

Weed all About Us

Your Kamloops Garden Club Newsletter

Oct., 2025

Next meeting: Wednesday Oct 22, 2025

Heritage House (Upper level)

100 Lorne St. Kamloops

(Riverside Park)

Doors open at 6:30 pm, meeting starts at 7:00 pm

Our Presentation this month

Speaker: Dawn House, retired city horticulturist will demo some Fall/Halloween arrangements. Good idea to take pictures.

Then a short "Gardener's Forum" . Bring your gardening questions for a room full of expertise.

Carol W.

Oct. Agenda:

Welcome from Carol W. president

Introduction of speaker,

Coffee Break

Secretary Report, Cheri

Treasurer Report, Lorna

Old Business:

-if the Heritage House parking front row is full, please park in the other areas and display your pink parking pass

-please keep taking photos of your gardens for Shauna to put in the February potluck Slideshow

- when signing in for the meeting to collect your NEW membership name tag and to please sign the NEW membership information cards for Lorna and Judy

New Business:

-If you have an idea for a guest speaker please email Carol W.

We now take E-Transfer for memberships to thekamloopsgardenclub@gmail.com; or cash cheques, and interac at meetings

Now is the time to be sending your beautiful garden pictures to Shauna for the February Pot Luck Dinner slideshow. Please email to shaunapezzot@hotmail.com

Protect Bird Feeders From Squirrels This Fall & Winter

by Simple Garden Life (edited for brevity)

4 Simple Tricks That Work!

#1 Making Bird Seed Unattractive To Squirrels

A few hot pepper flakes can add just enough heat to stop the squirrels from consuming your bird feed while the birds go unbothered.

First, you can add a bit of a spicy kick to the bird feed. Believe it or not, birds don't have nearly as many taste buds as typical mammals do. In fact, most birds only have around 300. But believe it or not, squirrels have more than 2,000, including tasting heat. And you can use this to your advantage by adding a bit of hot pepper to the feed.

To do this all you need to do is add cayenne pepper, hot pepper flakes, or another type of dried hot pepper powder to the birdseed mixture. Keep in mind that a little bit goes a long way, so don't overdo it.

The birds aren't bothered by the spice at all. But with one taste, the squirrels will be out! As an alternative, you can also purchase bird feed with the spices already added.

Another way to prevent squirrels from feasting away on the bird feeders is to use feed that they tend to not like. For example, squirrels love peanuts, sunflower seeds, and dried fruit. By excluding these from your seed mix, you make the feed less desirable to squirrels. One of the best ingredients to choose from is safflower seeds. While most birds love the seeds, squirrels do not and will often visit these feeders less often

#2 Choosing The Right Location

Another great tip is to always put your bird feeder in the best possible location to prevent robberies from squirrels. Squirrels are quite the acrobatics. In fact, they are able to jump heights of 5+ feet high and 7+ feet long.

Unfortunately, if you have a feeder close to a structure or tree, the squirrels can leap right to it. The further you can place feeders away from these structures, the lower the chances are that they can jump or climb to the feeders.

For the best option, place the feeders on top of a long pole or post, at least 5 feet is best.

#3 Protect The Bird Feeder Pole

After you have the bird feeder up high on a pole, the best way to success is to then protect the pole itself. The first is to use squirrel baffles, while the second is to use an old fashioned metal slinky.

Squirrel baffles are made to deter squirrels from climbing up or down poles. They are inexpensive and easy to install on most feeders. Essentially, they are big, dome-shaped metal cones that are attached either on top or below the feeders. And they are highly effective!

It's not just bird feeders you need to protect from hungry squirrels. Suet cake feeders – a popular winter treat for birds – are also up for grabs. Adding a baffle could help prevent this from occurring.

The shape of the baffles as well as the slippery material they are made of help to prevent squirrels from gripping onto the sides and climbing to the bird feeders. When attached below, they stop squirrels from climbing up the poles. When they are attached from above, the squirrels cannot jump from above and instead slip off. Just be sure to install the baffles at least five feet off the ground so the squirrels don't bypass the baffles altogether.

Using A Slinky – How To Protect Bird Feeders From Squirrels

You can also protect the bird feeder pole from squirrels by using a metal slinky. This old child's toy can be used to wrap around the pole to make climbing next to impossible for squirrels. Make sure that your feeder is located at least five feet off the ground. When a squirrel jumps onto the pole, they will instead grab the slinky which will take them on a quick but gentle ride back to the ground. Avoid using plastic ones since those can easily be chewed through by a squirrel's sharp teeth, and won't hold up well to the cold winter temperatures.

