



Digging It!

October, 2012

Putting Your Garden To Bed

When the sun comes up at 7:00 am it's the time of year to start winterizing the garden and in particular the perennials. October 15th is circled on the calendar as the first frost date for Zone 5a, which includes most of Simcoe County. Hopefully you have stopped fertilizing in mid-August. Your perennials do not need any more stimulation. After the first killing frost, clean of the dead plant debris to minimize soil-borne diseases.



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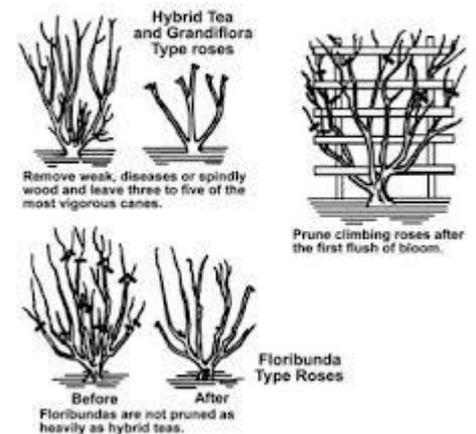
If it has been a dry fall, be sure to water the perennials frequently to prevent the roots from being damaged from cold dry soil. Remove and transplant container perennials into the garden to prevent the roots from freezing. Pruning is debatable. If you do not prune, the growth helps to trap snow which protects the plants, however it also makes it difficult to apply mulch which also protects the plants. So the best plan is to prune if you plan to mulch. There are some plants which are exceptions to the rule including ornamental grasses, peonies, lilies and Bishop's hat which should

always be pruned to at least one third of their size.

If you decide to mulch, apply the material in early to late November when the ground is slightly frozen. The purpose of the mulch is to protect the crowns of the plants from alternate freezing and thawing that occurs later in the fall and in the early spring. There are several mulches that work well, including straw, hay and leaves. Straw works very well because it does not pack, but takes forever to break down in the compost after you remove it. Hay is a good insulator, but it tends to pack down and may contain weed seeds. The advantage of leaves of course, is that they are readily available and have to be removed anyway. They also break down easily in your compost. There are some plants that should not be mulched, such as iris, since mulching seems to encourage the iris borer.

Some of your perennials will need some extra protection. After the first heavy frost, prune back your roses to 50 cm and remove all frozen leaves, buds and tender growth. Dust the lower branches with a general fungicide. Build up clean garden soil or sand about 25 cm around each rose bush - do not use manure or peat moss rich in organic matter. Rose collars can also be used to prevent the soil or sand from washing away. Bend rose trees down to the ground and cover with soil while climbing roses should have the root

protected with soil and the branches wrapped in burlap.



Stock Photo

Plants with tender crowns, like delphinium, can be protected by filling a nursery pot with mulch and setting the pot over the crown. Anchor the pot with a rock.

Generally perennials that bloom in the early spring or early summer, such as columbine, can be divided or moved in the fall. If the perennial blooms in the late summer or fall, it is best divided or moved in the spring. There are some exceptions which include iris and daylilies which should always be divided and moved in August.

True bulbs such as do not require lifting in the fall. Tubers including canna lilies, anemone, caladium, colocasia, begonias and tuberous roots such as dahlias and ranunculus as well as freesia and gladiolus corms, do require lifting.

Follow these guidelines and you will protect your perennials from harsh winds and severe cold.

*Tom McCavour,
Master Gardener*

October TO DO List

- Divide perennials
- Mulch the garden, but avoid covering plants completely until the ground has frozen.
- When raking leaves use indifferent ways: add them to the compost pile, gather them into their own compost pile to decompose into leaf mold or mow them over and then file them into flower beds.
- Breakup leaves by putting them in a bucket and using a whipper-snipper to cut them into fine pieces.
- Amend soil and the lawn with fertilizer in preparation for next spring.
- Continue to water trees and shrubs until freeze up.
- Pull out annuals and add to the compost pile
- Keep compost covered during heavy rains and sprinkle with water if it is too dry. The correct level of moisture has the consistency of a wrung out sponge.
- Start cleaning, pruning, repotting and isolating houseplants that have been outside for the summer to ensure a bug-free re-entry. Spray the plants thoroughly with an insecticidal soap and repeat two more times .times, waiting 5 days between applications, before bringing them indoors.

Tip of the Month:

Leaves work best as a mulch as long as they have been properly shredded. You can shred your leaves by running over them repeatedly with a lawn mower, using a leaf shredder or placing them in a bucket and taking a weed wacker to them. They will break down faster this way and provide your plants with lots of excellent organic nutrients.

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Editor Cherin Harris-Tuck

To Subscribe/Unsubscribe please contact therealdirt@rogers.com

Master Gardeners of Simcoe County



Where to find us for free gardening advice!

October 16,2012 Good Samaritan Retirement Home, Fall Planters, Cherin Harris-Tuck

October 16, 2012 Simcoe County Master Gardener Meeting, White Pine Board Room, Midhurst, 7:00 pm

Saturday October 20, 2012 Simcoe County Master Gardeners Technical Update at the Simcoe County Museum 9-4. (\$40 members, \$45 non-members) Pre-registration is required. For tickets call Linda Peacock (705)424-2179

*No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

Your Digging It! Newsletter is also being put to bed for the winter.

We will see you again in March!

Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!



For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Joan Nieman-Agapas 705-721-9088 or email her at jnabarrie@yahoo.ca. For more information on Master