



The



YARD BARBER

Tips from The Yard Barber

Time for a “Long Winter’s Nap”

December

Late fall and early winter (before the bitter cold sets in) is a great time to “tuck your garden in for a long winter’s nap”. Just a little preparation can make all the difference in plant survival and a better looking garden in the spring.

I know it’s tempting to cut back your perennials when they finish blooming and the stems are dead. However, resist the temptation. Let the stems remain for winter interest. Plus, research shows that leaving the stems will increase the likelihood the plants will survive the winter. Frost and freezing temperatures do more harm to the stems and top growth of plants. The cold can’t damage or kill what is already dead. I’ll admit there are some plants that are downright ugly when left alone. Personal taste dictates that I cut back some plants. I also cut back plants such as iris and peonies because of possible pest problems (don’t throw these plants in your compost).

Without a doubt, the most important thing to do for the winter is to put a blanket of mulch on and/or around your plants. Mulch will help keep the roots warm and control winter weeds. Commercial mulch will do, but think green and use the leaves that nature provides you. If you use leaves do not cut them up or chop them. Leave the leaves whole. The chopped up leaves will settle in too tightly and can do more harm than good. A good rule of thumb, place a blanket of mulch about 3-4 inches thick on your garden.

One last thing, consider placing identification tags near your plants. You don’t want to forget what you have and where they are. It would be a shame to save your plants from the cold just to dig them up in the spring.