

NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

Seasonal Maintenance

Spring cleanup, fall preparation, winterizing, and seasonal landscape transitions in New Brunswick

18 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

newbrunswicklandscaping.com/construction-brain

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Best order for spring garden cleanup tasks?

Start with debris removal and soil assessment, then move to pruning and preparation tasks as conditions improve. The key in New Brunswick is waiting for the right soil conditions and timing each task to our Maritime climate.

Begin with debris and damage assessment as soon as you can walk on your lawn without leaving deep footprints, typically mid to late April. Remove winter debris like fallen branches, leftover leaves, and any protective coverings from plants. Check for winter damage on trees and shrubs, looking for broken branches, rodent damage, or signs of snow load stress. Don't rush this step – walking on soggy spring soil compacts it and creates drainage problems.

Test your soil pH next, ideally in late April when the ground has thawed completely. Most New Brunswick soils are naturally acidic (pH 4.5-6.0), and lawns perform best around 6.0-7.0. If you need lime, apply it now so it has time to work before your main fertilizing. This is also the perfect time to assess drainage issues – standing water after spring melt indicates areas that may need attention.

Tackle pruning in early May once you can clearly see which branches are dead or damaged. Prune summer-flowering shrubs like spirea and potentilla now, but wait on spring bloomers like lilac and forsythia until after they flower. Remove any winter-killed perennial stems, but be patient – some plants that look dead may still emerge from the roots.

Begin lawn care when soil temperature reaches 10°C, usually mid-May in southern NB. Start with gentle raking to remove thatch, but avoid aggressive dethatching on wet soil. Apply pre-emergent herbicide when forsythia blooms – this timing coincides with soil temperatures that trigger crabgrass germination. If your lawn needs overseeding, wait until late May or early June when soil is consistently warm.

Prepare garden beds by gently cultivating soil once it crumbles in your hand rather than forming a muddy ball. Add compost or well-aged manure, but avoid working clay soils when they're too wet. In New Brunswick's clay-heavy river valleys around Fredericton and the Saint John River, this patience prevents soil compaction that lasts all season.

Save planting for last – typically early to mid-June after the last frost risk passes. Hardy perennials can go in earlier, but tender annuals and vegetables should wait until soil temperatures are consistently above 15°C at night.

The biggest mistake homeowners make is rushing spring cleanup when soils are still too wet. Working soggy soil destroys its structure and creates compaction problems that affect plant growth all season. In New Brunswick's Maritime climate, it's better to wait an extra week than damage your soil structure.

Need help with extensive cleanup or landscape renovation? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with local professionals who understand our unique spring conditions and timing requirements.

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Q2

When should I refresh mulch in garden beds?

In New Brunswick, refresh mulch in garden beds every 1-2 years, with the best timing being late spring (mid to late May) after the soil has warmed but before summer heat arrives.

The timing depends on your mulch type and garden conditions. Organic mulches like shredded bark, wood chips, or compost break down faster in our Maritime climate due to high humidity and moisture, typically needing refreshing annually. Stone mulches or rubber mulch can last 2-3 years but may need topping up where they've shifted or settled.

Late May is ideal timing for New Brunswick because the soil has warmed enough for beneficial microbial activity, but you're getting ahead of summer weed pressure. This timing also allows any perennials that are slow to emerge (like hostas or astilbe) to push through before you add fresh mulch. Avoid mulching too early in spring when soil is still cold and wet, as this can delay soil warming and potentially promote fungal issues in our humid climate.

Signs your mulch needs refreshing include visible soil showing through, the mulch layer being less than 2 inches thick, or organic mulch looking gray and decomposed rather than rich and dark. In areas with heavy foot traffic or where you've been working in the beds, mulch often gets scattered and needs replenishing more frequently.

