

# BEST PRACTICES



## Winter Lawn & Garden Checklist

With wetter weather and cooler temperatures, winter is the perfect time to tackle some simple maintenance and planning activities for your lawns and gardens! Lawns

- **Tune up time!** Service lawn mowers and sharpen blades.

*Dull blades pull and tear grass, which weakens it and makes it more susceptible to fungus and grass diseases. A sharp mower blade provides a clean cut and allows grass to heal more quickly.*

- **Rake leaves!** Leaves can be composted or spread over garden beds. Small leaves can be mowed and left on the lawn as mulch.

### Trees and Shrubs

- **Prune!** Prune fruit and other trees and shrubs in late January - February, while they are dormant. Make sure to research proper pruning techniques, such as described by WSU Extension: <https://extension.wsu.edu/maritimefruit/pruning-tree-fruit-the-basics/>, or hire a certified arborist to make sure they're pruned correctly.
- **Plant!** "Bare root" trees and shrubs are less expensive, easy to plant, and, when planted in winter, they have more time to establish their roots before summer!
- **Weed, again! Weed, again!** A late winter clean up can remove annual weeds before they go to seed and save a lot of work later!
- **Clean up, again!** In late winter, cut back perennials to make room for new growth.
- **Mulch!** If you did not spread mulch in the fall, mulch now to reduce top soil erosion and to protect plants during cold winter weather. When your plants awaken in the spring your beds will have fewer weeds, leaving you with more time to enjoy the season!

*Mulch grows healthier plants & makes garden maintenance easier!*

- Reduces water use by up to 50%.
- Smothers weed seedlings and makes them easier to pull.
- Prevents soil erosion.
- Keeps soil loose and absorbent, which reduces runoff.
- Feeds plants and beneficial soil life that keeps plants healthy.

### Downspouts and Gutters

- **Clean gutters and drainage downspouts!** Clean twice a year. Inspect for leaks or damage.
- **Do you know where your downspouts discharge?** If they lead to a drywell or other stormwater system feature (like many new homes) you are good to go. If not, direct runoff away from your foundation onto lawns or landscaped areas. Make sure flow is not directed off of your property, towards your neighbor's property, or towards a roadway. Stormwater must be infiltrated where it falls.

- **Add a splash block, rock or perforated pipe** to slow the flow and spread roof runoff into lawns, landscaped areas, rain gardens or rock-filled infiltration trenches.

### Storage Areas

- **Check for and dispose of unwanted pesticides safely!** Take unwanted pesticides and other household hazardous waste materials to HazoHouse located at the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center, 2420 Hogum Bay Road NE, Lacey.
- **Safely store lawncare and other hazardous products!** Store products upright in original containers. Keep away from children and pets. Clean up spills immediately.

For more information on how to safely dispose of household hazardous waste go to:

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/solidwaste/hazardous/haz-home.htm> or call the Thurston County Solid Waste Hotline at 360-867-2912.

### Reporting Spills

An illicit discharge is defined as anything other than stormwater going into the stormwater system. Examples are carpet cleaning waste water, paint, oil, pet waste, sewage, foam, grease and garbage. To report a small-scale spill or illicit discharge, call your jurisdiction's 24-hour hotline. You can do so anonymously.

Olympia: 360-753-8333

Lacey: 360-491-5644

Tumwater: 360-754-4150

Thurston County: 360-867-2099

To report a large-scale spill or illicit discharge, call the WA Dept. of Ecology Spill Hotline: 1-800-OILS-911. Call 911 if there is an immediate threat to life.

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