



Spring Garden Clean-up

Where quality is always growing

Spring has sprung! We've prepared these tips to help you freshen up your garden and give your plants a healthy start.

Clean Up After Winter

As soon as temperatures stay above 40°F for a prolonged period, it's time to remove winter protection. This means removing any burlap, twine, cones, teepees, tree wraps, and mulch mounds. Keep in mind that if we get a cold-weather comeback you can reuse these materials to protect plants from frost damage if they have broken dormancy.

Once the snow has melted, pick up branches and rake up fallen leaves that have accumulated in the yard over the winter months.

Pruning

Cut back any ornamental grasses or perennials that were not cut back in the fall (this excludes some perennials and grasses like *Heuchera* and *Carex*). Grasses can be cut back to 4-6" from the base before new blades start to emerge. Perennials can be cut back to the base. There are many types of perennials so if you're unsure what to cut back and how, please, ask one of our nursery professionals. We would love to help.

Shrubs are easier to prune when they're dormant, but do not cut back shrubs that bloom in early spring. Spring flowering shrubs, such as Forsythia, Magnolia, and Lilac, over winter flower buds. These plants should be pruned in late spring after they flower so you don't risk cutting off your spring flowers. It's safe to prune shrubs that bloom on new growth in late summer, such as Rose of Sharon and Panicle Hydrangea. Hedges, such as Burning bush or Privet, and non-flowering evergreens can be pruned in early spring as well. Do not prune evergreens that flower in spring such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Mountain Laurel, or Pieris. These are pruned after they flower in late spring.

Roses can be pruned to remove any winter die back (blackened stems) and to maintain desired size. For more information on rose care, please see our Rose Care Sheet.

Fruiting, ornamental flowering, and shade trees can be pruned to thin and correct branching. On fruiting and ornamental flowering trees, be careful not to cut too much or you will lose the spring flowers and subsequent fruit. Only cut what is necessary. For ornamental trees, if more significant pruning is required to control size, prune after flowering. Shade trees are best corrected when they're young and in early spring. With good training and proper pruning, you can avoid serious problems in the future when they may be too large.

Fertilize

To get your plants off to a good start, apply a slow-release fertilizer. Get to know your plants and try to choose a fertilizer that is optimal. In general, evergreens prefer acidic fertilizers (with some exceptions like arborvitae), while deciduous plants prefer non-acidic. If you have any questions about what fertilizer you should be using, we'd love to hear from you.

Preparing landscape beds

Your landscape beds can use some care before plants break dormancy and begin growing. First, determine how deep the mulch is. During the growing season there should be no more than 2 1/2" of mulch over the top of roots and none mounding up the stems of plants. If mulch is too deep, the roots system and stems of the plants may not receive enough air making them prone to smothering and fungal diseases. This will cause a failure to thrive and potentially kill them. If the correct amount of mulch is on the beds, turn the mulch over with a pitch fork or rake and spread it out. This helps to break up clumps, increase the amount of oxygen and water reaching the root systems, and can also freshen the look of your mulch.

While turning the mulch over, if you discover your mulch is too broken down to reuse you can mix it into the soil. This is an excellent way to add nutrients and organic matter which is especially useful in areas with high clay content. Once your mulch is turned into the soil, add a fresh layer to the top as needed.

Moving, dividing, or early spring planting

Now that your landscape beds are prepared, you can add new plants, divide older perennials, or move shrubs that need to be re-located. Moving and dividing your plants before they break dormancy increases success. The worst time to do this is once the plants are pushing lots of new growth. Dividing perennials, such as Hosta, Irises, or Daylilies, can help increase an older plant's vigor and encourage new growth. When moving established landscape shrubs, be sure that you get as large a portion of the roots as possible. This can be a big job, so contact us if you have any questions.

If you decide to add new plants remember to check what stage your plant is at. Sometimes plants are grown in warmer conditions from your local temperatures. These plants can be weeks ahead of the rest of your landscape and may need to be protected if cold temperatures persist.

If you have any questions about how to prepare your garden in the spring, please, give us a call or stop in to see us. We would be happy to help you.