



CNY Stormwater Coalition

Gardens and Gutters

A Central New Yorker's Guide to Managing Stormwater Runoff

Volume 3 Issue 4

Winter 2015

Winter Stormwater Pollution Solutions

Inside this issue:

- Northeast Gardener's December Checklist 2
- Cutoff Date for Fertilizing Lawns 3
- Maintaining a Healthy Landscape: What You Need to Know About Salt 3
- CNY Stormwater Coalition Needs Your Help 5

Protecting water quality is a four season job! Winter may change the way we view and interact with our waterways, but not the way we impact their health.

Because the ground will be frozen over for the next few months, it will lose its ability to absorb and filter pollutants during any snow melt events that might occur. The pollutants that accumulate in our snow banks all winter will eventually wash into our stormwater systems, lakes, and streams next spring.

There are many simple steps that we can all take to reduce the springtime pollutant load now, and throughout the rest of the winter season.

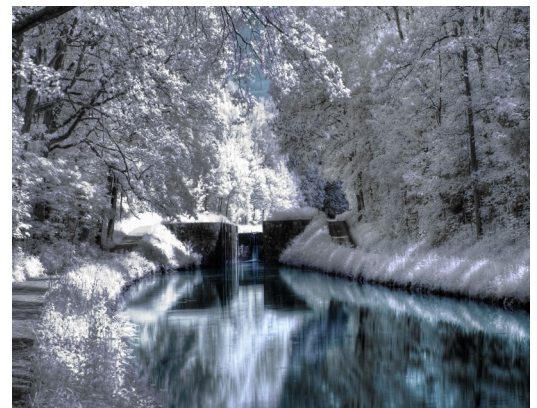
Before the worst weather sets in, take the time to collect the last leaves that may have accumulated in the storm drain or catch basin in front of your house. Not only will this help keep melting snow from pooling and refreezing during brief warm ups, but it will help reduce the amount of phosphorus and organic matter that enters our waterways next spring.

Picking up pet waste is just as important in the winter months as it is in the warmer months. Animal waste is a significant source of nutrients, bacteria and disease. Cooler temperatures and frozen snow slow the decay process. Adopting an "out of sight, out of mind" approach to pet waste management this winter will result in a very unpleasant and unhealthy landscape once the spring thaw sets in.

Don't feed the geese! By feeding them, you're encouraging them to stick around instead of migrating to find food for themselves. Their waste is extremely detrimental to our waterways. It's also healthier for the geese to feed themselves, without handouts from humans.

If you are doing earthwork in the winter, remember to maintain your erosion and sediment control practices to keep soil and other pollutants on your site and out of streams and lakes.

Salt can be harmful to plants, aquatic life and drinking water supplies. Consider using a non-toxic, biodegradable ice melt product instead of salt. These products can be more expensive than salt, but they are less harmful to the environment, and because they frequently have residual effects that prevent or delay new ice from forming, you may not need to use the product as frequently as salt.



Northeast Gardener's December Checklist

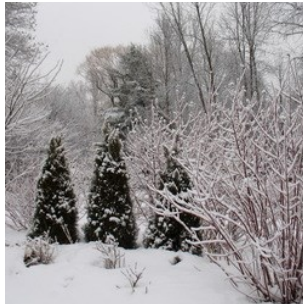
The following article by Charlotte Albers is provided courtesy of *houzz.com*

WILDLIFE AND EVERGREENS PROVIDE PLENTY OF WINTER INTEREST, BUT BARER VIEWS OFFER THEIR OWN BENEFITS.

It's the last month of a busy year. Most of us have stashed away gloves and tools for the season, and some can kick off their boots by a toasty fire to warm their tired limbs. While our gardens sleep under a blanket of mulch and snow and don't need attention, there are still plenty of things to think about and do.

For starters, look at the landscape, noticing its fundamental outline and shapes. Tall or short deciduous trees, shrubs and evergreens comprise vertical walls, crucial focal points in the winter garden. With the leaves off deciduous woody plants, the architecture becomes apparent, and masses of shrubs or specimen trees take on new character—especially if they've got interesting bark, like the multistemmed redbud or yellow dogwood, or the Japanese coral bark maple (zones 5—8), an outstanding cultivar with unusual coloration.

