

"Putting Your Beds to Bed for the Winter" – Workshop

Saturday, October 15th, 2011

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Remember the 5 P's: "Prior Preparation Produces Better Plants and Produce" ☺

CLEAR UP:

The first thing is to **clear out the past year's waste** – especially after all the rot, fungus and blight problems we have had this year – These MUST GO (and not even into the compost – they are to be put in the trash), as you do NOT want to infect next year's growth. Clear **around** perennials and clear **under** trees.

DIG IN:

Secondly **dig in** any or all of the following amendments (mixed together):

Well rotted manure – preferably horse, chicken or cow and/ or

Leaves and Compost from your hot compost bin/pile

CHECK pH:

Add **Sulphur or Lime** – if you find your pH is too low or too high (acid or alkaline)

NOTE: If you are not putting in a **green cover crop** (see below) until the spring or have left it a bit too late to plant now (start in early Fall), leave enough of the above amendments to layer on top of the bed especially if not completely rotted yet. Frost and snow break down the last few strands, leaves etc., so that it is ready for the next spring.

LAYER:

Layering on top is important as it will stop any weeds from growing, will help cut down the ultimate deep freezing of the soil and will create worm space. Worms are vitally important

Suggested layers :

- Direct onto the ground – **newspaper** in strips- try to use non-shiny, non -coloured paper as far as possible – worms can be affected by the chemicals in highly coloured papers. Make sure that all the soil is covered.
- Next layer –**leaves, compost and manure** – I tend to mix the whole lot up (if and when I have it) as you are going to have to mix it all when you dig it in, in the spring. If you can lay your hands on enough, make it at least 6 inches deep, and make sure you cover the paper completely.
- Finally a layer of **wetted leaves**(so they don't blow away) or even a layer of **horticultural fleece**.

GREEN COVER CROPS:

If you went the green cover crop route, and you want to dig it in now, dig it in to a depth of 5-6 inches deep and then layer on top of it. If you want to leave it over winter and there are few fall planted green manures that will last the blast of 25 below, then just cover it over with something like straw. Don't use hay – there are too many weeds and seeds in it, especially this year.

Green Cover crops: Winter wheat or rye, Buckwheat - A quickly maturing plant, buckwheat bushes out fast and produces a prodigious amount of biomass, creating a ground canopy that chokes out weeds (which rob other crops of nutrition).

NEW TREES: (I will acknowledge this came from Scott's Nursery)

Starting again with layers of (un-chopped up this time) newspaper to a depth of at least 2 inches, followed by various layers of straw, leaves, manure to make up another 6 inches. Then fix horticultural fleece up the stem of the tree to about 18 inches height, and to cover the mound you have made. The mound ought to stretch about 2 feet around the tree – also slightly depends on the size of the tree- it should cover the roots completely.

STRAWBERRIES AND TENDER PLANTS:

Strawberries and other slightly tender plants- tuck straw tightly around them so that no weeds come through in spring and cover with at least 4-6 inches of fairly loose straw once the bad frosts start. I cover my lavender and some of the supposedly hardy herbs, as well as my strawberries.

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