



## GARDENING TIPS FROM BLUE WILLOW AND LANDSCAPE ONTARIO

### NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

#### Gardening in Early Winter

1. Lawns: Apply Parkwood™ 6-8-14 Fall Fertilizer or Parkwood™ 6-8-14 Fall Weed & Feed to strengthen grass roots and blades and build up disease resistance.
2. Pot up paper white narcissi for bloom in 4 to 6 weeks.
3. Plant amaryllis bulbs indoors in early November for Holiday blooms, allowing six to eight weeks from potting to flowering. Direct sun and warm temperatures will speed blooming. Flowers last about two weeks.
4. To protect mature oak trees from gypsy moths, apply a band of sticky Tanglefoot.
5. Remove and compost all annuals and vegetables from garden beds and containers.
6. Carrots and parsnips can be left in the ground and pulled up as needed throughout the winter.
7. Empty and store all containers that aren't weather proof.
8. Rake all leaves off the lawn before snowfall and make the last cut of the season shorter.
9. Perennials need to be cut back close to ground level in late fall (except for the Ornamental Grasses, Lavender, and Russian Sage which are all pruned back in early spring).
10. For perennials that are borderline hardy, for Chrysanthemums, or for areas that are particularly windswept and, therefore, very cold cover plants with Parkwood™ Triple Blend that can be worked into the soil the following spring.
11. Upright Junipers and Cedars can be damaged from the weight of snow and ice bending branches down. To keep branches upright, purchase clear plastic mesh or green twine that is spiraled down the full length of the evergreen.
12. To protect tree trunks from rabbits, spiral a plastic tree guard around them or spray the bark with bitter tasting Ropel.
13. Turn birdbaths upside down so water can't collect and freeze.
14. Water Gardens: Don't let falling leaves accumulate in your pool through the fall. Rotting leaves at the bottom are a major cause of algae. Put a mesh tarp over top to catch them. With preformed pools, don't empty the water because the weight of it will keep the pool firmly in the ground.
15. Prepare lawnmower, other garden equipment for winter storage, empty gas tanks or add gas preservative.
16. In mid to late November, trim roses back to about 1 m (36"). Surround the base of your Floribunda, Hybrid Tea, Grandiflora, or English Rose with an adjustable rose collar purchased at your nearest Sheridan Nurseries Garden Centre. Sink it about 2.5 cm (1") into the ground where it will firmly freeze into place. Pack a mixture that's half Garden Soil and half cattle manure into the collar. Or you can place a styrofoam rose hut right over the rose which has been cut down much shorter. The hut can also be dug 2.5 cm (1")



into the soil or a heavy rock can be placed on top. For climbing roses don't prune back at all and pack Garden Soil and manure solidly against the base (called "hilling"). Shrub roses generally don't need extra protection but a bit of hilling wouldn't hurt.

17. These broadleaf evergreens as well as Holly, Oregon Grape, Mountain-laurel, and Japanese Pieris are very prone to windburn which is why planting them initially in a sheltered location is so vital. If this wasn't possible and a plant has a lot of brown, burnt leaves in spring due to windburn or sun scald, you may want to surround it with burlap stapled to sturdy garden stakes. Into this open-topped tent, you can place a thick layer of leaves, soil, or mulch to help insulate the root zone and preserve moisture in the soil. Or you can spray the foliage with Wilt-Pruf that seals moisture in the leaves while still allowing the plant to breathe.
18. November is often a somber month full of grey, rainy days. While it may seem depressing it's actually very beneficial. All your beds and the lawn will freeze up with plenty of moisture in case there is little snowfall, a mid-winter thaw, or no early spring precipitation. If we don't get a lot of rain during this month, you need to water everything deeply before shutting the water off for winter. Be sure to turn off all your outdoor water lines to prevent pipes cracking during the colder months.
19. Drain and store hoses carefully to avoid damage from freezing.
20. Mist houseplants regularly and don't over water them. Watch for insects.

### **Feeding The Birds**

In addition to having plants in your garden that naturally produce food for the birds, you can provide bird feeders so a constant supply of seed and nuts is available. Furthermore, you can view different species at closer range. Invest in a good field guide to help you identify these visitors. There are many styles of bird feeders from which to choose in wood or plastic. Some are for hanging and some can be pole mounted. If you have squirrels in your area, you will want to select a



feeder whose seed opening automatically clamps shut as soon as the weight of a squirrel or chipmunk lands on the feeding tray. Or mount your feeder on top of a sturdy pole just far enough away from trees or the house that the squirrel can't jump onto it. You can grease the pole itself or attach a squirrel baffle to prevent the pests from reaching the top. Squirrels are ingenious and great high flyers so you might find it easier to feed them on the ground with peanuts still in the shell. There are large and small feeders depending on how often you're willing to refill the seed and what kind of bird you wish to attract. Bigger birds like Blue Jays and Cardinals simply won't land on a small feeder. Tubular feeders come with small perches and large or tiny seed openings from which the seed is dispensed. Sunflower seed and wild birdseed mixtures can be used in the former type while Niger seed fills the latter tube. There's a third type of tubular feeder called an "Upside Down Feeder" that's for Goldfinches only. They are the only bird that will land on a perch and flip upside down to feed from the small opening directly below. Birdseed: Sunflower seed is available in two forms-stripped and black. Striped will attract all birds while black is the particular favorite of Blue Jays, Cardinals, and

