



24th November 2025

How to protect and prepare your garden for the cold season with winter gardening advice from British Garden Centres

As the days grow shorter and the temperature dips, gardeners across the UK are turning their attention to protecting their plants and preparing their gardens for the cold months ahead. Winter might seem like a time for gardens to rest, but the work you do now can make all the difference to how well your plants bounce back in spring. The team at British Garden Centres have put together some simple but effective steps to shield plants, nurture soil, and support vital garden wildlife during the winter season.

Mulching

One of the best defences against winter weather is mulching. Adding a thick layer of organic mulch, such as compost, bark chips, leaf mould, or well-rotted manure, around the base of plants helps lock in valuable moisture, improve soil structure, and protect delicate roots from freezing. Mulching also helps to stabilise soil temperature and prevent repeated freezing and thawing, which can cause roots to heave or loosen in the soil.

Mulching is such a simple job, but it has long-lasting benefits and can make all the difference in protecting young shrubs, perennials, and roses through the cold months. It also makes gardens look neat while feeding the soil at the same time. When applying mulch, gardeners should aim for a layer of around five to eight centimetres thick, leaving a small gap around stems to avoid rot. Winter is also a good time to top up existing mulch that may have thinned out over the summer.

Protecting plants from frost

The unpredictable British winter means frost can strike early and suddenly. Use horticultural fleece or cloches on tender plants and exotics and move to a sheltered spot. Even hardy plants can suffer in extreme or prolonged cold, especially young specimens that haven't yet established strong root systems, so mulch or cover where possible.

Container plants are particularly vulnerable because their roots are more exposed to cold air. Raising pots off the ground with pot feet helps drainage and prevents waterlogging. Wrapping pots in bubble wrap or hessian keeps the



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roots warmer, and grouping containers against a south facing wall creates a little pocket of extra shelter and a mini ecoclimate for the plants.

Most gardeners lose plants in winter not because of the cold itself, but because of frost on soggy soil so make sure your plants have good drainage, protection, and an occasional check on pots and beds makes a world of difference.”

Lawns, borders, and shrubs care

While growth slows in winter, lawns and borders still benefit from a bit of attention during the colder months. Avoid walking on frosted or waterlogged grass to prevent soil compaction and damage. Fallen leaves should be cleared from lawns and borders to reduce the risk of fungal disease and allow air and light to circulate. Leaves that are collected can be turned into leaf mold or composted for use next year.

This quiet season is also the ideal time to prune dormant trees and shrubs. Removing dead, diseased, or crossing branches improves shape and encourages strong new growth when spring returns. For fruit trees and bushes, pruning promotes better fruiting and overall health.

Supporting wildlife

Wildlife plays a vital role in the health of any garden, and winter is a time when animals need a helping hand. Leaving some seed heads on perennials such as echinacea and teasel provides valuable food sources for birds and insects. Piles of logs, leaves, or twigs in a quiet corner can become winter homes for hedgehogs, toads, and beneficial insects.

Gardens don't stop being alive in winter, and by creating little pockets of shelter and leaving some areas slightly untidy, you can support the creatures that help your garden thrive year-round. Bird feeders and clean, unfrozen water sources also provide lifelines when natural food supplies are scarce. Your local garden centre will sell good-quality seed mixes to attract a variety of species, as well as berry plants which provide extra treats for our feathered friends.

Furniture and tools

To protect your garden furniture from frost, it's best to bring wooden pieces inside or cover them with waterproof, breathable covers to prevent moisture damage. Metal furniture should be stored indoors or treated to avoid rust,



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while cushions need to be kept inside to prevent mould. Plastic furniture is frost-resistant, but benefits from cleaning and covering also.

Solar or electric garden lights should ideally be removed before winter to protect their wiring and bulbs from frost damage. Clean them gently, remove batteries if possible, and store them in a dry place like a garage to prolong their lifespan.

Garden tools also need attention, so make sure you clean off any dirt and debris, sharpen blades, and store them in a dry, frost-free place to prevent rust and damage. Proper care ensures your tools stay ready for the next gardening season and your lights keep shining bright year after year

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: "A winter-ready garden may look restful, but plenty is happening beneath the surface. Protecting soil, shielding roots, and supporting wildlife all contribute to a stronger, more resilient garden when spring arrives. Taking a bit of time in November and December to protect your garden creates the foundation for the best growing season yet."

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Notes to Editors:

About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK's largest family-owned garden centre group with 73 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by the Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire.

BGC was launched in 1987 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018, it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres, allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now, with 61 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham.

The group has a team of 3000 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, 2 growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres, Woodthorpe Leisure Park, and Woody's Restaurant & Bar.

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