

Fall 2011



From the Ground Up

Understanding Hardiness Zones

We receive many questions regarding a plant's hardiness here. The Canadian hardiness zone map is a good starting point but many other site conditions can affect a plant's ability to survive. Here are some tips to help you determine how your conditions affect your zoning.

**Below is the corresponding minimum temperature for some of the zones.
Regina area is considered zone 3.**

Zone 2 (-45C),

Zone 3(-45C to -40C),

Zone 4 (-40C)

Although the Canadian plant hardiness map is primarily determined by temperature, it does take into consideration the length of frost free period, moisture, winds, etc. The hardiness map does not take into consideration microclimates that may be naturally present or created by human intervention. Natural microclimates occur as a result of things such as a body of water, hills and valleys. Humans create microclimates through construction and landscaping etc.

Factors that may increase plant hardiness

- *Good snow cover acts like a blanket protecting the plant roots from thawing on a warm day with a rapid refreeze at night. This is especially important for perennials as their upper growth dies off anyway.
- *Soil with good tilth, which is what most plants prefer, results in strong and healthy growth and a better ability to tolerate cold.
- *Moisture conditions during the summer go a long way to helping a plant through the winter. A plant that struggles all summer is weak in the fall and often dead in the spring.

Factors that may decrease plant hardiness

- *Poor plant health going into winter
- *Improper moisture levels in the soil at freeze up (most plants like to be relatively moist when the ground freezes, but some like to be almost soggy and some like to be drier).
- *Compacted soil.
- *Poor snow cover.
- *No wind protection.
- *Freeze thaw cycles in mid to late winter.



Our “Spotlight On” page provides information on a different tree, shrub and perennial in each addition of “From the Ground Up”

Sorbet Peony

Paeonia lactiflora ‘Sorbet’

This late spring blooming perennial has small frilly petals sandwiched between larger pink petals and a pale yellow centre. These flowers are excellent for cutting. Its compound leaves remain green throughout the season. It will grow to about 3’ tall and wide. It grows best in full sunlight in average soil conditions and is hardy to zone 3.



Snowbelle Mock Orange

Philadelphus lewisii ‘Snowbelle’

A great shrub with attractive foliage and a nice overall shape, this plant has beautiful white lightly scented blossoms which bloom in early summer. Its reddish twigs are somewhat decorative in the winter landscape. Hardy to zone 3 this mock orange does best in full sun to part shade. Its mature height and spread is 4’.

Christina Columnar Norway Spruce

Picea abies ‘Fastigiata Christina’

This tree is excellent as a vertical accent with its narrow columnar habit and pendulous branches. It is slow growing with a spread of 4-6’ and a height of 6-8’ at maturity. It prefers full sun and once established is drought tolerant. It is hardy to zone 3.



The tulip is a beautiful flower and a cheerful reminder of spring

You know that fall is when to plant your tulips, daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs, but do you know when in the fall to plant? Many people have problems with getting their bulbs to grow or flower and wonder why. There are several reasons as to why that might happen. The first two things to consider are when they were planted and the soil conditions. It is possible to plant them too early or too late. Tulips need approximately 6 weeks in the fall in order to root sufficiently. If you plant too soon, the bulb may progress too far and the bloom freezes in the winter. Planted too late and the bulb remains dormant and will not bloom. In both cases you will probably see growth but no flowers. In heavy clay soil, the biggest threat to tulips is poor drainage causing the bulb to rot. The usual planting time is the last two weeks of September. Plant at the appropriate depth, and incorporate perlite in the soil below the bulb to ensure good drainage.

Tulips look better in groups of 5, 7 or 9 bulbs so plant them close to one another (about 6" apart in the ground)

When tulips begin to die in the summer it is important to leave the foliage until it all browns. Plan your flower bed so other plants hide the dying foliage.



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MAKE NOTES FOR NEXT YEAR!

While your perennials and shrubs are still identifiable, make a sketch and take photos of your yard and label where everything is. Then over winter you can mull over ideas and plan new beds and you are ready to go when the garden centre opens in the spring!

Note which perennials did not do well in their location and find out if they should be moved in the fall or the spring.

Make your Christmas wish list for your garden.

Make note of pruning projects for early spring & perennials that need division.

What Causes Winter Browning On My Evergreens?

Browning occurs when the leaves (needles) of the plant lose the necessary moisture to survive. Once the point of no return occurs, the leaf dies (turns brown). The reasons this occurs are (a) plant has been under watered in the fall (b) plant has been planted in an unsuitable location (c) drying winter winds (d) sunburn from the sun reflecting off the snow. Most likely it will be a combination of these. Remember, don't confuse browning with the natural leaf discoloration of some evergreens which occurs in early autumn on older portions of the plant.

What Can I Do? Prevention starts right away. Beginning Sept. 15th, water your evergreens thoroughly.

Check several times before final freeze-up that the soil remains moist. This ensures that the plants are fully hydrated and not stressed. For plants like young cedars or any evergreen in a vulnerable location (exposed to a lot of sun or northwest winds) wrapping may be appropriate. To wrap a plant you want to stake around the plant and then wrap around the stakes. This maintains healthy air movement preventing disease, while creating a barrier from the wind and sun. Wrapping does not keep the plant warmer, just protects it from the elements. Most importantly, spray your evergreens with an anti-transpirant such as Wilt-Pruf or Cloud Cover in late fall. These products coat the leaves reducing the drying effects of wind and sun. They are available at Unique Garden Centre. A little bit of effort now will save you a lot of work in the spring.

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