



Winter Garden Tips

Spring is almost here. Get ready!

Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

- Before buds open, **apply dormant oil** to trees and shrubs with known pest problems like scale, mites, or aphids. Dormant oil organically smothers overwintering pests and their eggs.
- **Prune** out obvious dead, diseased, and winter-damaged branches on shrubs and trees.
- Now is the time for **formative pruning** of young deciduous trees and shrubs while branch structure is obvious.
- **Thin boxwood** to improve air flow and light penetration.
- **Identify lateral shoots on wisteria** and shorten them back to three buds, which encourages additional bloom-spur formation.
- **Prune fruit trees** for best production by removing suckers and damaged branches and opening the center.
- **Remove leaves from beneath fruit trees** to minimize spread of foliar diseases.
- **Spur-prune grape vines** back to previous season's fruiting shoots.
- **Prepare vegetable garden beds**, perform soil tests, and apply a layer of compost.
- **Avoid working wet soils** to prevent structural damage.
- **Cut back winter-interest perennials** left standing as winter shelter for beneficial insects.
- **Cut down ornamental grasses** into a rounded clump around 4 inches tall.
- **Sanitize tomato cages** by soaking them for ten minutes in a trash can filled with a 10% bleach solution to kill tomato blight spores.
- **Feed cool season lawns** with a ¼-inch layer of leaf gro compost.
- **Hand pull winter annual weeds** before they go to seed. Common winter weeds include hairy bittercress, henbit, and chickweed.
- **Check stored tubers and roots** (canna, dahlia, alocasia...) for humidity; if they are dry, mist lightly with water. Discard any with evidence of rot.
- **Clean out nonviable seeds** by using a seed viability chart for reference. Order seeds now for best selection.
- **Organize stakes** by size and use; remove tired twisty ties and string.
- **Sharpen clipper blades** or install new blades.
- **Scrub patio furniture.**
- **Discard old potting soil** from containers into compost. Decaying plant debris, insects, nematodes, bacteria, viruses, and weed seeds may be lurking within.
- **Empty bird nesting boxes** and consider repositioning them if they are uninhabited. Add baffles to deter predators.
- **Clean bird feeders and baths.**
- **Evaluate walkways** for tripping hazards. Winter heave may have dislodged stones or bricks.
- **Arrange consultation services** or secure a landscape designer for improvements to your personal patch of nature for the coming season. 🌱



NANCY AND PIERRE MOITRIER operate *Designs for Greener Gardens*, a boutique gardening company that specializes in designing, creating, developing, and maintaining distinctive gardens of all styles. Pierre hails from France and brings the charm of the Old World to their garden creations. Nancy's 40 years of gardening experience combined with her design knowledge and innate artistic eye add a superior dimension to their garden projects. Follow *Designs for Greener Gardens* on Facebook.