

Hide shrubs from old man winter

By MARGE ALPERN

We can say goodbye to fall and accept the reality of winter. But only after all of the leaves have been raked, the bird feeders installed, the shed cleaned out, the vegetable and flower garden plowed and fire wood piled up close to the house.

With the critical fuel situation, our fireplaces are rapidly becoming more than things of beauty. Everyone is burning wood.

Well, save the ashes, they are a valuable fertilizer. Wood ash contains 1 percent phosphorus, 25 percent calcium and 5-10 percent potash.

The heavy hardwoods give the best heat and are also the richest in potash. Potash builds strong plant tissue and aids disease and drought resistance. It is essential for producing richly colored flowers and fruits.

You can spread wood ashes on the soil at any time of year. Mix it with the soil or mulch.

During the winter when it is not practical to apply the ashes, store them in a weatherproof can outside until spring. However, since wood ashes are alkaline, keep them away from acid-loving plants such as rhododendron and azaleas.

The soil in my garden tends to be quite acid, but a generous spread of ash around lilac bushes, which need an alkaline soil to produce blooms, seems to counteract the naturally high acidity.

I also suggest you save some ash for pest control. Sprinkle it on the ground under hosta plants. Snails and slugs literally dry up when they encounter a pile of wood ash.

WE OFTEN forget that mature trees and shrubs need feeding. Old trees, especially, will be given a new lease on life and a fresh start in spring by fertilizer applied annually in very late autumn just before the ground freezes solid.

Contrary to popular belief, recent research shows that this late application works very well on trees and shrubs. Growth on the upper portion of plants stops because of the cold, but the roots are still active until the ground is frozen solid.

Nutrients are absorbed and stored in the roots for the initial spring flush of growth. Spring addition of fertilizer, no matter how early, will produce much later results because most of the growth is initially from food stored in the plant tissue over the winter.

Experts recommend a high nitrogen formula, such as 10-6-4 or 15-5-5. Spread this a few feet away from the trunk to several feet beyond the drip line of the branches at the rate of 4 to 6 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet and water it in well.

While you're feeding your shrubs and trees, it is a good time to cut off old canes and trim back overgrown branches. Our yard always seems to present grooming jobs, regardless of the season.

Winter-kill is a problem to all gardeners in our climatic zone (zone 5). As a general rule, only the tips of plants are winter-killed. Semi-hardy plants and young plants are most frequently affected.

Winter-kill can be prevented to a considerable extent by protecting susceptible plants with such materials as

leaves, straw, burlap and canvas, or chemical anti-desiccants.

Microfoam is a new highly efficient flexible insulator made of Styrofoam-like material. Its newest use is to protect roses over the winter.

Everyone seems to have their own technique of protecting roses through the snow months. I prefer mounding soil about 6-8 inches high around the base.

Do not dig the soil up around the bush. Take fresh soil from the compost or elsewhere in the garden.

After a hard freeze, perhaps in the middle of December, I cut the shoots down to about 12 or 14 inches from the base and then cover the whole bush with ground leaves.

However, this year instead of using ground leaves, I am going to experiment with insulating the rose bushes with Microfoam. Robert Gouin of the University of Maryland has studies that show that wrapped roses went through the severe 1976-77 winter completely free of injury. I have never had 100 percent survival success with the ground leaves.

If you have trouble buying Microfoam locally, write to Specialty Markets Division, Du Pont Co., Wilmington, Del. 19888.

IT IS NOT just the "snow and the blow" that injures newly planted evergreens, though. What these growers really need is a light covering to protect them from the winter sun's rays.

Boxwood, one of the most valuable plants for hedges, when established will thrive for years. However, our harsh winters are very hard on them. Complete protection with the slats of snow fencing is imperative.

The burlap wrapping commonly seen around newly planted foundation shrubs is admittedly unattractive. This year, to protect our new young dwarf Alberta spruce, we will stake some spruce tree tops directly in front of them. The evergreen boughs and tops available at the Farmer's Market this month work very well.

Spruce or pine boughs make ideal winter coats for low-growing broad leaf evergreens like azaleas or Pieris japonica. You can also cover perennial beds with these boughs, although hemlock which is lighter would probably be a little kinder to the tender spring shoots in April.

Save a few boughs to fill any large permanent pots you may have sitting on a terrace. The pots look pretty bleak as reminders of summer days if they are left empty and permanent plantings of dwarf evergreens in them do not usually last through more than one winter. Yearly replacement of fresh boughs is much more satisfactory.

The anti-desiccant, Wilt-Pruf, is particularly useful to protect the tall, broad leaf evergreens that don't lend themselves to being covered with boughs. If you buy a spray can of Wilt-Pruf, be sure you try it first. It clogs up very easily. Follow the directions carefully.

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CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS CITY COUNCIL MEETING NOVEMBER 19, 1979

The City Council of the City of Farmington Hills held a special meeting at the City Hall on November 19, 1979. Mayor Pro-Tem Deacon opened the meeting at 7:30 o'clock P.M. Councilmembers present were: Soronen, Jones, Smith, Alkatieb and Delam. Oppenheimer absent. Others present were: City Manager Savage, City Clerk Cairns and City Attorney Donohue.

Hearing on Necessity for Briar Hill Road Improvement was held and approval was given to the Notice of Intent to Issue Bonds in the amount of \$131,160.

After the Court Hearing, Council confirmed the Special Assessment Roll for Water Improvement in Greening, Burbank to Twelve Mile Road in the amount of \$137,520.

The show cause hearing for the demolition of a building at 21411 Jefferson under Section 25.120 of the City Code was adjourned until December 17, 1979.

Amendatory Ordinance #02-74, Article 2A, Section 100A, Area and Bulk Requirements and Ordinance #02-72, Article 2A, Section 100A, Paragraph 4a and 4b, conditions for maps and site plans to amend the Farmington Hills Zoning Ordinance were introduced.

Council approved Tentative Preliminary Plan for "Kendall-Y" Section 10.

Third amendment to the Agreement for Planned Residential Development for Ramblewood in Section 5 was approved.

Michigan National Bank's bid was accepted for the sale of the \$105,000 Stonewood Court Road Improvement Bond, the \$58,000 Hemlock Road Improvement Bond and the \$26,000 Quail Hollow Road Improvement Bond Issues.

Upon motion meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
FLOYD A. CAIRNS, City Clerk
Approved by: Mayor Pro-Tem Deacon

Publish: November 29, 1979

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