

PREPARING YOUR GARDEN FOR WINTER

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GARDENING



WHY PREP YOUR GARDEN FOR WINTER?

Taking the time to prep your garden for harsh winter weather is something that is often overlooked by beginners, but it's crucial for several reasons. Not only does it give time for gardeners to complete any repairs or improve the general appearance of their garden, but it will also ensure that the plants they've worked so hard on growing, survive the winter. It also allows gardeners to get ahead start on next year's crop by ensuring that their soil is healthy and ready for new growth when spring arrives.

When should you prepare your garden for winter?

You should start preparing for the harsh effects of winter during the autumn months, before the first frost. You don't want to procrastinate and leave it too late, risking irreparable damage to your plants. Depending on the size of your garden it may only take a half-day to get your garden ready for winter. However, if you're dealing with a larger space with many plants, you'll likely need to dedicate more time. We recommend making a to-do list so you don't miss any important steps, use the top tips provided in the sections below to compile your list.



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR GARDEN

Step 2: Keep potted plants safe inside

Once you've finished your tidying and your garden is looking in better shape, it's time to protect any tender plants. Keep plants stored in pots away from the cold weather by moving them indoors. Giving these plants shelter in time will save them from the frost and wind that accompanies a cold winter. As these plants have not been growing into the ground, their roots will be more exposed to the harsher conditions and they will likely not survive if left outdoors during this time.

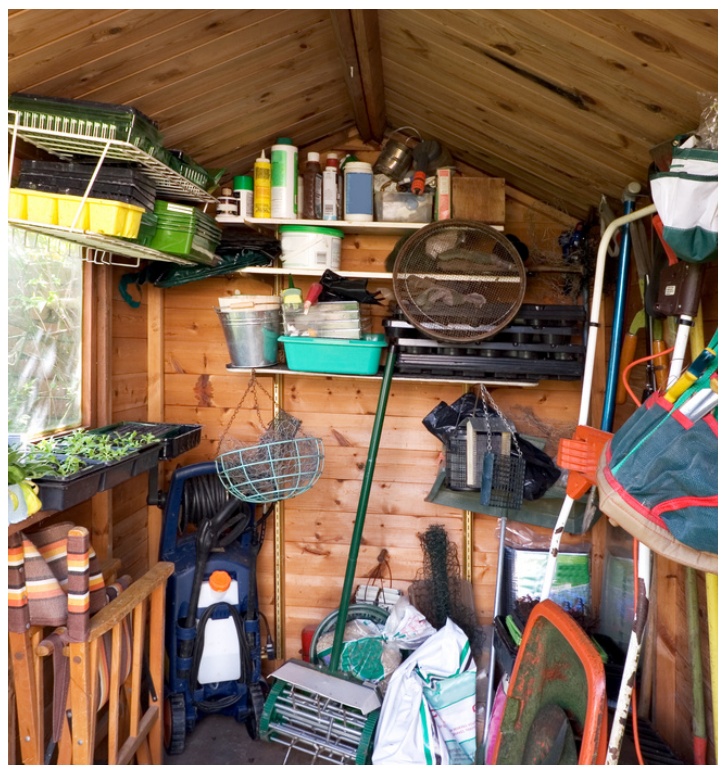
Step 3: Dig 'em up: Protect your tender bulbs

Another item that should be on your list of gardening jobs is to dig up any tender bulbs. This will protect them from freezing temperatures, as many plants will not be able to survive the winter weather, while also protecting them from bulb rot, which occurs when they are kept in wet, cold conditions. Use your trowel to dig them up, gently brush off any excess dirt and pack them into a cardboard box. If packing quite a few, layer them with some newspaper to protect each layer and avoid the bulbs from touching one another. Then choose a cool, dry location to store them.

Step 1: Clear the decks (and the shed)

Starting to prepare for winter by clearing out your shed and outdoor space allows you to take stock of everything you'll need to do. As they say, a clear space = a clear mind and throwing out all the junk that's in your shed (and on the ground) will not only improve how your garden looks but also help you keep organised.

