



# Planning for PERFORMANCE

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Autumn is the time to prepare your landscape for vigorous growth the following spring.

**V**ibrant colors, textures and scents fill the air as one experiences the splendor of a beautiful landscape on a bright summer day. In this moment, it's hard to think of the preparation that was completed the previous fall when a well-trained caretaker spent essential time preparing the garden for the harsh winter ahead. You too can create moments like this on your property next year—here's how:

**Lawn Fertilizer:** Every fall, lawn areas should have a fertilizer application to allow turf grass plants to store energy for the winter. This energy will encourage the fastest recovery time possible from winter stress.

**Plant Fertilizer:** All landscape plants should be fertilized in the fall to give them energy for the winter. A slow release balanced fertilizer (12-12-12 for example) works well. Avoid applying fertilizer too late in the season, as it will promote growth and the plant can be damaged when winter weather arrives.

**Plant Installation:** Bulbs can be installed any time before the first hard frost. Beware of late planting for perennials and shrubs—they have a decreased risk of survival due to an insufficient time for root establishment.

**Winter Wind Protection:** Certain plant material is essential to protect, ensuring vibrant blooms and growth for the following spring. Burlap (10-ounce minimum) is a good material to protect foliage and buds from winter kill. Boxwood, rhododendron, and Kousa dogwood are all varieties that benefit from having their buds and/or foliage protected. Ever-blooming hydrangeas should be wrapped in burlap or a white frost blanket. This includes the very popular Endless Summer varieties.

**Deer Protection:** Plants prone to deer damage should be sprayed with deer repellent, covered with burlap/fabric or fenced. Tender new buds are a favorite food of deer and should be protected. Yews, burning bush, arborvitae and cedars are highly pressured by deer during winter months when other food is scarce.

**Rabbit Protection:** Rabbits can also cause a tremendous amount of damage to landscape plants. Metal fencing is recommended for rabbits—chicken wire works well. Although rabbits can damage bark on many varieties, viburnum, dogwood, roses and burning bush are the most prone to browsing.

**Vole Protection:** A less recognizable winter nuisance is the vole. Similar to mice, voles live in outlying fields and seek stone retaining walls and landscape beds for winter protection and food. They feed on turf grass plants under drifted snow, leaving narrow tunnels of dead turf grass in their path. These areas will not grow back and will need to be over seeded or re-sodded. Voles also eat the roots of juniper shrubs and can eat the bark of landscape trees. The easiest way to control voles is to install rodent bait boxes and monitor them periodically.

**Reduce Irrigation:** In the fall, watering can be decreased due to the larger amount of natural rainfall and colder temperatures. If trees or shrubs are still actively growing when temperatures drop below freezing, their bark can suffer damage from water in their trunk freezing.

Fall is the time to protect your landscape investment. If left exposed, wildlife or harsh weather can cause thousands of dollars in damage in a few hours' time. Depending on your experience and plants located on your property, seeking advice or services from a landscape professional can be invaluable when spring arrives. A licensed, certified landscape company has the expertise and materials necessary to ensure your plant material has the nutrients it needs and can keep wildlife and weather away from your landscape investment. They will visit your property periodically throughout the winter to ensure your trees and plants are staying protected, yielding spectacular spring results. □

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