and storing garden hoses that tend to crack if left outside during cold weather.
- Emptying and storing containers not in use during winter. Store ceramic pots in a garden shed or garage to prevent cracking.
- Finishing up bulb plantings.
- Fertilizing trees and shrubs, amending soil per soil test results.
- Pruning any damage to trees and shrubs from the recent early snow storm.
- Making notes for next year on things to add or change in the garden.
- Adding some winter greens at the end of the month to windowboxes and containers.

See also our article on winterizing beds for more tips on things to do this month.

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At this time of year, I am always grateful for my continued association with you, my loyal clients and staff. It's a true pleasure to work with you and to watch plants grow that astonish, delight and nourish our beings. Thank you, and best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,
Priscilla

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