



## **PLACE MULCH IN LANDSCAPES TO CREATE NATURAL AREAS**



Many homeowners desire a low-maintenance landscape. Maintenance, time and expense are all factors to consider when developing a landscape plan.

A natural, low-maintenance landscape can be easily accomplished with a 3- to 4-inch layer of organic mulch, like pine needles, decayed sawdust or pine straw. However, it should not detract from the overall appearance of the landscape.

Choose mulch that cannot be easily disturbed by wind or erosion. Define the area with a crisp boundary so grass won't grow over into the mulch, or mulch won't spill out into the grass.

When designing the area, let existing trees influence the design. Don't be stingy with the mulch and make the area too small by cutting the boundaries close to the tree trunks. Incorporate at least half of the tree's drip-line area on large trees and all of this space on smaller trees.

If you're naturalizing an area because of a poor stand of grass under the trees, it's probably because of too much shade and tree root competition. A general rule to remember is to naturalize all areas that receive 50 percent shade at all times.

Use as many free-flowing curves as possible in these projects. Try not to create boundaries that project too abruptly, as they will not appear natural and will create hard to maintain areas.

Before spreading the mulch, try to remove all bermudagrass and other perennials, fescue, nutgrass or broadleaf weeds. A 3- to 4-inch layer of mulch will control weeds, but not by just piling it on top. Several herbicides are effective for home use for weeds or grasses.

Over the last few years the use of black plastic has declined, while the use of the various geotextile fabrics has increased. Plastic material does not allow moisture to penetrate and also inhibits a free exchange of oxygen. These factors can cause problems for many ornamentals and cause weak plants to die during a stress period. Landscape fabrics will allow moisture penetration as well as promote oxygen exchange. The latest research rates the usefulness of landscape fabrics very highly in conjunction with organic mulches.

For more assistance on creating a landscape plan, see the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension publications website at [www.caes.uga.edu/publications/](http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/).

## FALL GARDEN OR NOT, THERE ARE PLENTY OF WINTER GARDENING CHORES

Gardeners who chose not to grow cool season crops may be getting restless as temperatures drop and the growing season comes to an end. Well, a gardener's work is never done. Here are a few garden chores that can be accomplished over the next few months.



Now is a great time to test the soil. Developing and maintaining productive soils begins with soil testing. Whether it is for your lawn, flowerbed or vegetable garden, University of Georgia soil test results will reveal the soil's actual nutrient status. Follow the test's recommendations for ideal soil in your spring garden.

Do you have an abundance of leaves on your property? Chop them up and add them to your garden as a mulch, or work them in to improve the soil's organic matter. Unchopped or shredded leaves can also be used, but they tend to mat down and will not breakdown as rapidly. Leaves can also be added to your compost pile to provide a carbon element.

Speaking of compost piles, work off some of those delicious holiday desserts by grabbing a shovel or pick and giving your compost pile a thorough turn. This will speed the decomposition process and add needed air and circulation to the pile.

While you have that shovel or pick handy, look at it closely. Does the handle appear to be rotting or cracking? If the handle is beginning to crack or turn gray, sand it down and apply a coat of marine or outdoor varnish to preserve the life of the handle.

Is the shovelhead showing rust or wear? Take the time now to clean, sharpen and repair your garden tools and you will be glad when spring rolls back around. Remove caked on dirt with a wire brush and rinse and dry tools thoroughly.

Apply lubricating oil to any working parts on pruning shears or saws, and sharpen the blades. To sharpen properly, place the tool in a vise and sharpen away from the tool's head, on the push-stroke side only.

Proper storage of gardening tools will extend their life. My worst nightmare is when my son "borrows" my lopping shears to clear a path in the back woods. Weeks later when I am looking for them to prune that overgrown Cleyera, I find them rusting in the dirt on that new path in the back woods.

Don't let this happen to your tools. Keep them out of the weather in a shed or garage in a neat and orderly fashion. This will not only save you a lot of frustration when it comes time to use them, but your storage space will be maximized -- making room for that latest and greatest gardening tools on your Christmas list.

