

Frost Protection

IN THE CHICAGO area, the first frost typically occurs around mid-October. This is nature's way of bringing the growing season to a close. The first frost is usually followed by a few more weeks of good weather. Frosts kill plants when the internal temperature of the plant is cold enough to break down plant cells, which causes plants to wilt and die.

If you have a vegetable garden, it is recommended that you pick your green tomatoes before a predicted frost, and store them in a dark and cool location (i.e. a closet) in order to ripen them up. Flowers planted close to your house have some protection from frost due to the heat from your home. If you want to prolong your gardening time you need to trap the heat from the soil around the plants. To protect from frost, you may cover plants with blankets, newspaper, straw, sheets, boxes, or plastic sheets (such as garbage bags). Apply covers in the late afternoon and remove them in the morning.

Watering your garden before a frost may also offer some protection. Wet soil will hold four times more heat than dry soil. Unfortunately, no matter what you do to protect your plants from frost, the weather will eventually end their growth.

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Employee of the month

August 2006



Tony Hernandez
Landscape Supervisor

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William Quinn & Sons Newsletter

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Think Spring!

The weather is cooling down, but gardeners should not give up yet.

FALL IS THE time when you need to think about spring flowers in your garden; a perfect time for planting tulips, crocuses, narcissuses, hyacinth, and other spring flowers. The bulbs of these flowers need time to root before winter arrives. Planting bulbs in masses will provide spectacular color in the early spring.

Bulb planting depths vary depending on the variety of flower, which is why it is important that you follow the package directions carefully. Bulbs planted too deep will not surface and bulbs planted too shallow may surface too early [if the weather is mild during the winter months]. Heavy clay soils may need to be amended in order for your bulbs to grow successfully. Always plant a bulb "pointed" side up. The rounded (or flat) side is where roots are produced.

Newly purchased bulbs contain all the fertilizer flowering bulbs need. But if you feel a need to fertilize, bone meal can be used to amend poor soil conditions.

Squirrels love to dig up tulips and hyacinths. Deers and rabbits eat flower buds as they emerge in the spring. Garden centers carry products you can apply to the bed areas before they feed on your plants. In order to stop squirrels, you can dig out the areas to the recommended planting depth, not individual holes. Place the bulbs in the ground and cover the area with chicken wire. Finally, put the rest of the soil back in and cover the wire with at least one inch of soil.

Each year nurseries strive to create new varieties of perennials. Be careful if you plan on purchasing new varieties. It may be a couple of years before the creators are able to perfect their newly grafted varieties. Only order bulbs and perennials from reputable companies; many times customers are disappointed with the size and health of catalogue purchases.

When purchasing your bulbs, make sure they are firm. Soft bulbs, or bulbs that are bruised and moldy will not germinate. Thoroughly water your newly planted bulbs to encourage root development. Winter is a great time to plan next year's garden, and before you know it, your bulbs will emerge with beautiful color in the spring.



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CATHY'S CORNER

ANOTHER SEASON IS winding down as we ask, "where did summer go?!" There is still plenty of time to get out and enjoy the weather. The brisk mornings, however, are a sign that winter will be here before you know it. The leaves on the trees and shrubs are showing signs that change is eminent. Enjoy the brilliant colors of the burning bush and maples while you can.

Even though the season is coming to a close, there is still plenty of time to complete those last minute landscaping projects. If weather conditions permit, we can plant through December. Dormant pruning will also continue this winter. Weather permitting, you will see the trimming crews cleaning up the dogwoods, Spirea, crab trees, and all shrubs that can be pruned during the winter.

Many customers ask what we do all winter. I wish we could all go somewhere warm, but that won't happen. During the winter months, every piece of equipment – from the ride on tractors to the hedge trimmers – are thoroughly examined, repaired, and painted (if necessary). This is no small task, and we take the time to be sure each piece of equipment is ready for the upcoming season.

The 2006 season has been very interesting. Flexibility has been the theme this year. It seemed that the schedules were ever changing due to the weather. A warm "thank you" to those customers who realized that the turf was too wet to be cut and that the crews couldn't come the following day because their schedules didn't allow for rain days. I can't remember a season when the shrubs needed to be trimmed 3 and 4 times! What a difference from last year when the grass was brown and the leaves on the trees and shrubs were scorched from the heat.

All this rain doesn't mean that we're out of the woods from last year's drought. It may take another four years to see the full effects of the drought. We will be closely monitoring any weakened trees and shrubs throughout the year, and will be for some time to come. I can't stress enough how important it is to make sure your plants are well watered going into the winter season. We can't count on snow cover to protect the newly planted trees and shrubs. If weather permits, don't be afraid to pull out your hose even in December.

This will be our last newsletter of the season. It's been a great season getting to know all the new customers of the 2006 season. Every winter Mickey and I reflect on the previous season and work to improve the service where needed. Remember, we're here all winter if you need anything. Please feel free to call. Thank you for your business, as always, Mickey and I appreciate it. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and look forward to working with you in the spring.

- Cathy

Dividing Your Perennials



Split bulbs in the manner above



Split roots as shown above

EVERY FEW YEARS perennials such as Daylilies, Iris, Hostas, and Spring flowery bulbs tend to become overgrown, which reduces flowering. Now is the time to divide your perennials.

Dividing perennials is easy. First dig up the plant. Be careful to make sure you remove the entire plant. Next, shake off as much soil as possible. Wash off the remaining soil so that you can see the entire root structure. Use a sharp knife to cut out all injured or dead parts of the plant. Then divide the plant into clumps (you should have at least two). The smaller you divide the plant, the longer it will take for it to re-flower. Relatively large divisions should flower the following year.

Bulbs are harder to divide because it is harder to remember where they're located. When digging up bulbs for division, be careful not to pierce them with the shovel. Bulbs can also be divided with a sharp knife. Discard any soft or moldy bulbs. Water your newly transplanted flowers well, and if the leaves start to drop, cut them back to reduce stress on the plant.

Protecting Newly Planted Evergreens During the Winter

PROTECTING NEWLY PLANTED evergreens during winter months is key to their survival. Winter can be very harsh for young evergreen trees [and shrubs]. Cold weather and drying winds will dehydrate the plants. Since evergreens – both needle and broadleaf – maintain live foliage throughout the winter, the foliage continues to lose moisture even when frozen. If water loss is too great, the needles – or leaves – will turn brown and die off.

You can prevent damage to your evergreens by making sure the plant has plenty of soil moisture before the ground freezes. Another way to avoid dehydration is to make a screen that will block the wind. Use sturdy stakes that are a couple of

feet longer than the plant's height. Place the stakes in the ground before the ground begins to freeze. You may use burlap, cheesecloth, polyester, or snow fencing to create a barrier. Secure the barrier to the stakes using zip ties, available at any hardware store. The barrier should be used to reduce the flow of wind, through and around the evergreen, but it should not stop the wind entirely. No plants should be wrapped entirely with protective material. It is very important to make sure light reaches all of the plant, so be sure not to situate the screen so it touches the evergreen. If it does, you'll end up with a partially dead evergreen plant come spring!

