



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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December 2003



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Winterize Your Landscape

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Kansas Certified Nursery Professional

The beauty of fall is a delight for our eyes, from the colorful leaves of intense yellow, orange, purple and bright red; to the colorful fruit produced by trees and shrubs.

Though fall is a beautiful season, it must come to an end. Our plants need the rest they get from winter dormancy, giving them a jump start into spring. As we approach the winter season, don't let your plants go through the cold and harsh climate without providing them with the careful and crucial preparations that will affect your plant's overall health. This is very important advice for the area we live in because our winters vary dramatically from year to year. Whether you have established or newly planted trees and shrubs, use these helpful winterizing tips to promote healthier plants for years to come.

Right now is the perfect time to mulch all of your trees and shrubs. Soon we will start getting harsh cold weather and if your plants are mulched three to four inches deep, the mulch will keep the ground frozen, preventing the roots from going into a repeated frozen-to-thawed state that causes severe root damage.

Mulch is the best protection that your plant's roots have when temperatures turn for the worst, whether it's very cold or very hot. During the summer months, mulch keeps the ground around your plants a cool 78 degrees whereas grass will only cool the ground down to the lower 90s.

If you do not mulch your plants when the temperatures start dipping down to where it is affecting the roots, there is a great possibility that you will have unhealthy plants going into spring. If your plant is unhealthy, it will not be able to fight off harmful pests that will sooner or later either kill it or leave it very unattractive. Just keep in mind, if you have trees and shrubs, you need mulch.

At Johnson's we carry many different types of mulch to fit your interests from the premium cypress mulch to the darker shredded cedar mulch. Cottonseed hulls are great for spring blooming bulbs and pansies. If you are into the bigger chipped wood, we offer three different sizes of landscape bark. We also have Hershey's™ Cocoa Mulch that smells so great, you will have an extreme craving for chocolate! Cotton boll compost can even be put down as a mulch.

After the mulch, don't forget to fertilize your plants for the winter. Though the plant is in a dormant period, the roots are very active in the winter. Johnson's carries a great fertilizer called ferti•lome Tree & Shrub Food. It is a quick-release fertilizer, meaning all the food is available for the plant's use at the time of application. Tree & Shrub Food should be used once in the fall and also in the spring.

We also carry a product called ferti•lome Start-N-Grow, which is a controlled-release tree and shrub fertilizer. This makes Start-N-Grow a great plant food to put down in the late fall, releasing smaller doses of fertilizer only when the plants need it. Start-N-Grow gives your plant access to fertilizer throughout the winter and into spring, giving your trees or shrubs a great, healthy start into the growing season.

Of course we shouldn't forget the lawn. For a healthy fescue lawn, make 2-3 applications of ferti•lome Winterizer in the fall. Now is the perfect time to make your final application of the year, as long as the ground is not frozen.

Now that we have talked about winterizing your trees, shrubs and lawn, let's talk about your roses. You will want to winterize roses slightly different than your regular plants. They still need to be mulched, but roses need to go through several freezing nights before you mulch them in. We carry rose collars that fit around the base of the rose bush leaving just enough room for the right amount of mulch to fill up the collar. The rose collar, along with the mulch, will give enough protection for your rose bush to get it through the winter. Don't forget, when spring comes around start fertilizing once a month with ferti•lome Rose Food containing Systemic Insecticide to keep those harmful, nasty bugs away from your roses.

Follow these winterizing guidelines to keep your plants healthy and more attractive and they will turn out to be plants that you will cherish for many years to come. ■