

10 TO DOs In Winter For Your Survival Garden

You've worked hard to [improve your soil](#), [pick your seeds](#), and [plant your survival garden](#). But now temperatures are dropping. Winter is here.

You don't want all of your gardening efforts to be wasted during this harsh season. There are steps you can take to maintain and protect your survival garden this winter.

Taking care of your garden and orchard in the winter takes a little work, but it'll be worth it in the spring when your overwintered plants are still alive.

You'll have a head start on next spring's planting, and you will be able to provide more food for your family.

Keep a close eye on the temperature during the winter months—the lower the temperatures, the more work you'll have to do.

1. Care for Perennial Plants

If you've planted perennials like asparagus or rhubarb in your garden, you'll be overwintering some plants. These will need protection from the freezing weather.

Once the ground has gotten cold, ensure that you've cut back these plants. Then cover them with four or five inches of a natural [mulch](#). You can use:

- Straw
- Hay
- [Leaves](#)
- Wood that's been chipped

- Shredded pine needles

The mulch will protect your plants from the temperatures that can change rapidly in winter. You don't want your plants to constantly freeze and thaw throughout the winter. Mulch helps keep their temperature more constant.

It also provides warmth for the roots. By protecting the roots of your plants from freezing, you'll give them a much better chance of winter survival.

In addition to protecting your plants, the mulch will also provide nutrients to your soil. Just be sure to uncover your plants when spring comes. Then, you'll want the mulch to be around the plants instead of on-top of them.

You'll also need to continue watering your plants if you aren't getting precipitation regularly. While plants don't need as much water in the cooler temperatures, they do need some. Plan on a deep watering session at least once a week if the ground has begun to thaw and you don't have a snowpack.

2. Start Your Seedlings

If your growing season is short, you'll want to maximize it by [starting your plants indoors](#) this winter. Before planting, you'll want to ensure you have containers that drain well and good soil.

You'll want to time this step right so your seedlings can be transported directly to your garden when they're the right size. If you have gardening neighbors, ask them for advice on when to start plants. Otherwise you can check with your county extension agencies or online resources.

[Start Your Survival Garden And Never Worry About Food Again – Read More!](#)

3. Keep Pests Away

Winter's freeze doesn't eliminate the threat of pests to your garden. Some insects, such as the tomato hornworm and squash vine borer, burrow underground for the cold season. If you had a pest problem before winter, you might find yourself with an even bigger one come spring.

One strategy to eliminate these underground pests is to till your garden before the hard freeze, but after small freezes. Turning over your soil will expose the pests to the cold and decrease their survival odds.

Bugs aren't the only pests you'll encounter in the winter. Hungry deer and rabbits will be searching for anything they can find when the snow is covering what they normally eat. Make sure your garden fence is solid to protect your overwintered plants.

If you have an orchard, you'll also want to have wire around the base of the trees. This will keep animals from gnawing on the trunk. This video shows an easy way to keep animals away from your trees with stakes and wire:

Video first seen on [The Do It Yourself World](#).

4. Know Your Plants' Hardiness Level

Not all plants can withstand the same levels of cold. Be sure you know the hardiness for your plants and trees. If the weather in your area drops lower than it typically does, you may need to take additional action.

When planting with overwintering in mind, always select hardy

plants for your [zone](#). You should know when your typical first frost occurs, and how low the average temperatures are when selecting seeds.

If colder than usual weather is predicted, ensure your plants have a thick layer of mulch. New plants and trees will need more protection than established ones.

Garden Growing ZONES

WHAT ARE HARDINESS ZONES? Hardiness zones were developed by the USDA to define 11 numerical climate zones and the ability of certain plants to grow within those zones. Seed packaging and plant labels indicate which zone your plant is most likely to thrive in, so identifying where you live is vital to the planning of your garden.

USDA PLANT HARDINESS ZONE MAP*



* Average Annual Extreme Minimum Temperature (1976-2005)



WHEN is it warm enough to plant?



EGGPLANTS

Planting Temperature: 75° F
Optimal Germination: 85° F



SQUASH

Planting Temperature: 70° F
Optimal Germination: 95° F



CORN

Planting Temperature: 55° F
Optimal Germination: 95° F



TOMATOES

Planting Temperature: 55° F
Optimal Germination: 85° F



RADISHES

Planting Temperature: 45° F
Optimal Germination: 85° F



BEETS

Planting Temperature: 45° F
Optimal Germination: 85° F



LETTUCE

Planting Temperature: 45° F
Optimal Germination: 75° F



CARROTS

Planting Temperature: 45° F
Optimal Germination: 80° F



SOIL SCIENCE

Soil temperature is most important to seed germination, but it's difficult to measure. Drawing conclusions about the soil from air temperature makes gardening easier.

My HARDINESS ZONE Tips

PLANTING PLAN

Tulips pushing through soil or forsythias budding are great indicators that it's warm enough for seed planting.

