



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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### **PBOG's Leaf Shredding Service**

There's still time to have Pumpkin Brook shred your leaves. Fallen leaves contain 50-80% of the nutrients taken from the soil and air during the growing season. As the leaves decompose those nutrients are released back into the soil and made available to plants. We use a commercial grade leaf shredder that ensures a uniform and quality product. If you would like this service, please let us [know](#) right away.

### Greetings,

We are very happy here at Pumpkin Brook that the snow went away almost as fast as it came. There are still things to do in the garden! Please see the articles below for some hints.

### Questions from our Customers

Recently, we've been asked the following questions by our customers. We hope that you may find some of the answers that you were looking for.



Q: Why are these evergreen needles turning yellow or brown?

A: If the yellow needles are on an inside length of a branch, near the main trunk, it's perfectly natural for them to turn yellow and drop in the fall. As the plant grows, you'll see this oldest growth mature. Most evergreens drop one-third of their needles in fall and then push out new green growth in spring.

Q: Why are those rhododendron leaves turning yellow?

A: Again, the oldest leaves on inside branches will turn yellow and drop off, usually in the fall.

Note: If you see new growth at the tips of needles or broadleaf evergreen leaves turning yellow or brown this is a different issue, most likely related either to drought stress or overwatering. Call us if you see this problem so we can diagnose further. Or perhaps the branch was broken and is now beginning to die - such damage can be pruned out easily.

Q: Why are the perennials planted this fall now looking so bad?

A: It's normal for perennials to collapse in the fall and die back to the ground. Some do this more gracefully than others. For instance, the peony collapses in a heap of browned and blackened leaves. Solomon's Seal becomes a ghostly pale stalk when its leaves drop. Others like the Rudbeckias hold shape well through winter and sport interesting seedheads. Some have evergreen leaves such as Bigroot Geranium and Hellebore.

Q: Do I cut back my hydrangea now?

A: The blue flowered hydrangeas have quite a hangdog look in the fall as their leaves are frosted and battered by the weather. We leave them alone

until buds swell in late April, then prune just above the topmost bud. That way you'll get flowers. Oakleaf hydrangeas tend to hold their leaves until very late in the fall or even all winter in sheltered spots. It's best to wait to prune these in late April using the same method as above. The white flowered hydrangeas can be cut back now if desired, as they'll bloom on new growth next summer. However, we usually wait to prune these in late April as well. Flowers can be carefully removed now on all species if desired.

Q: What should I do about protecting tulip and crocus bulbs from critters?

This year we are planting these bulbs using a product called chicken grit, or small stones. First we place a layer of grit in the hole, then plant the bulbs with fertilizer as usual. Next we layer in more grit to cover the bulbs up to their "necks" before filling up the hole with soil. This strategy will prevent critters such as chipmunks, squirrels, and voles from feasting on the bulbs this fall or next summer after bloom. Due to the shortage of acorns last fall, we found that the bulbs were fair game for food for these rodents! However, this year there are plenty of acorns, so we hope that ready availability plus this strategy will make for longer lasting bulb displays.

In the spring we can spray tulip foliage with a deer repellent to circumvent browsing damage to foliage and flower stalks. Or plant daffodils and lily family bulbs now which are poisonous to animals.

## Protect your Roses and Evergreens Now

With the winter season quickly approaching, there are still a few crucial tasks that need to be done before your garden is ready for its long winter nap.



### Winter Rose Protection

Some of you have been asking us whether it's now time to prepare David Austin and hybrid tea roses for the winter ahead. It's best to wait until Thanksgiving or just after when the ground has frozen and evening temperatures are in the 20's.

Let us help bring your roses back next year!

Dehydration caused by strong winds and water loss from periods of freezing, thawing and refreezing can be detrimental to these roses. We apply 6 to 12 inches of high fungal compost mounded around the rose canes as a way of buffering against this cycle. The snow will help do this as well, but when there is no snow cover, the compost will act as a backup. This great material will add nutrients and microbial life to the soil next year when we remove it from the canes.

