



# LANDSCAPE DESIGNS, INC

A COMPREHENSIVE LANDSCAPE DESIGN COMPANY

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## AUTUMN MULCHING

For years I have endorsed and practiced the application of our double shredded bark mulches just before the onset of winter. I have been known to do this the day before a November or even December snowfall.

Here's what I recommend and have been doing in my and many other clients' gardens for many years.

Sometime in LATE October into Late November, cut down to near ground level, anything that is not a woody ornamental or has evergreen foliage in the winter. Typically, the following evergreen or near evergreen herbaceous perennials should not be heavily mulched over the winter. Some, of the following are also noted with an \*. These should have their dead stems removed, and **only** very lightly have their green foliar basal rosettes covered by mulch if at all. They need to be at least partly exposed to light over the winter. If you do cover any of the following with mulch, it should be removed sometime in late March to early April. Heavy mulching is known to kill many of the following.

Achillea - Yarrow *	Geranium cinereum	Phlox subulata - Phlox
Ajuga - Bugle	Goniolimon - Statice	Polystichum - Christmas Fern
Alcea - Hollyhock *	Goodyera - Orchid	Primula - Primrose
Alchemilla- Lady's Mantle	Helenium - Helen's Flower *	Pulmonaria - Lungworts
Alyssum - Basket of Gold	Helianthemum - Rock Rose	Rudbeckia - Black-Eyed Susan
Antennaria - Pussytoes	Helleborus - Hellebore	Salvia - Salvia *
Asarum - Evergreen Gingers	Heuchera - Coralbells et all	Saxifraga
Aster - Aster *	Heucherella - Foamy Bells	Sedum - Evergreen types
Boltonia - Bolton's Aster *	Iris cristata - Crested Iris	Sempervivum - Hens & Chicks
Brunnera - Siberian Forget-me-Not	Iris tectorum - Roof Iris	Solidago - Goldenrod
Campanula - Bellflowers *	Iris verna - Spring Iris	Spiranthes cernua
Chelone - Turtle Head Flower *	Iris - Bearded Iris	Stachys - Lambs Ear
Chrysogonum - Goldenstar	Jovibarba - Jovibarba	Thymus - Thyme
Coreopsis - Tickseed *	Lamium - Lamium	Tiarella - Foam Flowers
Chrysanthemum - Mum *	Lavandula - Lavender	Vinca - Periwinkle
Dendranthemum - Mum *	Leotopodium - Edelweiss	Waldsteinia - Barren Strawberry
Dianthus - Pinks	Liriope - Lilytuft	
Dryopteris marginalis -Evergreen Woodland Fern	Lysimachia - Pennywort	
Duchesnea - Barren Strawberry	Oenothera - Sundrops	...and any others, with evergreen winter foliage
Echinacea - Coneflower *	Ophiopogon - Mondo Grass	
Galeobdolon - Archangel	Oreostachys - Dunce Caps	
Geranium macrorrhizum	Pachysandra - Spurge, including native	
	Phlox procumbens - Phlox	
	Phlox stolonifera - Phlox	

If the herbaceous perennials have particular winter interest to you, such as *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' & *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Forester', leave the heads. No need to totally pillage the garden.

Before you cut the stems of all of your native garden stems completely off, a few plants have stems that provide wintering habitat for certain bees. Leaving 8-24" of the following plant stems will ensure overwintering habitat.

Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

Joe pyeweed (*Eutrochium purpureum*)

Coneflower (*Echinacea*, sp.)

Sunflowers (*Helianthus*, sp.)

Blazing star (*Liatris*, sp.)

Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa* and other *Monarda*, sp.)

Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum*, sp.)

Goldenrod (*Solidago*, *Oligoneuron*, *Euthamia*, sp.)

Aster (*Symphyotricum*, *Ionactis*, sp.)

Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)

For more information: <https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/18-014.pdf>

Once you have cut off the dead foliage, scapes, stems etc, just lay them in the garden in the locations where you cut them. ON plants that have bushy stems, such as *Symphyotricum*, break or cut them into smaller pieces.

Compost or dispose of the excess.

If they have diseases, they should have been cut off and disposed of, long before this time. Also, unless the plant is of strong sentimental value or totally awesome yet disease prone, get rid of it and replace it with one of the more disease resistant cultivars or a different type of plant. I can't think of another reason to keep disease prone plants in the garden.

Also, any NATURAL leaf-drop from the surrounding trees and shrubs, I allow to remain on the garden. I'm not talking about naturally wind-blown piles or leaves piled feet deep in the beds or forest, from their removal from your lawn and other surfaces. I am talking about what would naturally fall if the plants were growing in a forested environment. Chances are the plants that you have growing in your shady environments evolved in forested environments. Yes, if the leaves become dense on those listed above, damage often occurs. Yet, I have seen *Pachysandra* and *Vinca* performing admirably in *Quercus* – Oak & *Acer* – Maple forests.

Naturalized forest environments should never have their autumn leaves removed.

And rarely will they require any additional mulch – except maybe around some newly planted specimens or on the paths and sitting areas.

Then apply our PLGF fertilizer to the entire landscape. See our website for more information.

Next, cover everything, leaves, stems, scapes, old flowers etc, except for those listed above, with about one-half inch to one inch of double or twice shredded oak or other mixed hardwood BARK mulch. Do not use wood chips. With the above listed perennials, an even lighter or less than a one-half inch application will not harm them. Actually, it will protect them from the vagaries of the winter's sun, since we haven't received reliable snow cover for many years.

In rock gardens using gravel mulches, mulching with bark mulch is not recommended.

For certain winter sun sensitive plants such as, *Calluna*, *Doboeicia*, *Empetrum*, *Erica*, *Lavandula*, *Thymus* and newly planted (within this season or the past 3 years) coniferous evergreens, including *Abies koreana*, *Cephalotaxus*, *Chamaecyparis*, *Pinus*, *Picea*, *Thuja*, *Thujopsis*, *Tsuga*, especially the dwarf and miniature ones, cover with a couple layers of white nursery or white landscaping fabric. This will protect them from the

vagaries of the winter sun when and where lack of snow cover is the norm. Covering many gravel-mulched rock garden plants with white nursery fabrics is also worth a try and has proven to be quite beneficial. Use rocks, giant landscape staples or wooden clothes pins to hold the fabric in place.

The autumn mulching woody ornamentals is also recommended at the same time.

Mulching around your tree and shrubs should never be more than 2-3" thick/deep. Often if you mulch deeper, you can actually create habitat for mice and other vermin – inviting them to cozy environments with tender bark from your delicious specimen conifers, miniature elms and willows – for their dining pleasure and your angst...

If you apply much too thick, you can also kill your desirable plants.

An excessive layer of mulch can actually prevent water penetration, resulting in dry soils beneath the mulch and water starved plants.

For some reason, I think, people believe mulch can tell the difference between a non-desirable and a desirable plant. Sorry to inform you, but mulch just cannot do that.

Now for the results of your Autumn work.

In the Spring, once the ground has thawed about 6 inches, remove the nursery fabric, dry, and store for next winter. Gently brush aside or blow off the mulch from the above listed herbaceous perennials. Cut down any grasses and other herbaceous perennials that have had their winter interest.

Treat the garden with Pendulum Pre-M. See our web site for further information.

You are now ready for Spring.

The dead leaves, stems, scapes, etc are composting in situ, under the thin layer of bark mulch.

No need to tiptoe through the garden wondering if you're stepping on newly emerging plants.

You may now relax and go about other Spring chores such as cleaning out the garage while enjoying your Spring Garden.

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