

## Evergreens need winter water too!

Evergreens are planted in our landscapes because they provide year round color when other plants are dormant. Since evergreens don't rest during the winter, they can dry out during periods of low snow cover or high winds. That's why it is important to continue to water your evergreens during a mild, windy, or low snow cover winter.

Just when you think it's safe to hang up those gardening gloves, remember that your evergreens may need winter water too! Don't forget to disconnect the hose from your spigot though or it will freeze!



**Don't forget those evergreens still need water even in the winter!**

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## William Quinn & Sons Newsletter

### Fall/Winter 2011

### Where's the Fall Color?

Weird weather has been the story of 2011, and fall is right on track to continue the saga. We're not complaining about the 60° days full of sun, but the trees and plants are sure confused. In a normal fall at this time, we should see most plants either in full fall color, or just about done dropping their leaves for the year. This fall however many trees are still green and growing, or dropping their leaves before we can even enjoy their beautiful colors!

In fact the grass is still growing at normal rates – something that usually stops, or at least slows down, by Halloween. Many annuals that should've been tossed, changed out for fall color, or died off by now are still flowering. It's almost like we're living in a Dr. Seuss fantasy world this year.



#### What can we expect going forward this fall?

As the temperatures get colder, and days get shorter, we can expect to see rapid changes in those trees that have yet to turn their fall colors. This will likely mean those trees won't hang onto their leaves very long, and what would normally be weeks of color will turn into days. Some trees are so confused that they're turning color one day, and dropping their leaves the next.

The first hard, deep frost we have should take care of any annuals that have been hanging around. They've just about overstayed their welcome anyway!

Burning bush and other shrubs that normally have a spectacular color array in the fall reached full brilliance this year. An extended fall color season (thanks to the warm weather)! Hopefully they'll be back next year for another round next year too.

#### What does all this wacky weather do to our plants?

Record snow, record rain, record heat...and that's just the preface of the book on how strange the weather's been in 2011! What will all of this do to our plants going forward?

The truth is that most experts really don't know. One thing we do know is that most plants are able to adapt fairly well to their climates. This year, for example, some Magnolias bloomed in September/October because the heat forced them to "shut down" to survive earlier in the year. You can probably expect lesser blooms next year on a lot of plants. Some plants that really can't adjust to the "new" climate may wither away, but others will thrive. Plants that were previously damaged, and repairing themselves, may become overly stressed and die off. It's all a throw of the dice at this point, but one thing is for certain...it will be an interesting 2012!

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# Cathy's Corner

Here we are near the end of another maintenance season. This has been one of the most challenging seasons we've had in a long time. Our ever changing weather forced us to learn how to keep on schedule when mother nature doesn't cooperate. Each year I think the weather can't get worse than the season before but, this is Chicago so anything goes.

As many of you know, we have an incentive program with the foreman and their crew. Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to let us know when your crew does an outstanding job. Each letter is shared with all employees during our monthly meetings. It's not too late to let your crew know they do a good job. I can honestly say that before the point program was started, the monthly meetings were more me complaining about improving the crews performance. Now I'm happy to say that we read more compliments than complaints. This is our way of showing how much we appreciate all our dedicated employees who work hard even in the toughest weather conditions.

I hate to say it - the snow season will be here soon. People ask us what kind of winter we're going to have. The answer is: anyone's guess. We've been preparing for the winter season since September and are ready to go. Hopefully, it won't be as bad as last year, but if it is I know we can handle it. Please take time to remind the residents about your snow removal procedure. When the streets and drives are open it makes the whole procedure go smoothly.

It's not too late to think about holiday decorating for your community. If your association may be interested in fresh Christmas greens or lighting, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

I want to thank all our customers for the trust and loyalty you have with our company. The long term relationships we have developed with many of you are treasured. The Quinn Family wishes you a happy and safe holiday season and look forward to working with you during the 2012 season!

Cathy

# THE FALL OF CLAY SOIL

Fall is the best time to stock up on nonperishable landscape materials you plan to use next year. You may be buttoning down the hatches getting ready for winter, but before you cozy up to the fireplace you may want to check out how much you can save on garden materials for next year! Clay soil amendments should be pretty cheap this time of the year, so let's look at some options.

Many new homes built in the last 12 years have the same problem – CLAY SOIL! It seems that builders realized there is (or was) a bit of money in high quality pulverized topsoil. To squeeze a few extra dollars out of a project, it became common practice for them to sell off the quality soil. Leaving the future homeowner with a headache of clay.

Surprisingly with the bad press clay soil receives, there are benefits to working with it. Clay soils retain moisture and nutrients better than sand or silt (but not as well as topsoil). It does, however, dry up much "harder" than top soil – ever seen cracks in your soil after a long period without rain (it looks like the Mojave Desert). The best way to "live with clay" is to amend your planting beds.

Most soil amendment products can be purchased at big box stores, or local garden centers. Soil conditioner and compost add organic matter and improves soil drainage. Gravel can also improve drainage when tilled into the soil. And finally Gypsum can work wonders when used over several years to adjust soil alkalinity. You'll need quite a bit of it though – figure on tilling in at least 3" of your amendment product (if using soil conditioner, compost, or gravel), or 50LBs of Gypsum per 1,000 Square Feet (or a 10x10 foot area).

One extreme measure, if you plan on "gutting" your entire planter beds is to remove about 6 inches of the clay. Find someone who will take it, and fill that area back in with pulverized black dirt. This should give the roots of the plants enough good dirt to flourish.

Either way you look at it, clay soil needs to be amended – whether you go the slow and steady route, or quick and extreme route.

One final alternative is to simply utilize only plants that are known to tolerate clay soils very well. See our list at <http://clayplants.williamquinnandsons.com>.



## Fall & Winter Perennial Care

To cut back or not to cut back, that is the question. Whether it's better to leave a perennial standing in the winter, or to chop it to the ground depends on a few factors:

- Personal preference
- The type of perennial
- Spring gardening efforts

Do you prefer the winter appeal of the perennial or not? Some perennials look absolutely beautiful

in the winter, and some look like they're out of a bad horror movie. Astilbe and perennial grasses, for example, have beautiful seed heads that truly compliment your garden in the winter. Hostas and daylilies do not.

Some perennials, such as roses, should never be cut back for the winter. This lessens their winter hardiness, and increases their chance of not coming back in the spring. Make sure you know your plants, and their temperaments before giving them a haircut.

If you do a lot of early spring gardening, before your perennials pop up, leaving them alone in the winter will help ensure you don't dig in the wrong spot. Accidentally cutting a perennial in half at the wrong time could mean certain death for the plant. So unless you have a photographic memory, or use something to mark "late rising" perennials, it may be best to leave them alone this fall. But if you really have the itch to cut those perennials back, here are a few tips:

- Wait until the plant has gone dormant before pruning them back. This ensures you aren't sparking new growth.
- Never cut plants below the soil line, you may have trouble with blooms the next year.
- Mark late rising perennials with a popsicle stick so you remember where they are next spring.
- Use a little compost on top of the perennial to insulate it over the winter. Fallen pine needles are great for this!