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Chickadees. Sheridan Nurseries Garden Centers offer a refillable bird bucket program so you can choose from black sunflower, striped sunflower, or a deluxe mix. You only need to put a deposit on the bird bucket and you can refill it with any mix of the three types of seed. Wild finch mixture and Niger seed are sold in smaller quantities to specifically attract Finches. Suet cakes are an important food source to many birds in winter especially Chickadees, Woodpeckers, and Nuthatches. You can purchase a suet cage that fits a suet cake perfectly if you don't already have one built onto your feeder. Feed the birds all year, not just in winter, so you can enjoy the beauty of summer visitors too. And don't worry too much about birdseed falling on the ground unless it germinates. Mourning Doves and Juncos love to clean up the leftovers on the ground.

**Bulbs purchased for planting in September and October can still be planted.**

**Potted Christmas Trees:** An alternative to artificial or cut Christmas trees is a potted, live evergreen that's brought into the home for a brief period and then planted outdoors for years of enjoyment. If this is appealing to you there are a few key things you need to know so your Christmas tree can become a permanent part of your garden.

**Preparation:** In November when the ground's still workable, dig a hole where you intend to plant approximately 50 cm (20") deep and 60 cm (24") wide. Loosen the soil at the bottom with your shovel. If you have heavy clay put 5 cm - 10 cm (2" - 4") of gravel on the bottom. Add 15 cm - 25 cm (6" - 8") of Parkwood™ Triple Blend mixed with some manure or compost. Place the balance of your soil mixture in the garage so it doesn't freeze solid when you're ready to backfill the sides at planting time in late December. Cover the planting hole with planks of wood or a sheet of plywood to avoid an accident. Fresh fiber potted evergreens start arriving at all Sheridan Nurseries Garden Centers in late fall. You can choose from Scots Pine, White Spruce, Colorado and Blue Colorado Spruce, and Fraser and Douglas Fir in sizes from 60 cm – 150 cm (24" – 5'). Bring your evergreen home and leave it outside in the cool temperatures. Water every 2 or 3 days to the point where you see water exiting the drainage holes at the bottom of the pot.

**Bring Your Potted Christmas Tree Inside:** Your potted evergreen can be kept inside for 7 to 10 days but only if it's positioned in the coolest area of your home (i.e. near a window or door) and away from direct heat sources. When you bring it inside be sure you have a large, sturdy drainage tray it can sit in when you water. Also, because it's not very tall, you may want to raise it on a pedestal, cube, or table that's strong enough to support its weight. Decorate it with minilights that produce little heat and your favorite Christmas decorations. Water your living Christmas tree every day.

**Planting Your Potted Christmas Tree:** It's a good idea to "harden-off" your evergreen before putting it right into the ground after Christmas. By taking it outside for a few hours each day and putting it back in the garage overnight, it gradually readjusts to colder temperatures until after a week it's used to 24-hour exposure. Trim the rim of the fibre pot down to the soil level with a sharp knife and remove. Cut the bottom right off. Make four evenly spaced slits halfway up the fiber sides from bottom to top but don't try to remove. Leave the sides on to maintain the integrity of the rootball so it doesn't fall apart during planting. Place the container

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in your pre-dug hole and backfill the sides firmly with the soil you stored in the garage. Water the area thoroughly, then put an extra 10 cm (4") of soil over the top to help insulate the root zone for winter. You can maintain moisture in the foliage by spraying your evergreen with Wilt-Pruf to prevent windburn or you can surround your specimen with burlap stapled to sturdy garden stakes.

**After-Care:** As soon as the ground starts to thaw in spring, remove the burlap, if applicable, and the extra 10 cm (4") of soil that acted as an insulation blanket. Dilute Parkwood™ Transplanter 5-15-5 with water to promote immediate root growth. Repeat this treatment twice more at 2-week intervals with regular watering in between. Continue to keep your evergreen well watered especially through prolonged periods of high temperatures and drought. The following spring, make a yearly application of an evergreen fertilizer and enjoy watching your living Christmas tree become a permanent memory in your very special garden.

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