#4 Keep Feeding Areas Clean

Finally, one of the best ways to help deter squirrels from hanging around is to clean up the ground around the bird feeders. Birds are not the tidiest of eaters. Most like to break the seed out onto the ground as they dig out the food within.

Squirrel baffles can be enough to keep the hungry animals from physically going onto your bird feeders. However, cleaning below the feeders will also help deter them.

All of the feed left on the ground is then free game for squirrels. Then, once the food on the ground is all gone, the next choice is to head for the feeder.

But it's not just squirrels that the seed will attract. Other pests like raccoons, mice and even rats will also visit and take the free ground treats. To help prevent this, just clean up underneath the feeder every couple of days.

Parking Passes: please see Myles Huble for 2025 free parking passes which you put on your dash, and park in the front row of Heritage House

Memberships are due every Jan \$20/person, \$25/couple and paid to treasurer Lorna McMillan
Cash or checks only please.

For new members I am reposting this article on covering hydrangeas with leaves from Oct. 2024 because my hydrangeas were shrinking and not blooming, covering them with leaves boost their size by 25% and they bloomed a small amount, so by covering them every year from now on they should come back to their original size and produce more blooms.

Protecting hydrangeas from the cold. By Laidback Gardener Larry Hodson

This article is about growing hydrangeas in Quebec but can apply here in B.C. as our winters seem to be getting colder and hydrangeas are having a hard time blooming.

First of all, blue hydrangea is not a good choice for northern regions. It's simply not hardy enough for our climate. Nurserymen often give it a zonal rating of 5 (USDA zone 4), but I find them oddly optimistic. Serious books give it a rating of 6b or even 7 (USDA zone 5-6). That's a long way from our hardiness zone here in Quebec. In other words, the wisest gardener doesn't plant bigleaf hydrangea and avoids disappointment.

However, bigleaf hydrangea, like many other borderline shrubs, has a trump card up its sleeve: it is capable of regenerating from the ground if its roots have not been killed by the cold. And with the thick blanket of snow that falls in my region, its roots are protected from the worst of winter's cold. So, in spring, the shrub grows back from the base, apparently healthy. It's just a matter of cutting back the branches that have died in the cold. But where are the flowers? There won't be any! In this species, flower buds are formed the previous summer, on the growing stems. As the branches froze to the ground, the embryonic flowers died too. Hence the desolation of people who can't understand why their hydrangea isn't flowering, but yet is producing beautiful new, apparently healthy branches.

A Ray of Hope

And yet, blue hydrangeas can be seen blooming in the region, (Quebec, not every year, but occasionally.) But why? Because, if winter protection is excellent, the branches may not freeze over their entire length. In this case, some flower buds can survive the winter and flowering can take place.

How can we increase the chances of at least some of the branches surviving the winter? First of all, it has to be said that the usual winter protections (jute and geotextile) do absolutely nothing. They offer no protection against the cold, only against the wind (i.e., the temperature inside the protection will be exactly the same as outside). But wind isn't the problem here. Styrofoam rose cones are not suitable for hydrangea because there is no air circulation, and the hydrangea can rot.

A better solution Snow and Fallen Leaves

It's worth noting that in our region we have two great natural protections against the cold: snow and fallen leaves. In fact, unprotected hydrangeas often bloom when protected hydrangeas do not. Why is this? It's because, when the blue hydrangeas do bloom, we've had beautiful snow flurries, starting early in the season and lasting throughout the winter. As a result, the branches are well protected from the extreme cold and can flower the following spring. Just planting the blue hydrangea where the snow accumulates makes all the difference.

But we can do even better! Dead leaves also protect against the cold. Shred them (otherwise they'll blow away) and pile them on top of your hydrangeas. Don't be afraid to pile them thickly: 15, 30, even 60 cm of dead leaves. Shredded leaves have one advantage over all other winter protection: they decompose even in the middle of winter and give off heat! What's more, whereas snow can melt too early, leaving the plant exposed to late frosts, and "protections" need to be removed early in the season to prevent the plant from suffocating.



But even leaves and snow can't always guarantee flowering. If it's -35 or -40°C (-30 to -40?) for weeks, the cold will certainly penetrate and kill the flower buds, but in most winters, under a thick layer of leaves, and with the snow, bigleaf hydrangea will flower without too much trouble. *I found -29, -30 for 2 years killed the flower buds in zn 4. J.V.*

The Ideal Location

Part shade (especially not in full sun, in an area where snow accumulates, north or east side of the house. It prefers soil rich in organic matter and moist, but not soggy. Avoid fertilizers that are supposed to make flowers bluer: they are often toxic to hydrangeas! The best fertilizer for this plant is leaf mulch, which decomposes and enriches the soil.

