

Winter Landscape Maintenance Tips

It appears Winter has finally arrived in the Hamptons. Winter landscapes can be beautiful, but now is the optimal time to inspect your landscape for maintenance on certain species of ornamental trees and shrubs.

It is generally agreed that during the Winter season, it is a great time to inspect your deciduous trees for both maintenance pruning and removal of hazardous limbs with low thresholds of insects and fungal spores. The healing process will quickly seal the pruning cuts with little to no adverse effects.

With the lack of foliage, inspecting the canopy of trees will reveal the tree structure and any signs of crotch weakness resulting in possible limb failure. Cleaning and thinning of your trees will be most beneficial by removing all non-beneficial, dead and diseased limbs and by thinning and reducing the density of the canopy. This will allow an increase in both air and sunlight to penetrate through the canopy during the Winter and when they re-foliate in the upcoming Spring.

Let's not forget to reduce trees that over time has outgrown or simply need to be decreased in size to control and maintain their objective in the scope of your landscape. Don't wait until the trees become overgrown and cause adverse conditions on adjacent trees and shrubs. Trees can be reduced if maintained on a regular (every 2-3 years) schedule. This will avoid unsightly large pruning cuts. Avoid topping any trees. This will disfigure the natural form and creates problems by upsetting the balance between the crown and roots resulting in a undernourished tree.

Winter is also a good opportunity to rejuvenate certain species of ornamental shrubs that have over time crowded out other highly valued ornamentals. Not all ornamentals respond to this kind of pruning, so have your arborist from Ray Smith & Associates spend some time on your landscape providing a free recommendation for Winter Maintenance Pruning. It will improve the health, appearance and vigor of your landscape heading into Spring of 2016.

Additional Winter Tips for your Landscape

Avoid dumping snow and ice on top of your plants and shrubs. The additional weight can damage by splitting your ornamentals and ruin their shape.

Newly planted landscape trees and shrubs still require water to keep them well hydrated. With no precipitation for over 2 weeks by either snow or rain, simply apply around 5 gallons of water from a bucket. They are more likely to survive a hard freeze when hydrated, especially Evergreens as they lose moisture (transpiration) through their needles. This can of course only be done while the ground is not frozen.

Icing can be extremely hazardous for us, as slipping and falling causes the most injuries during the Winter season. Salt is a very effective way to melt snow and ice, but it does have a negative side effect on your landscape. The salt will actually drain water away from their roots. Use caution when applying salt for de-icing. Avoid spreading onto your landscape, and possibly clean up the overage once the melting has occurred. There are eco-friendly melting agents (CMA) which are biodegradable and non-corrosive. If possible, use this product near landscape borders.

After heavy snow accumulations avoid shaking snow and/or ice off branches. You risk causing additional damage. Tapping limbs with a light broom gently will knock off the extreme weight. Brush the snow in an upward direction off the limbs. If they become coated with ice, leave them alone!

Finally, put out a bird feeder or two for our feathered friends.

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