# Cold Damage to Ornamental Plants

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Cold damage to ornamental plants can be a problem during the winter in the Georgia landscape. This is true whether you live in the upper elevations of the mountains or in the most southern regions of the state..

During the summer months, ornamental plants are actively growing and would be severely injured by even the slightest frost. During the late summer and early fall, the plants must prepare themselves for winter through a process called cold acclimation. This process is initiated by the cooler

temperatures and shorter day lengths that naturally occur at this time of the year.

**Covering and Heating** Protect plants in containers either by placing them inside a protective structure (house, garage, greenhouse or shed) or by placing a protective covering over them. Container plants are especially susceptible to cold temperatures; their roots are more exposed because they are above ground. Plants with roots that are damaged by cold temperatures may not show immediate signs of damage; these plants will show signs of stress when temperatures rise and the demand for water from the roots is greater.

Push together container plants that are left outside and mulch or cover them to decrease heat loss from the sides of the containers. Wrap the bases of the containers in plastic, burlap or blankets to reduce heat loss.

Plants growing close to the ground are usually protected by heat radiating from the soil. Tall, more open plants do not receive as much radiating heat and are not as protected from the cold. Mulching helps reduce heat loss of the soil, thus minimizing temperature fluctuations. Protecting the roots of tender perennials may also be beneficial for them to survive the cold and come back in the spring.

Covering your plants with sheets, blankets or cardboard boxes helps protect them from low temperature injury. Plastic sheeting is not recommended; the plant can heat up rapidly as temperatures rise be damaged). Remove the cover and provide ventilation during the day to allow the release of the heat that is trapped by solar radiation. You can build a frame from PVC or similar material to keep the cover from coming in contact with the plant and possibly breaking leaves and stems.

**After a Freeze** To determine if your plants have been damaged by the cold, wait several days after a freeze and remove several buds, stems and leaves (if present) from the plant. Use a sharp knife or razor blade to cut a cross section of the bud's top. If there is any discoloration in the bud, they have been damaged.

Waiting to prune after freezes have passed will guard against removing living wood. If localized damage has occurred to the foliage or stems, prune several inches below the injured tissue. Although injured buds may reduce or eliminate flowering or leaf emergence in the spring, no pruning is necessary.

For the full article see <http://www.ugaurbanag.com/content/cold-damage-ornamental-plants>

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## TACKLE EROSION WITH GRASSES, LANDSCAPE PLANTS AND TERRACES



It is estimated that 25 billion tons of soil are lost every year due to erosion. Since it takes 500 years to replace just one inch of top soil, anything that helps to prevent erosion will benefit future generations.

There are several ways to prevent erosion in the home landscape, but the most important thing you can do is cover the soil with vegetation or mulch.

A grass lawn is one of the quickest and easiest ways to add vegetation to a large area. Sod or quick growing grass seed is often planted as a temporary measure until other landscape plants, trees and shrubs are established. However, some areas are either too shady or too steep for grass to grow well. In spots that receive less than four hours of sunlight per day, trying to grow grass is a waste of time. Grass can grow on steep slopes, but maintaining it with a lawnmower may become difficult or impractical.



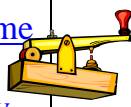


In these challenging situations, consider establishing alternative ground cover plants, trees or shrubs that are best adapted to the site. The roots of these plants will help hold the soil in place and minimize erosion.

There are many ground covers that can be planted to cover larger areas fairly quickly while not breaking your landscape budget. Some favorites include junipers, Japanese spurge, Asiatic jasmine, autumn fern, bugleweed, cast-iron plant, Carolina jessamine, creeping raspberry, daylilies, Japanese plum yew, evergreen candytuft, liriopse, mondo grass, rosemary, St. John's wort and phlox. Do your homework and determine which plants are best suited for sunny versus shady areas.

The best time to install ground cover plants, and all new plants for that matter, is in the fall or winter months. Remember to mulch around these plants to fill in the gaps and cover any exposed soil. Any mulch type is better than no mulch at all. Mulch selection on steep slopes may be limited to either pine straw or finely shredded wood mulches, which tend to stay in place better than other types. Wood chips and pine bark nuggets tend to float away with heavy rains.