No Pruning!

In our climate, bigleaf hydrangea should only be pruned to remove dead branches. Their presence will be obvious in spring, as they have no leaves! Above all, don't prune them in autumn, or you'll remove all next spring's flower buds.

Benefits of using grass clippings

Using dry, dead grass clippings as a winter cover for plants can be a good idea to act as a mulch that suppresses weeds and protects against frost heaving, but use them thinly and mix leaves to avoid matting and mold. It's crucial to use clippings that are free of pesticides, remove in spring to let the soil warm up.

Benefits of using grass clippings

) **Mulch:**

Grass clippings, especially when mixed with leaves, can act as a protective mulch to suppress weeds and insulate the soil from temperature fluctuations.

) **Nutrient boost:**

As they decompose, they add organic matter and nutrients back into the soil.

) **Prevents heaving:**

A layer of mulch can prevent the soil from freezing and thawing repeatedly, which can push out shallow-rooted plants like garlic bulbs.

) **Avoid matting:**

If fresh or thick layers of clippings are used, they can mat together, get slimy, and become moldy, which can harm new growth. Use dry clippings and spread them in thin, even layers, or mix them with bulkier materials like leaves.

) **Pesticide-free:**

Only use clippings from a known source that has not been treated with herbicides or pesticides, as these chemicals can damage your plants when they decompose in the soil.

) **Spring removal:**

In the spring, remove some of the mulch to allow the soil to warm up for planting, especially for early crops. Be careful not to smother young plants that are starting to emerge.

If you have a hard time getting enough leaves to cover your hydrangeas you don't need as many if you can set up chicken wire or other mesh circles to hold them in, otherwise they spread out into a cone and is harder to keep the tops covered where the blooms will come. In spring you can buy white papery/fabric "Plant Covers" at Dollarama, cut a hole in the top to put the leaves in.

Planting Garlic and Mulch from new Master Gardener member Anne Patterson

After so much extreme cold in parts of Kamloops that used to be zone 5 or 6, many gardeners now have adopted Zone 4 as the safest standard. Most garlic growers plant in the fall, around 4 weeks before the first hard frost to give the plants' roots time to develop.

The Perfect mulch for Garlic Beds

It's really horse bedding called Simply Straw, sold in bales. It is very fine, chopped straw that is great for insulating, and easy to rake to one side to improve the soil and plant in the spring. My fellow MG's have become fans. You can buy it at Purity Feeds and I believe Art Knapps now carries it for gardeners.

We have a door prize table/sharing table " at every meeting set up so members can donate garden items, plants, books or magazines on gardening, etc. Tickets are given out when members sign in at the beginning of the meeting and the numbers are called out at the end of the meeting, Items that you bring must be taken home if no one has picked it up.

So please sign in and get your name tag & door prize ticket.

The club gives only one parking pass per member, so please keep it in your glove compartment.

[VIDEO: Woman Notices Bee Tangled in a Spider Web and Brings It to the Closest Hive—What Happens Next Goes Viral | The Epoch Times](#) press ctrl and enter to open link.

Healthier Garden Next Year

While you can mulch year round, mulching in the fall has added benefits, but some downsides for certain plants. So maybe the better question is not "Can you mulch in fall?"



Benefits Of Mulching In Fall

A variety of [organic materials can be used to mulch](#) in the fall, such as wood chips, pine needles, bark, straw, or perhaps the cheapest and most plentiful (if your landscape has trees) is shredded leaves. Most people rake up the fallen leaves anyway so why not put them to work over the winter months? A good 2-3 inch (5-8 cm) layer of mulch acts like a cozy blanket, protecting plant roots from extreme temperature changes in the soil. That layer of mulch will also break down as temperatures warm, adding in some organic matter and lots of [microbes](#) effectively and inexpensively plumping up your [soil nutrients](#).

Fall mulch also suppresses weed seed growth, reducing the number of weeds you'll need to battle in the spring.

Problems With Mulching in the Fall

With every pro, there seems to be a con and this is true of fall mulching. For the most part, fall mulching is a positive process, but it can have some detrimental effects.

Just as it can [suppress weed seeds](#), fall mulch can also suppress seeds from self-sowing perennials. Mulch laid in the fall can trap moisture and foment fungal diseases, although this is more common with heavy mulches like wood chips. Ideally, you should [weed the area to be mulched](#) in the fall prior to laying the mulch. But this might be more of a chore than some people desire.

