

Winter Protection

Small or slightly tender perennials, roses, and hydrangeas can be easily protected during the winter with an overturned flowerpot. Choose a pot that is large enough, or a rose cone, to accommodate all of the plant's leaves without crowding. When the pot is in place, bank some soil against its rim to hold the pot in place during high winds or place a brick or large rock on top. Leave the pot's drainage hole open for good air circulation.



Applying a layer of winter mulch is one of the best methods to protect perennials, shrubs, and trees from wintertime damage. Use mulch, straw, or even evergreen branches to a depth of 4-6" inches after a few hard, fall frosts. Avoid using raked leaves because they eventually pack down and make a soggy mess. For beds in windy locations, lay sections of chicken wire over the surface of the mulch and weigh it down with bricks or stones.

TREE AND SHRUB PROTECTION BASICS

- Both evergreen and deciduous trees need some type of protection in cold winter areas for the first three or four years after planting. If they are not already staked, deciduous trees should be securely fastened to a sturdy, well-anchored pole to strengthen them in high winter winds. Tie the trees loosely with cushioned, heavy cord to prevent any injury to the bark; don't use wire.
- Wrap all young deciduous trees with a long strip of burlap or tree tape to prevent sunscald. Sunscald occurs when the bark of the tree is warmed during the day by the winter sun and is suddenly subjected to freezing temperatures at night. This often results in weakened trees and dead limbs. The burlap or tape not only acts as a protective barrier until the tree develops its own thick bark, but also protects the trunk from rodent damage.
- Be sure to give special attention to all your evergreen plantings. They are very vulnerable in the drying, winter winds because they retain their foliage year round. One way to provide winter protection is to wrap them in burlap or erect a four-sided burlap screen around the evergreen, keeping the bottom of the screen a few inches above the ground so air circulation will be adequate. Simply drive four stakes into the ground and staple the burlap to them. With smaller evergreens, build a similar screen, but stretch the burlap down to ground level and fill the area directly around the base with leaves. Hydrangeas also benefit from a burlap wrap.
- For added protection, buy an anti-transpirant like Wilt-Pruf to spray evergreen foliage. Coating with an anti-desiccant (anti-transpirant) prevents loss of plant moisture from desiccating winter winds, sun, and low winter temperatures. Wilt-Pruf can also help preserve your cut Christmas tree and fresh holiday decorations too.
- Water all trees thoroughly before the first hard freeze, and apply a three to four inch mulch around the base of each tree after the ground freezes. This mulch will protect the plants from "heaving", (the alternate freezing and thawing of the soil in the early spring that damages tender root systems), and can even force the young tree right out of the ground. If a plant has plenty of moisture around its roots just before the ground freezes hard, it will stand a much better chance of survival. Water evergreens thoroughly every month throughout the winter. In the early spring, remove any burlap screens you may have installed. If you use tree wrap, unwrap your plants in the spring.

