

## FALL HOME &amp; GARDEN | LANDSCAPING

# Preparing Flower Beds for Winter

Spring brings warmth and an abundance of beautiful flowers, but this gorgeous transformation doesn't happen on its own.

The preparation for that season really starts in the fall, as we protect our flower beds from winter.

Many of our flowers don't die but go into a dormancy period. The promise of life and beauty still remains unseen. All the while, those plants are growing new roots and absorbing nutrients and moisture from the soil.

While the plants do their jobs, it's up to us to prepare the environment around them to make sure everything blooms beautifully in the spring.

## BASIC STEPS

The most basic tasks for preparing a flower bed for winter are cleaning up and covering the soil. Depending on the size of your area, this can be a simple task. For those of us with supersized flower beds, this can be quite the challenge.

Sometimes the professionals need to make an appearance. Your local lawn and garden care specialist will be able to help you plan your preparation activities as you work together to protect your hard-earned landscape beauty.

They also will be able to guide you through various techniques and treat-

ments that can help your plants come back even stronger next year.

## CLEAN UP

When taking on your flower bed preparations yourself, the first step is to clear out dead foliage. Put on your gardening gloves and remove any weeds or dead flowers. These materials can be composted and re-used as fertilizer for next year's plants. Removing this foliage also can keep pesky bugs and eggs from setting up camp this fall.

Always make sure you know which plants are perennials (your flowers that come back year after year). Pulling them is a mistake that can lead to sparse spots in next year's bed.

## COVER UP

After cleaning up your area, it's time to cover the soil. Use mulch or even cover crops to achieve this goal. Leaves can make for great mulch, so collect them and add them to your compost pile.

There are lots of plants that can be used as cover crops; just ask your local home improvement store or nursery for the best options for you area.

