

# WINTER Checklist

## *Rest and Assess*



**Lawns:** Apply your last feeding for the year if you haven't already done so before the first freeze. Now is the time to strengthen the root system; unused nutrients are absorbed and stored over the winter. **Keep off frozen lawns.** They are susceptible to damage if there is a lot of foot traffic on them.

**Water:** Trees and shrubs are preparing for dormancy and are slowing their uptake of water and nutrients. Drier conditions help them harden off for winter, but they still need some water during winter months. The combination of dry soil and cold temperatures can cause serious freeze damage.

**Clean up:** If you haven't already, pull out old annuals, vegetables and fruit and clean/store plant supports. Dig up dahlias, calla lilies and cannas and clean/store the tubers. Wait until Spring to: 1) Cut back evergreen perennials; 2) Divide herbaceous grasses and plants that bloom late in the year. Yanking out winter weeds like henbit and chickweed now will prevent the million babies in Spring.

**Containers:** Group planters together close to buildings/under eaves for added protection. Wrap pots with some kind of insulation—hay, leaves, blankets, bubble wrap, burlap, or styrofoam packing peanuts to protect the root ball. To protect the top part of the plant from frost, place several tall stakes around the rim of the pot and wrap with frost cloth.

**Assess Winter Damage:** The results of winter injury may not be evident until months or even years later. Scratch off a little of the bark to examine the next growth layer called the cambium layer. If it is green the plant is still alive at that point. Resist the urge to whack away at plants until Spring in order to determine what is actually dead!

**Snow/Ice Accumulation:** Try letting snow/ice melt off on its own. (Snow can even act as an insulator during frigid night time temperatures.) Gently knock off heavy wet snow from arborvitae if necessary. In general, don't disturb frozen brittle branches - let the ice melt naturally.

**Treat:** Spray fruit trees annually in late winter/early spring as needed with horticultural oil to kill over-wintering pests and prevent disease. Apply oil sprays before foliage leaves out and bud expansion begins so as not to damage emerging tissue. Be certain to identify the problem precisely before spraying any pesticide.

**Prune** anything dead, diseased or damaged. Hold off on severe pruning of trees and woody shrubs until late winter while plants are still dormant but almost ready to go into their active growth phase. Pruning cuts will heal quickly, which makes for healthier plants throughout the growing season.

**NOTE:** The coldest weather of the year often occurs in February, so keep an eye on weather forecasts. If a cold snap is expected, provide some protection to tender plants by covering them with frost cloth. Remember to remove the covering as soon as the weather turns milder.