Avoid [volcano mulching](#). This is when you mound the mulch up and around the trunk of a tree in a sort of "volcano". This keeps the trunk constantly moist which increases the incidence of fungal diseases and the presence of some types of insects like carpenter ants. Be sure to keep the mulch away from the trunks of trees and woody plants and don't lay it more than 4 inches (10 cm) deep.

Lastly, depending on the mulch you choose to use, you may need to remove or [replace the mulch](#) in the spring as temps warm and plants begin to sprout.

Timing

So you've decided to give fall mulching a try, but exactly when should you mulch? Again you can mulch any time of the year, but in the fall, plan to mulch just as or soon after the [plants enter dormancy](#).

If you apply the mulch too early, you risk delaying dormancy which in turn increases the risk of cold injury. [Applying mulch too early](#) can also encourage rodent habitation as they search for a winter home.

Tips For Fall Mulching

You can use almost any [organic mulch material](#) to mulch in the fall, but lighter weight organics work best. Heavier mulches like [wood chips](#) or [pine straw](#) become dense piles with no aeration which can lead to fungal diseases. Plus they don't break down as well as, say, [leaf mulch](#). If you do use leaves, shred them first with your lawn mower. That way, they will decompose more quickly.

You can also use [straw as mulch for vegetables](#) and [strawberries](#), but make sure it is weed free. Compost it for a year to kill off any weed seeds.

[Bark mulches](#) such as fir, shredded cedar, redwood, or mahogany chips will do the job and are all more ornamental in appearance. Pine needles provide great insulation but they don't degrade quickly so need to be removed in the late winter.

[Grass clippings can be used as mulch](#), but they are more likely to mat down and lack aeration which can foster fungal diseases.

You can also use [inorganic mulches](#) like rubber, gravel, stone or landscape fabric. These will not break down however, which depending upon your needs, may be a good or bad thing. [Landscape fabric isn't sustainable](#) and acts as a barrier for nutrients to go back into the soil.

Plants You Shouldn't Mulch In Fall



Most plants benefit from mulching in the fall however, any that rely on [self sowing](#) and require light for germination, shouldn't be mulched. This includes wildflowers.

[Succulents](#), [Alpine plants](#) and some herbaceous perennials like heucheras and hellebores should not be mulched in the fall.

Mediterranean herbs like [oregano](#), [thyme](#), and [sage](#) should not as they thrive in dry soils, and mulching around them would keep them too wet.

[Ornamental grasses](#), [daylilies](#), [iris](#), and [liriope](#) also react badly to mulching in the fall.

For these plants, mulching can either trap moisture leading to [root rot](#) and other fungal diseases, interfere with photosynthesis, suffocate roots or prevent seed germination.

IS OCTOBER TOO LATE TO MULCH?

October is not too late to mulch, in fact it's the perfect time in most areas. You can mulch anytime early to mid-fall in colder areas that benefit from fall mulching.

SHOULD YOU REMOVE OLD MULCH BEFORE APPLYING NEW?

It depends on the type of mulch you have laid down. If the mulch you are using is inorganic or doesn't break down easily, then yes, remove it before applying new mulch. Examples of this are pine needles which take a long time to break down or grass clippings which tend to just form wet, airless mats.



The garden club is a scent and smoke free zone



October snacks will be bought by Mary Granger

Remember to check out the Kamloops Garden Club Facebook page for lots of information, thanks to Kiera McLellan.

Any members who have anything to contribute to the monthly newsletter please email me at judyricher@shaw.ca we have a wealth of plant knowledge in this club and would love to hear from you.

For speakers please email Carol at cwozencroft@gmail.com or 250-319-5451 with your suggestions. and tell anyone who might like to speak at our meetings that we pay them \$100 for a ½ to ¾ hour presentation. We can provide a laptop & projector if necessary.

Delicious cookie recipe I found in a Christmas magazine many years ago. J.V.

Florentines

2 c. sugar
½ c. butter (= ¼ lb)
1 2/3 c. whipping cream
2.5 c finely ground almonds, (called almond flour in stores)
1/3 c cake flour
4 c sliced almonds
1 tsp almond extract

In frying pan, top of stove on med. heat cook cream, butter, sugar till bubbly, add ground almonds and cake flour, heat till bubbly, stir to keep from burning. Remove from stove and add sliced almonds and almond extract.

Drop by spoonfuls onto non-stick cookie sheet or parchment paper lined, keep them far apart because they spread, but also push all the sides in a bit otherwise they come out too lacey and fragile.

Bake 350 degrees 15 min

Should be golden brown, if too white they will not hold together.

To save time the cream could be heated in microwave before putting in frypan

Executive

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