



# How-To: **WINTERIZING THE GARDEN**

*In temperate climates, gardens go dormant for the winter months. Learn how to prepare your garden for the winter and get a head start on next year's growing season.*



A STUDENT PLACES STRAW MULCH ON A GARDEN BED AT PROPEL HOMESTEAD



MULCHED RAISED BEDS, READY FOR WINTER, AT THE FRICK KITCHEN GARDEN

## **TAKE SOME PHOTOS AND NOTES**

Though your garden may seem unforgettable now, it is amazing what a winter season can erase from memory as well as from the garden. Take the opportunity to make a record of what was planted where. If you have time, include notes about crops or varieties that did well or didn't. If you had problems with diseases or pests, write down the details. These notes will help with your seed order or seedling selection for next year!

## **AFTER THE FIRST HEAVY FROST, REMOVE ANNUAL PLANTS THAT HAVE STOPPED PRODUCING**

Most vegetables and some herbs are annual, meaning they only live one year in this climate. They won't produce any more this year, and the winter will completely kill them. If the plants you pull are free from pests and disease, it's fine to compost them.

## **CLEAN UP PERENNIALS**

Some herbs and fruits like raspberries and strawberries are perennial. This means they will go dormant over the winter and grow again next spring. Prune off any dead areas and add a couple inches of mulch underneath your plants. Be careful not to prune excessively or fertilize your plants, as these both encourage rapid, tender growth. This new growth is vulnerable in the winter and may die, stressing or killing the whole plant.

## **COVER SENSITIVE PLANTS OR BRING THEM INSIDE**

Some sensitive crops like figs will usually survive the winter if they are bundled in straw and burlap. Tender perennials like rosemary and chard may overwinter if they are heavily mulched. Or, pot up small plants and bring them inside to a South or West facing window. Keep these potted plants somewhat dry, as they will go dormant in the low light of winter. As the days grow longer, begin watering normally.

## **RAKE UP DEBRIS**

Rake and remove any fallen leaves or fruits and vegetables from the plants you've removed. This important step helps to keep pests and disease from overwintering in the soil.



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EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD  
PITTSBURGH STUDENTS PLANT  
COVER CROPS AT  
COLFAX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## ADD COMPOST AND AMENDMENTS, AND COVER THE SOIL WITH MULCH

Adding soil-building materials now gets a jump-start on spring. Straw, lawn clippings, or raked leaves are good mulch options and help keep soil, compost, and amendments from washing away.

## CONSIDER PLANTING COVER CROPS

Cover crops are living mulches: crops that are grown for their ability to hold the soil in place and add nutrients to the soil. In the fall, only a few cover crops can be successfully planted, and they are perennial varieties that will not die over the winter. Therefore, only plant these cover crops if you have a good plan for tilling them back into the soil in the spring. It can be quite frustrating to have to deal with a thick, lush bed of rye where you want to plant peas! Rye and clover are good cover crops to plant now, if you have a plan to manage them in the spring.

## LEAVE A SPACE FOR GARLIC

If you'd like to plant garlic in your garden, add compost to the area where you plan to plant it. Garlic growth relies on a winter dormant period. It should be planted in November or early December, before the ground freezes. It will be ready to harvest in June-July, the next summer.