



WINTER Checklist

Rest and Assess



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.

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. This will help keep the root ball warm. To protect the top part of the plant from frost, place several tall stakes around the rim of the pot and wrap with plastic or cloth.

Assess Winter Damage: The results of winter injury may not be evident until months or even years later (See Tip Sheet on Winter Damage.) **Dead or Alive?** 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. If it is a sickly yellow or brown the plant is dead or dying. Again, 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.) The exceptions are upright conifers, such as *Thuja occidentalis* or *arborvitae*. Their branches may not readily bounce back, so gently knock off snow, especially if it is the heavy wet kind! 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 trees in late winter while plants are still dormant and almost ready to go into their active growth phase. Pruning cuts will heal quickly, which makes for healthier plants throughout their 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.