

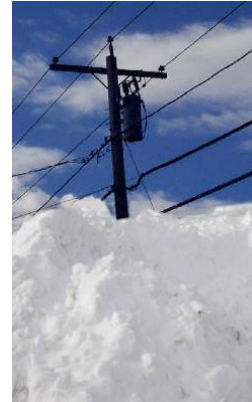


GARDENING TIPS FROM BLUE WILLOW AND LANDSCAPE ONTARIO

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Gardening in the Winter

1. It's ok to shovel lots of snow on top of perennials. They like the extra insulation.
2. Don't use salt to melt ice that might end up on nearby plants. Instead, try an ice melter that contains calcium chloride.
3. Keep your bird feeders filled with seed throughout the winter.
4. Don't let the weight of snow accumulate on small, grafted, ornamental trees. They can be seriously damaged, sometimes irreparably.
5. Water your houseplants when they are dry to the touch and the soil is a lighter colour. Over or under watering will turn foliage yellow.
6. Watch your rhododendrons carefully to make sure hungry squirrels aren't eating the fat flower buds at the terminal tips. If they are, spray buds with Ropel or any vile tasting concoction you wish to brew.
7. Keep adding kitchen waste to your compost. Be sure to throw on a handful of soil or a bit of compost accelerator after each addition.
8. When the bloom has finished on your amaryllis, cut the flower stem back and allow the large, strap-like leaves to develop and grow freely. This foliage feeds the bulb so flowers form for next year.
9. Treat yourself to potted spring flowering bulbs and primulas throughout the winter months for a cheerful dash of colour.
10. Cut branches of forsythia, flowering almond, witch hazel, flowering quince, or pussy willow from your garden and bring them indoors for a spectacular display of early spring bloom.
11. Keep florist cyclamens near a cool window to prolong their blooming time and maintain lots of heart-shaped leaves.
12. Do some reading, go to the library, get on the internet, or join a horticultural society and make a list of plants you'd like to try in your garden this year.
13. Keep a gardening journal that records all your successes and failures too. You'll find it immensely useful to refer back to in years to come.
14. Buy tuberous begonias early when selection is best and start growing them in a bright window or under fluorescent lights.
15. If you see perennials heaving themselves out of the ground, firmly press them back in and add extra soil or mulch over top so roots aren't exposed.



Garden looking a little lifeless?

Add some zip to your garden with ornamental grasses. Their interesting plumage adds appeal to the garden long after the roses have stopped blooming.

Evergreen trees and shrubs are another great addition to any landscape. But they can be used for more than just adding a touch of green to the yard. Select plants with a variety of forms, shapes, leaf textures and colours to provide different shades of green.

A variety of groundcovers can also be utilized to add winter interest.

Once the garden is covered in snow, trees with interesting shapes and bark textures add beauty to the winter landscape.

Start Geraniums From Seed Now

You can start geraniums in February, as well as perennials that will bloom the first year and slow growing or early blooming annuals like pansies, petunias, and impatiens.

Use a specially formulated, lightweight, seed-starting soil. For containers, clean pots are fine or cellpaks in a drainage tray. Fill your containers with moist but not soggy medium, and firm it down lightly so that it is about 3/8 inch below the rim.

Sprinkle the seed evenly, either singly, broadcast, or in rows. Press seed down for firm contact with the medium. Seeds pinhead-size and smaller need no covering indoors. Larger seeds should be covered with finely sifted soil or sphagnum moss.

Labels are important whenever you plant. You will not otherwise remember what is what or where. Water, preferably by placing the pot in a pan. If you must water from the top, use a very gentle spray.



Then cover, but not air tight, with a plastic bag to keep in the moisture. Remove this as soon as the seeds begin to sprout. Light is not necessary for most seeds until they germinate, but warmth helps, especially if it comes gently from the bottom.

Move the seed pans to your brightest window as soon as they sprout, and water with great care. Too much water will lead to damping-off: seedlings rot at the bottom of the stem and die. Too little water will cause wilting followed quickly by death.

Seedlings really prefer a cooler temperature than most people do. If your space and time are limited, only plant special varieties that you cannot buy from Blue Willow Garden & Landscape Design Centre.

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