With everything looking bleak and empty, evergreens become the dominant landscape feature, so take stock—do you have a good mix of evergreens in your beds and borders? Vertical evergreens, like the columnar white cedar 'Emerald' (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald', zones 3 to 7) are great for mixed borders as they punctuate space and take up little room. Planted in groups, they draw the eye and provide a good background to grasses and stonecrops



Keep in mind that deer like to eat cedar and can easily defoliate plants. If you're in deer country, loosely wrap burlap as high as you can around the tree to protect it. Yes, it's ugly, but it's better than having to replace your cedars, which is costly.



Nothing beats boxwood for classic good looks in containers at this time of year, especially by doorways, where it can be dressed up with tiny white lights or left au naturel. For best effect, mix things up with different-size containers and plants, and make sure

they're watered on a regular basis throughout the season. If you're using ceramic pots, it's best to keep them on a covered porch so freeze-thaw cycles don't damage the containers.

Boxwood (*Buxus* spp) is also lovely in the winter garden when planted in groups of varying sizes with creeping ground cover **beaberry** (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, zones 2 to 6), which Native Americans call kinnikinnick. It's a dependable evergreen that likes acidic soils and full sun.



Beaberry is a good choice for cold-climate areas where winters are harsh, and it looks especially good planted around the base of **white birch** (*Betula* spp). Its distinct red stems contrast brightly with its glossy, rounded leaves, which turn bronze in dormancy. Good cultivars of this underused perennial include 'Massachusetts' and 'Emerald Carpet'.

Most patio furniture gets winterized under protective covers or moved into the garage, but the Adirondack-style seat



shown here is made of tough postconsumer plastic from recycled milk jugs and can stand up to winter's worst weather. Because the material is a composite, the color won't fade and the chair resists cracking and splitting, unlike its wooden counterparts. Furniture that stays in place is a nice option, and on mild days it's great to be able to sit outside and soak

up the sun.

Walk around your property and check trees for fallen limbs or broken branches. Winter storms can wreak havoc and cause widespread damage; get outside with a broom following wet, heavy snow and brush it off shrubs and small trees to prevent permanent damage.

Collect branches and add them to a brush pile on your property—somewhere out of view, where they can decompose, and form a shelter for wildlife.

Light pruning can be done at any time now that plants are dormant. Look for healthy bud tips and snip off dead branches to add to the brush pile.



Northeast Gardener's December Checklist

Note areas that might need stonework. Start getting names of reputable masons or landscape contractors who service your community.

If you are a new property owner, note slopes and grade changes that might require retaining walls and be prepared to spend some hard-earned money on hardscaping next year. Be sure to check references and make sure your contractor is fully insured.



Smaller projects, like walkways, patios and seat walls, are good to think about in the landscape design process; the stripped-to-the-bones view of your property at this time of year can make you see where privacy is needed or where to route a stepping stone path through a side yard.

Get outside with a camera and take photos of your garden. Back indoors, you can brew a pot of tea and review the images while you thaw.



Keeping photos organized in easy-to-access folders on your computer can help immensely as you plan your next move. You can arrange plants by specific area of the garden, such as "Front Walk" or "Peony Bed," or group them by categories, such as foliage or flowers. It's great

to have a visual record of your landscape especially as you chronicle the growth and development of new areas.

REMINDER: CUTOFF DATE FOR FERTILIZING LAWNS IS DECEMBER 1

If you plan to fertilize your lawn this fall, remember that NY has a state law that restricts the use of lawn fertilizers. It is against the law to fertilize between December 1 and April 1.

To learn about other requirements of the Dishwasher Detergent and Nutrient Runoff Law, visit the [NYS DEC's website](#). The law does not apply to agriculture fertilizer or fertilizer for gardens.

PHOSPHORUS CAN CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Excess phosphorus in freshwater lakes and ponds can cause algae overgrowth, with serious impacts to the environment and public health.

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LANDSCAPE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SALT

Winter can be hard on your landscape if you don't have shrubs that can withstand road salt. Plants in cold-weather planting zones may need to endure several applications of salt per year. Minimize the amount of salt reaching plants by mixing sawdust or ash with rock salt before application and direct saltwater drainage away from plants.