In areas that are difficult to access, it may be necessary to install an earthen ridge or terrace, which will catch runoff water, let it soak into the ground and deliver it safely to the bottom of a hillside with minimal erosion. Terraces should be installed on a hillside on the contour at regular intervals to create shorter slopes that will slow down the force of the water. Fairly level areas between the slopes could include lawn grass surrounded by a boarder of landscape plants. A more expensive and permanent approach would be to add retaining walls built of stones, blocks or landscape timbers.

The average homeowner should not tackle retaining walls higher than a foot or two. Hire a professional landscape contractor with the proper equipment and expertise for these larger jobs.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>JANUARY 2013</b>		1 	2	3	4	5 <a href="#">National Bean Day</a>
<b>National Radon Month</b>						
6	7 	8 Elvis Presley Birthday	9	10	11 <a href="#">Learn Your Name in Morse Code Day</a>	12 
<b>Artichoke &amp; Asparagus Month</b>		<b>Apples &amp; Apricots Month</b>		13 14 15 16 17 18 19 		
20	21 	22	23 <a href="#">National Pie Day</a>	24 <a href="#">National Peanut Butter Day</a>	25 26 <b>National Soup Month</b>	
<b>National Tubers &amp; Dried Fruit Month</b>		<b>National Oatmeal Month</b>				<b>National Mail Order Gardening Month</b>
27	28	29	30	31		

### Low Allergenic Potential Word Search

T P D M M B B I A X A P B B C I N T E  
 U Z I U A O A I B M P Y I X A U J L N  
 O H D T X R L Z A E N R O H T W A H I  
 M E Y W T O I R U W A A A R A V K E B  
 S G O D N O A G T W N C U A L S N J M  
 F O W G S N S V O X Z A J C P H H Z U  
 D I A R T S I P Q L I N D C A W O H L  
 K M A H J C O F O Y D T D U B D E R O  
 V N U A P Z A M X R C H W Y Y X D V C  
 W S P O P P Y L H E U A P O M L E I P  
 G E R A N I U M D S Y M F A L M U N W  
 F J N Q F O P A R R I Y M J N L S C L  
 H E U A G I R Q V C H R M L C S I A E  
 N P Z N P E I L B E E S I G E U Y W H  
 P A S G P R G Q P G W V D Q D A F Z R

- AMARANTHUS
- BOXWOOD
- CATALPA
- CEDAR
- COLUMBINE
- ELM
- GERANIUM
- HAWTHORNE
- IRISH MOSS
- MAGNOLIA
- MARIGOLD
- PANSY
- PITTOSPORUM
- POPPY
- PYRACANTHA
- RED BUD
- SEDUM
- VINCA
- WILLOW
- YUCCA

### **Healthy One Pot Meals, Soups and Stews-**

Thursday, January 24, 2013 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Materials fee: \$12.00 (\$15.00 at door)

### **Homemaker's Club – Candy Bouquets**

Monday, February 11, 2013 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Materials fee: \$13.00 (\$15.00 at door)

### **Diabetes Cooking School-**

Tuesdays, March 5, 12, and 19, 2013 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Free to the public

### **Yeast Breads- How to Eat Healthier, Homemade Breads and Save Money Too!**

Thursday, March 14, 2013 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Materials fee: \$12.00 (\$15.00 at door)

### **Healthy & Happy Easter Dinner: On Time and Under Budget!**

Tuesday, March 28, 2013 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Materials fee: \$12.00 (\$15.00 at door)

Class limit: 12 participants

*ALL CLASSES WILL BE AT THE DOUGHERTY COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
OFFICE IN THE CANDY ROOM @ 125 PINE AVENUE IN DOWNTOWN ALBANY*

## **★ Cancer Prevention School ★**

**Dougherty County Cooperative Extension Office in the Candy Room**

**★ 10:00 am to 12:00 am ★ Tuesdays, February 19 and 26, 2013 ★**

**FREE TO THE PUBLIC – RECIPE TASTING & RECIPE BOOKLETS**



**Emphasis will be on mammograms, colonoscopies and pap smears for women over the age of 65 and the importance of regular testing.**

**Sponsored by Dougherty County Cooperative Extension, the American Cancer Society, and the Dougherty County Health Department**