

Fall/Winter Landscaping Tips for Solterra

These are recommendations from the Solterra Landscape Committee for early Fall and Winter with assistance from area lawn and garden experts.

- Solterra Landscape Committee

Maintaining a healthy landscape in Solterra can be challenging with our alkaline clay soil, drastic winter temperature changes, and harsh dry winds. Just look further up Green Mountain. The lack of vegetation you see there is a result of the same conditions that we have here in Solterra. The good news, however, is that with a little attention and preventive care you can have a lush, healthy landscape, and you don't have to have a green thumb!

Fall is a time when we often think our landscape chores have come to an end, but in reality, fall is the most critical time of the year for your landscaping. This is when all plants strengthen their root systems and make preparations for the upcoming year. Taking the following steps will not only promote the healthy landscaping you desire, but they will make your job much easier and likely cheaper next spring and summer.

FALL/WINTER TREE AND SHRUB CARE

Hold off on any needed pruning of trees and shrubs until late winter or early spring. Avoid pruning flowering trees and shrubs until after their bloom period. Regardless of when you do prune, don't remove more than 1/3 of woody shrubs such as Burning Bush, Dogwoods, etc. at a time. Perennials such as Yarrow, Cranesbills, etc. may be cut to the ground in the fall or early spring.

Cut ornamental grasses back in late February through March before new growth appears. Ideally, it's best to cut them as low as three to six inches from the ground.

Treat trees and shrubs now with a systemic pesticide and fertilizer such as Bayer's Tree and Shrub Dual Action or other similar product. Plants absorb the pesticide into their root system, branches, and foliage, thus preventing damaging insects such as aphids, spider mites, etc., from invading during the spring and summer. Such treatment is especially crucial to aspens which tend to attract insects at our altitude. Fertilizer stakes are an easy-to-apply fall/winter fertilizer for all trees.

Wrap young tree trunks up to the first or second set of branches with winter wrap before it freezes. Winter sun and winds tend to blister and splinter tree bark, causing serious damage to young trees especially. More mature trees that have developed a rough bark do not need to be wrapped.

Mulch trees and shrubs around their base with a shredded western cedar, but keep it six inches away from the trunk itself.

Water trees and shrubs one time each month November through March; twice monthly if we have a dry winter. The best method is to use a root feeder or slow soak with a regular hose for about an hour. Water when temperatures are in the 40's or above and preferably in the afternoon. If a hard freeze is expected, try to water a day or two before the freeze arrives.

Hose down evergreens in addition to a good monthly root soaking. Evergreens absorb the water into their needles which helps prevent burning and dead branches.

Be a good neighbor! If there are trees in the common area adjoining your property, run a hose out to these trees once or twice a month during the winter to give them a good soaking. After all, these trees add beauty, privacy, and value to your home as well.

FALL/WINTER LAWN CARE

Apply a winterizer to your lawn in late October. *Colorado's Choice Winterizer and Water Saver is an organic and reasonably priced product that can be found at local garden centers, but there are other quality products as well that are safe for the environment.

Apply a pre-emergent such as High-Yield Turf & Ornamental Weed and Grass Stopper (or other similar product) in February to fend off broadleaf weeds and invasive grasses in the spring.

Treat for grubs, Japanese Beetles, ants, fleas, and other insects now with a product such as Bayer Advanced Complete Insect Killer. Organic treatments are always best, but if you have had a serious infestation, you may need something stronger.

Top dress your lawn with a light covering of an organic product such as *Colorado's Choice BOSS (bio organic soil supplement) or an equal combination of BOSS and cow compost. Most lawns in Solterra were not given a layer of top dressing before installation. Adding an annual or bi-annual light covering of a quality top dressing will make an amazing difference in your lawn all year long.

Continue mowing until grass is dormant. The last cut should be 2 – 2.5 inches to prevent matting.

WATER your lawn one time per month in the winter; twice if we have a dry winter. Choose a day when the temperatures are at least 40 degrees (never water when the ground is frozen) and preferably in the afternoon.

Don't depend on snow to moisturize your lawn. It takes at least four inches of snow to supply moisture to your lawn; anything less than that evaporates and does not penetrate the roots. This is why our wet spring snowfalls are so valuable!

Reseed in the fall and February if you have bare spots in your yard or areas where the grass is sparse. Be sure to cover the seedlings with a light coating of BOSS or other top dressing.

TIPS FOR FALL/WINTER/EARLY SPRING COLOR

Pansies are in area nurseries early in the fall and will offer color fall, winter, and spring. These hardy plants, even in containers, can withstand temperatures to -25 degrees and rebound after heavy snowfalls. Don't forget to water them at least once weekly.

Plant bulbs such as daffodils, tulips, iris, and other spring bulb flowers after the ground is cold, preferably late October and November. Use bone meal or a bulb plant food and follow planting instructions according to packaging.

Plants Most Susceptible to Winter Kill

- Newly established lawns and those with southern or western exposure
- Newly established trees and shrubs
- Plants exposed to strong winds
- Perennials and ground covers in unprotected areas
- Plants with shallow root systems

* Colorado's Choice products are made in Colorado and are specifically designed for Colorado growing conditions. They are not generally found in box stores, but rather at area nurseries.