Begin by raking up fallen leaves, stray sticks and other debris before the ground freezes. You'll also want to prune and pull any weeds around your plants at the same time. Next, clean out your garden shed from top to bottom. Get rid of any rubbish you no longer need, neaten up your tools and ensure it is a functional space for you to work in. It's the perfect time of year for this particular task as you'll likely have more time on your hands and you can stay inside while you work.





Step 4: Give your compost a boost

Next, it's time to give your compost a little pick-me-up. First, make sure your compost is well protected by storing it in a bin with a lid. This will avoid access moisture from seeping in or allowing it to freeze over and become unusable. You can also insulate it by adding layers of leaves and cardboard inside or surrounding the bin with bags of straw to buffer against the cold winds. Then you'll want to add in those dried leaves you raked up earlier and even any kitchen scraps like vegetable peels or eggshells.

Step 5: Time to mulch!

It's important to mulch as part of your prep as it adds an extra layer to protect your perennials against high winds and frost. Mulching essentially means that your plants will go into a dormant state over the winter and when you notice the plants putting out new growth after the worst of the winter conditions have subsided, you can remove it. Be careful when you spread a thick layer of mulch (aka bark, shredded leaves or straw), as adding too much runs the risk of smothering your perennials.

Step 6: Don't forget about critter care

The colder months wreak havoc not only on your garden but also on the local wildlife. So, it's important not only to protect your plants but also the creatures that visit. That's why we recommend leaving food out for birds, providing shelter for hedgehogs by making a leaf pile or making sure you don't disturb any small animals you find. Plus, birds are natural predators of common garden pests, so by supporting wildlife in your garden, you'll also be encouraging natural pest control solutions.



ACTIVITY TIME!

Create your own bird feeder

Follow the steps below to learn how to upcycle a bird feeder from a plastic bottle. This is a great activity to get the kids involved with and will ensure that any bird that visits your garden will remain well-fed throughout winter.

What you'll need:

- Bird seed
- A plastic bottle
- Some small sticks
- Wire or string
- Scissors

Instructions:

1. Cut a hole in the side of your plastic bottle. This will act as the opening for the birds to access the seeds. Make sure the hole is big enough for a bird to comfortably put its head through without getting caught or scratched.
2. Make some perches using the small sticks (you can also use pencils). Cut two holes opposite from one another near the bottom of the bottle. Place your stick or pencil through the holes to act as a perch for the birds.
3. Fill the bottle with birdseed.
4. Attach the wire or string by tying a knot around the neck of the bottle. Then, make a loop at the other end to hang it up.
5. Find a good spot to hang the feeder and viola, you're done!

Step 7: Give your tools a little TLC

Before you store your trowels, forks and other tools safely away in your shed for winter, this is a good time to get rid of any rust or give them a spruce up. Line up your tools and clean off any dirt and debris with a cloth, then use a wire brush or sandpaper to remove any rust you see. You can even give the handles a wash with mild soap and water, though make sure to leave them to dry fully before storing.

We recommend that you also take the time to sharpen the blades of your pruning shears, hedge trimmers or other cutting tools by using a sharpening block. This will allow for more efficient use when you pick them back up in the spring. Add lubricant to the hinges of the tools to keep them in good working order and make sure they are all stored in a well-sheltered spot in your newly cleaned shed, ready for when gardening season resumes.



Step 8: Plan ahead by planting winter-proof bulbs

Before we finish up, there's one more step we recommend – planting some winter-hardy bulbs in your garden beds! Much like evergreen trees and shrubs, there are certain plants that can withstand the harsh conditions of winter. So, before you put away your tools you may want to plant some tulips or bluebells to get you excited for the warmer months ahead.



WINTER PLANTS PERFECT FOR YOUR GARDEN

You may be surprised to learn that there are plants that can survive and even thrive during the winter months (especially with our unpredictable UK weather). These plants defy the frost and can help you create the perfect winter garden. So, take a look at our list below for our recommendations on the best winter-proof plants.

- Violas
- Bluebells
- Camelias
- Crocuses
- Primrose
- Snapdragons
- Poppies
- Snowdrops

Well done, you're finished for the day. We hope you enjoyed this one and it has given you a good guide on how to protect your beloved garden from the harsh winter conditions.