ZONES 2-3

Winter hardness is very important in these zones. Choose plants that can withstand harsh winters and hot summers.

Ideal for Carrots

ZONES 4-5

Native plant species are highly recommended due to the varied micro-climates and altitudes in these zones.

Ideal for Lettuce

ZONES 6-7

Ideal climate conditions for vegetable gardens. These zones may produce 3 seasons of crops for gardeners.

Ideal for Squash

ZONES 8-9

Summer-heat hardness is very important in these zones. Heat-loving plants will thrive with minimal maintenance.

Ideal for Citrus

ZONES 10-11

Frost seldom occurs in these zones, but heat and humidity are a major factor in growing conditions.

Ideal for Eggplant

Avant
GARDEN

For more information & tips, visit AvantGardenDecor.com

5. Protect Your Orchard

Trees can be vulnerable to freezing temperatures, especially if they're not very hardy. Water that's in the tree can freeze, causing limbs to break off and other damage. Here are some ways to keep your orchard trees from freezing this winter:

- String some of the big, old-fashioned, non-LED Christmas lights through the branches. Though they let just a tiny bit of heat, it's enough to protect from a light freeze.
- Place a blanket around your tree. This obviously works best for small trees.
- Don't fertilize in the winter. This extra food boost will encourage your trees to grow, which is not what you want happening in the winter. Those new shoots will be extremely susceptible to damage.
- Apply a frost cloth to your trees.
- Mound the soil up high against the base of the tree.
- Light a fire on the ground nearby to help warm it up and provide heat to the branches. You can save what you trim each spring to burn over the winter.

If you wrap or bank the trunk of your trees, be on the lookout for insect infestation. The bugs like a warm place to live as well.

A buildup of snow can also cause problems with trees. If you notice that the branches are bowing under the weight of the snow, help them out by knocking the snow off. This will keep your branches from breaking off.

6. Bring Plants Indoors

Some plants that don't respond well to freezing temperatures can be dug up and potted for the winter. Just bring the pots

inside, and care for them by providing water.

Here are some plants you can bring indoors for the winter:

- Banana plants
- Basil
- Cilantro
- Lavender

You can also dig up starts from other plants, and bring the shoots indoors. But, you'll want to do that before the deep freeze occurs to help avoid transplant shock.

Winter is also a great time [to start a small garden indoors](#). You can grow a variety of food indoors, which will help lower your winter grocery bill and provide fresh, local produce to enjoy. Just remember to keep an eye on your indoor garden and keep it in a room of your house that isn't going to freeze.

7. Inspect & Organize

Since you won't be using your gardening tools as often this winter, take time now to inspect them all. Your goal is to make your life easier once you jump into the gardening season again.

Sharpen your pruners, hoes, and any other tools you use with blades. Repair or replace any handles that have cracked.

Also, take time to walk your fence and make any repairs that are needed. If deer were a problem, consider adding another layer to increase the height of your fence.

Organize your garden supplies and make note of anything you're running low on. Now is a good time to reorder supplies so you have them on hand when spring comes along.

8. Keep Your Compost Going

You'll want compost in the spring to help get your garden growing again. If your compost pile is exposed to the elements, you can use a tarp to cover it. This will help keep the center warm and encourage the organisms to continue working.

The cover will also keep your compost from getting too wet. Too much moisture isn't good for your pile.

You can save your food scraps throughout the winter to ensure your pile continues to grow. If you're letting your compost pile go dormant for the winter, you might consider starting a small secondary pile. Just remember to keep adding carbon.

Video first seen on [Alberta Urban Garden Simple Organic and Sustainable](#).

9. Plan for Next Year

Winter is the perfect time for [planning your next year's garden](#). Take time to sketch out your current garden's layout so you can remember where each crop was planted. This will help you more efficiently plan crop rotation.

You can use the cold months to study new gardening techniques, research the best varieties for your area, and reflect on last year's harvest. There's always something to learn when it comes to gardening, so pick up some reading material at the library, and enjoy planning your garden.

10. Harvest Edibles

If you're overwintering carrots, onions, cabbage, or other plants that will continue to produce in your climate, be sure to harvest the edibles. There's nothing like farm fresh produce in the middle of winter.

For plants that grow underground, the freeze will eventually kill off the tops. This makes your edibles less visible. Be sure to mark where these plants are located so you don't forget when your garden is covered with snow.

If you typically enjoy milder winters, the number of edibles you can grow significantly increases. You can also extend your growing season with [cold frames](#) or [greenhouses](#). Remember to water the plants you have in there, and keep weeds at bay.

This way you can have your own survival garden no matter the season. Click the banner below and learn how to grow an endless supply of nutritious food in your backyard with no effort and in extreme conditions.

[Venezuela is in shambles. People were unprepared. How will you feed your family?](#)

*This article has been written by **Lisa Tanner** for Survivopedia.*