Winter protection is only necessary with David Austin and hybrid tea roses; other varieties such as Knockout, heirloom or shrub roses do not require this kind of maintenance. It can be helpful to prune long canes out of the way for access during the mounding process. We also clean up all foliage and debris around the roses as a way of preventing the spread of overwintering diseases.

### Broad Leafed Evergreen Protection

Consider now the possibility of how harsh wind and cold create drought stress for these shrubs over the winter. Our anti-desiccant application will slow



winter. Our anti-desiccant application will slow transpiration (water loss via evaporation from by leaves) by coating the surface of leaves with an all-natural pine pitch based spray. This is crucial to prevent winter scorch and drought stress at a time when plant roots are limited in their ability to take up water due to frozen soil.



Protect your rhododendrons now for beautiful spring blooms!

We also apply deer repellent sprays to broadleaf evergreens, yews and arborvitae.

Contact [Carminc](#) to arrange an anti-desiccant application or deer protection spray later this month.

## Impatiens Downy Mildew - Post Season Cleanup Tips

This new disease burst on the scene this summer (see photo) and brought with it additional post-season cleanup chores.



Impatiens downy mildew

If you grew impatiens in any container that will be reused, UMass Extension is advising that the soil be completely removed. Then disinfect the container with biodegradable bleach, scrubbing well. Allow to air dry before storing the container for winter or refilling for use in a winter display. Do this even if there was no evidence of Impatiens Downy Mildew on your plants, as this disease is windborne and can spread around neighborhoods.

"Being a new disease in our area, there is not a lot known about overwintering, re-infecting plants the next year, or persistence in the soil in Massachusetts," writes Tina Smith, Extension Specialist in Greenhouse Crops and Floriculture. We at Pumpkin Brook will err on the side of good sanitation. We are busy amending soils that include areas where impatiens were planted in the ground this season to help ameliorate the situation.

## Consider the Beech

I just returned from a day in Newport with the New England Chapter of the International Society of Arborists. What lured me there was a workshop on caring for Newport's historic beech trees. When these trees were planted 120-130 years ago, we were told that the trees were probably about 20 years old. They've now become stately monarchs guarding mansions, shading avenues and giving definition to garden promenades. Each tree takes up an incredible amount of space!



Close Up of American Beech Leaf in Autumn

Beech trees have brilliant autumn color, and some of this was still evident. Fancy European beech varieties including the weeping, fernleaf, purple and copper were sighted. As these trees age, they appreciate a soil with a high pH, ample water, shade on their bark, and finely shredded woodchip mulch around their bases. Compacted soil near the trees leads to stress, canopy dieback and



Beech Tree in Summer

canker problems - all of which have been evident in Newport. We learned about the use of an air spade to ameliorate this situation, which allows compost or biochar to be worked in around the trees. Calcium and Potassium were cited as the two most important soil amendments to keep a beech tree healthy (always take a soil test first to know exactly what your tree needs).

Every fall I enjoy the show put on by a forest understory of young American beeches just a mile down Turner Road from my house. The brilliant hues of copper, amber and gold light up the woods, lingering long after other trees have dropped their leaves for the year.



Beech Tree in Autumn

If you have the space in your garden, or seek a superb shade tree, consider the beech!

## November Is the Time for.....

- Cleaning up garden beds with special attention to removing foliage of iris and peony that are prone to diseases and pests
- Emptying containers as fall flowers fade and filling with winter greens and berries
- Planning winter protection of tender plants and those vulnerable to winter damage
- Amending soil per soil test results
- Fertilizing woody plants installed within the past 3-5 years
- Making notes about changes to next year's gardens
- Draining and storing garden hoses and tools for winter
- Shutting off irrigation systems for the season
- Marking driveway edges for ease of snowplowing
- Raking leaves
- Planting spring blooming bulbs
- Pruning grapevines and blueberries



Winter greens in container

### Quick Links

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All of us at Pumpkin Brook wish you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving. We are very thankful for you, our customers, and the opportunity to work outdoors in so many fine gardens.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla

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