



## Gardening with Nature

by Sigrie Kendrick

LAST WATERING OF THE YEAR

# Now's the time to prep your garden for winter

Sigrie Kendrick - Nov 8, 2023 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Water in your perennials before winter or they could die. You'll find if you dig down a couple of inches the soil is like dust because it's been so dry this year.

You might not like what I'm going to say, but your garden will thank you for your efforts now.

I planted a shrub in a client's garden recently and was shocked by how dry the soil was. It was basically dust.

I soaked the root ball of the *Rhus typhina* ("Tiger-eyes") prior to planting and gave it a good watering after planting but it got me thinking about all the established plants that had not been recently irrigated.

This fall has been extremely dry and warm, with temperature records broken throughout the summer and into the fall. Although by now you've had your irrigation system blown out, you are going to have to think about providing one last good drink for your plants as they head into winter.

That may require dragging around hoses that were already stored away in the garage for the winter, or the arduous task of multiple treks to and from the kitchen sink with a watering can, but it must be done.

Going into winter without a proper soaking is a killer for many plants.

As of this writing, the 14-day forecast doesn't include any freezing temperatures, making this the ideal time to irrigate your garden prior to the onset of the colder winter weather.

While bare branches above ground indicate the growing season is over, the roots of your trees, shrubs and perennials will continue to grow in the warm soil until the ground freezes. They need to be hydrated.

At this time of year plants store the sugars and nutrients in their roots that are essential to their survival.

If you must pick and choose where you irrigate, focus on your evergreens and the newly-planted or recently-transplanted plants.

Evergreens, by their very nature, don't lose their leaves, and therefore require additional hydration to survive winter as they never get a break from the drying winter wind and sun.

Plants recently planted or transplanted will not have had time to establish a strong, deep root system and will also benefit from additional irrigation.

As always when you water, do so deeply, but infrequently, to encourage the establishment of deep roots, as they are then better able to withstand drought come summer.

A soil probe is a useful tool to determine soil moisture, with perennials requiring four to eight inches of moist soil and shrubs and trees requiring up to twelve inches.

Don't let our recent rains give you a false sense of security as that moisture only permeated the first few inches of soil.

At our regular Friday Dig with Sig, we will need the help of volunteers to haul hoses and buckets to ensure the demonstration garden is well-irrigated in preparation for the upcoming winter season.

*The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with them on their Make Water Work campaign.*

*Sigrie Kendrick is a master gardener and executive-director of the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association and can be reached at 778-363-8360 or by email at [exec\\_dir@okanaganxeriscape.org](mailto:exec_dir@okanaganxeriscape.org).*

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