



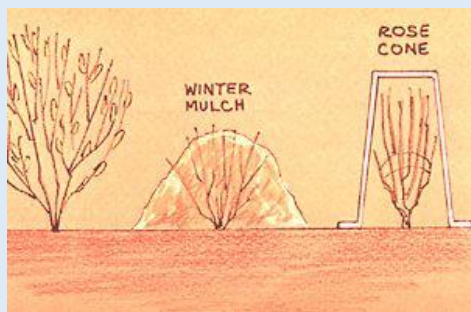
Trowel Talk!

November, 2014

Stemming winter's wrath

The snow is flying and you're not ready! The roses aren't protected, there are perennials that still need to be planted and those spring bulbs are still in the bag. What to do?

Not all roses need to be winterized, but hybrid teas in our area require a fall pruning and some form of protection from the cold. One method is to "trench" the rose canes. Dig a trench from one side of the plant, loosen the plant around the other sides and bend it over into the trench. Then cover the canes with the soil you just dug up. The roots will re-establish next spring when the plant is up-righted.



A rose that has been hilled up and one with a rose-cone. Both have been pruned back for winter.

Roses can also be "hilled up". This involves covering the rose stem with soil. If your soil is frozen, you can buy a bag of peat moss or black earth to pile around the plant. Another option is to buy a

rose cone at a garden centre. These are styrofoam hats for your roses (and other shrubs). Place a rock or brick on top to prevent it from blowing away.



A rose-cone held in place with a brick.

Potted perennials and shrubs need to be kept from freezing and thawing. If you have the final site prepared, you can plant them in that spot as you would any time of year. If not, you can "heel them in". This means sinking the whole pot into the ground. You can add a little soil to the top for extra insulation or just bury them to the same level as the pot.



Pots of perennials sunk in the ground to protect them from the freeze-thaw cycles.

"Heeling in" works if the ground isn't frozen yet, but what if you can't get a spade into the ground? Group potted perennials or shrubs together and cover with a thick fluffy layer of leaves. Oak leaves work best since they don't compact as much, but any leaves will do. And since the ground is frozen, you shouldn't have to worry about mice settling in with your plants for the winter – they

should have found their winter homes long ago.

Alternatively, bring the pot into an unheated but insulated garage. I find the temperature in my garage hovers around 0 degrees celsius, which is a good temperature to keep plants dormant without them freezing completely. If your garage is slightly colder than freezing, put the plants into a styrofoam cooler, stuffed with leaves or pink insulation for extra protection.



A tulip bulb with lots of root growth in late fall.

Spring bulbs need to set roots and then go through a dormant cold period to bring them to bloom. Storing the loose bulbs in the refrigerator does not give them the proper conditions and they will not keep until next year. Bulbs can be planted until the ground freezes completely, so bite the bullet, dress warmly and get out there to plant. If the ground is frozen already, your only option is to pot them up and "force" them into bloom. (An article on forcing bulbs is posted on Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton's [web-site](#).)

It's not too late – don't procrastinate any longer – a little effort now will save your investment and provide you with blooms next year.

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Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily

- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

No advice clinics until next spring.

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Indoor Plants: The Best, the Benefits and the Bugs – January 12 – 7:30pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

RCMP Long Island Campground, Nicolls Island Road, Manotick

Hosted by Manotick Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$5)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit us at: <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>



November TO DO List

- It's time to wrap trees or shrubs with burlap or a perennial blanket (white felt-like cloth) after the ground has frozen and rodents have already found their winter home.
- Clean and oil your tools before putting them away for the winter to prevent rust.
- Houseplants will be going into dormancy or a period of very slow growth because of the lower amounts of light. Reduce their watering and feeding during this time.
- Start planning next year's garden by reviewing the past year's successes and failures. Do some research to find new plants to try next year.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

This month's tip is a DIY project—building an insulated planter box for a balcony or patio area.

For a good sized planter, use a large tote box as the plastic liner. Cut a sheet of high-density foam insulation (at least 2.5cm thick) into pieces that will surround the outer sides and bottom of the tote. Hold the foam box together with duct tape. Then build a wooden frame with inner dimensions that fit the foam wrapped tote.



For the frame, ensure there are supports across the bottom to hold the tote off the ground, but there is no need to sheath the bottom.

Use a wood that will withstand the elements such as cedar or redwood to build the frame and sheath the sides. The wood will also add insulation value. Avoid pressure treated wood.



This insulated planter has been home to a clematis vine for 5 years.

Place the insulated tote into the wooden box. Mark the bottom of the tote for drainage holes, avoiding the bottom supports. Cut drainage holes through the tote and foam.

Trim the top by building a frame out of the same wood as the sheathing, with mitred the corners to finish the planter and hide the insides.

Add feet to the planter to ensure the wood is not sitting in contact with

moisture which could lead to premature rotting.



A large insulated wooden planter box.

Should you want a planter that is larger than a tote, form the foam insulation into a topless box (held together with duct tape). Then line the box with a peel and stick water proofing membrane (used for foundations) overlapping the seams well. Fold the edges of the membrane over the top of the foam. Then frame around the lined foam box with wood as above allowing for drainage and hiding all the lining.

In the spring, fill your planter with soil and plant it with perennials that are suited to the amount of space you've provided. Using plants that are hardy to a zone lower than your hardiness zone will ensure success.