Choosing the right plants makes a big difference if you want a vigorous post-winter landscape. Check with your county extension office, or the U.S Department of Agriculture website to find your growing zone. They are numbered 1 through 9 and represent the temperature conditions and corresponding geographic areas under which plants will grow. Newer zone charts include both high and low temperature ranges.



Road salt is extremely tough on plants, both from its build up in the soil near treated surfaces and its physical contact with foliage and branches as salt laden spray is splashed or aerosolized by fast moving traffic. When dealing with areas where salt may be a problem, such as along a roadside where winter salting is done, it is helpful to wash salt spray off plants and to flush the soil with fresh water. Roadside salt should be flushed out vigorously in early spring. If the soil is sandy, be sure to add organic material when planting, and also use it regularly as mulch.

Air-borne deicing salt on plants draws moisture out of plant tissue. Salt spray produces dieback on branches starting at the tips of leaves and needles of vulnerable shrubs. Spray and excess soil salts stunts growth of *Continued on p.4.*

CNY Stormwater Coalition

The CNY Stormwater Coalition was formalized in 2011 in order to establish a regional approach for stormwater management and water resource protection. The Coalition is made up of 28 local governments and the NYS Fairgrounds. Each member operates a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4). Through the Coalition, members are working together to meet regulatory requirements while improving water quality.

CNY STORMWATER COALITION MEMBERS

Camillus Town	Baldwinsville Village
Cicero Town	Camillus Village
Clay Town	Central Square Village
DeWitt Town	East Syracuse Village
Geddes Town	Fayetteville Village
Hastings Town	Liverpool Village
LaFayette Town	Manlius Village
Lysander Town	Marcellus Village
Manlius Town	Minoa Village
Marcellus Town	North Syracuse Village
Onondaga Town	Phoenix Village
Pompey Town	Solvay Village
Salina Town	Syracuse City
Van Buren Town	Onondaga County
	NYS Fairgrounds

The CNY Stormwater Coalition Needs Your Help!

The Coalition invites you to participate in their online, 2015 Stormwater and Water Quality Survey. This non-scientific survey is designed to track baseline public awareness about stormwater quality and issues, and will be used to help direct future public education efforts. The survey takes less than five minutes to complete. By participating, you'll help the Coalition improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its education and outreach efforts.

[CLICK HERE](#) to participate in the survey. The survey ends on December 31, 2015. Thank you in advance for your time and input.



The CNY Stormwater Coalition is staffed and coordinated by the Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board. For more information, visit the CNY Stormwater Website at www.cnyrpd.org/stormwater.



Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board

Maintaining a Healthy Landscape: What you Need to Know about Salt (*continued*)

stems and foliage, and causes lack of vitality and death.

Not all gardening plants can tolerate these poor conditions. Gardeners must research the growing requirements of plants to determine their tolerance to road salt and other disadvantages near sidewalks, walkways or streets.

Careful observation now, and good planning and planting practices next spring will help you to achieve a healthy and balanced residential landscape all year long. The benefits of a healthy and balanced landscape are not limited to aesthetics. They extend to wildlife habit and water quality protection. Healthy plants have healthy root structures that help hold soil in place; foliage that reduces the velocity of raindrops as they hit the soil; and a vascular system that helps with the uptake of excess water, nutrients and in some cases, other less than desirable substances that may be present on site.

When spring rolls around, consider carefully where you choose to purchase your plants and other garden materials. Choose a reputable, local nursery that will spend the time to answer your questions and help you select native plants that are best suited for local conditions. Not only will this help the appearance and health of your garden, it will save you time and money in the long-run (think less watering, pesticides, replacements). Although they are closed for this season, [The Plantsmen Nursery](#) in Groton, NY, just outside of Ithaca, offers a wide selection of native and deer resistant plants and design services. Visit their website now, and consider a trip this spring to check out their offerings firsthand.

JUST BECAUSE YOU MAY NOT SEE IT NOW, DOESN'T MEAN IT WON'T MATTER LATER

Anything that is left on the ground this winter will be there next spring. Pick up after your pets. The bacteria, nutrients and organic materials in pet waste will have a big impact on water quality when the snow melts!

