



NOVEMBER 2011

Putting Your Yard Away for Winter

By Karen Mayne

Late fall is a good time to put your yard away for the winter. Doing these chores before the busy holiday season will ensure that you have a nice looking and safe property throughout the winter and into the spring. The cool weather of November makes tackling these projects a little easier.

We all like to look at the well maintained yards of our neighborhood . which is one of the reasons we love living in Suburban Acres. Flora the Mermaid, our civic league mascot, graces a yard each month to honor someone who does an especially good job of keeping a beautiful yard. Nicely landscaped yards help maintain the appearance of our neighborhood, improve security, and keep home values up. In fact, studies show that nice landscaping can increase the value of a home when it comes time to sell.

Here are some things to do to get your yard and house ready for the winter:

Prune back overgrown shrubs around doors and windows. Light pruning of bushes too close to the house or blocking windows will improve security and give a tidy, lived in look to your house during the dark days of winter.

Edge the grass along sidewalks. This will prevent tripping hazards for neighbors and guests (and our postal carriers), and will make it easier to clear snow during the winter. Property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalk and grassy area between the sidewalk and the street in front of their property. If street trees have low limbs that are dangerous to walkers or block views at stop signs, the City is responsible for fixing these problems. Call the Norfolk Cares Assistance Center at 757-664-6510 (or use their on-line reporting form at www.Norfolk.gov/311CallCenter) to report the problem. You can also call the Cares Center to report sidewalk cracks and tree root lifting or pothole problems.

Mulch fallen leaves back into the grass with your lawn mower for a free fertilizer boost. Alternatively, you can bag leaves with your lawn mower attachment to use as mulch in flower beds or add to your compost pile. Never put leaves in the street . the leaves will clog storm drains, causing street flooding and polluting the Lafayette River.

Clean leaves and pine straw out of gutters and off roofs. With winter rains approaching, free flowing gutters will ensure no rainwater back-ups, which could lead to leaks around your lower roof and potential ice dam problems in freezing weather. Heavy accumulations of pine straw can weigh down roofs and contribute to roof leaks.

Caulk and paint windows, doors, and trim. This will stop air leaks into the house and will ensure that wood trim remains solid and strong and doesn't rot.

While many of us can do these chores ourselves, other folks may not have the time or ability to tackle them. What to do? Often, neighborhood teens are looking for odd jobs and may be able to do these projects for you. Or ask neighbors who they use for their lawn care service. Some churches, military units, and social organizations have programs to help out members with handyman services.

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