When refreshing, don't just pile new mulch on top of old. **Pull back existing mulch, weed thoroughly, and add a thin layer of compost if your soil needs organic matter.** Then apply fresh mulch to a total depth of 2-3 inches, keeping it 2-3 inches away from plant stems and tree trunks to prevent moisture-related diseases and pest issues.

For DIY homeowners, mulching is straightforward work you can handle yourself. Calculate about 3 cubic yards of mulch per 1,000 square feet for a 2-inch layer. Many NB garden centers offer delivery, which saves your back and vehicle. However, if you have large beds or want a complete garden refresh with new plant additions, a landscaper can efficiently handle the entire project and ensure proper plant spacing and mulch application.

The investment in quality mulch pays dividends through the growing season by retaining soil moisture during dry spells, suppressing weeds, and gradually improving your soil as organic mulches decompose.

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Q3

What is the complete spring lawn care checklist for New Brunswick homeowners?

A complete spring lawn care checklist for New Brunswick starts with patience — wait until the ground firms up in mid-April before doing any work, as walking on soggy turf compacts the soil and damages grass crowns. NB's freeze-thaw cycle through March and early April means lawns need time to stabilize before you begin cleanup and treatment.

Step one is a thorough spring rake to remove dead grass, matted leaves, and any snow mold that developed over winter. Snow mold is extremely common in New Brunswick due to our Maritime humidity and long-lasting snow cover, and you'll often see grey or pink patches on the lawn. Raking these areas vigorously helps air circulation and recovery. This should happen once the lawn is dry enough that your footprints don't leave deep impressions,

typically mid to late April in the Moncton and Saint John areas, or late April to early May around Fredericton and northern NB.

Once raking is done, test your soil pH. New Brunswick soils tend to be acidic, often in the pH 4.5-6.0 range, and most lawn grasses prefer pH 6.0-7.0. If your results come back below 6.0, apply pelletized lime at the recommended rate — this is one of the single most impactful things NB homeowners can do for lawn health. Plan on 20-40 lbs per 1,000 square feet for moderately acidic soil.

Apply a pre-emergent herbicide when forsythia blooms, which signals that soil temperatures have reached about 10°C. In most of NB this happens in early May. This prevents crabgrass and other annual weeds from establishing. Follow this with a balanced spring fertilizer (look for a ratio like 20-5-10) in mid-May once the grass is actively growing. Avoid fertilizing too early — the grass can't absorb nutrients while still semi-dormant.

Begin mowing when grass reaches 3.5 inches, usually mid-May. Set your mower height to 3 inches for the first few cuts. Sharpen your mower blade before the season starts, as dull blades tear grass and invite disease. If you notice bare or thin patches, early May is a decent time for spot overseeding, though late August remains the best window for major overseeding projects in NB.

Finally, inspect your irrigation system if you have one, checking for cracked pipes or broken heads from frost heave. A professional spring startup typically costs \$75-125 in New Brunswick. The entire spring lawn care process — rake, lime, pre-emergent, fertilize, first mow — usually spans from mid-April through late May. If the scope feels overwhelming, spring cleanup services from NB landscapers typically run \$200-500 depending on property size.

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When should I start spring cleanup after snowmelt in New Brunswick?

The ideal time to start spring cleanup in New Brunswick is mid-April in coastal areas like Moncton and Saint John, and late April to early May in inland and northern regions like Fredericton, Woodstock, and Bathurst. The critical factor is not when the snow disappears but when the ground has firmed up enough to support foot traffic and equipment without causing compaction damage.

New Brunswick's spring is notoriously slow and uneven. Coastal Zone 5a-5b areas often see snow disappear by early April, but the soil underneath remains waterlogged from snowmelt and spring rains. Walking on this saturated ground compresses soil particles together, squeezing out air pockets that grass roots need to breathe. This compaction damage can take an entire season to recover from. The rule of thumb is simple: if your footprint sinks more than half an inch into the lawn, it's too early to start work.

Test your lawn by walking across it in mid-morning after a dry day. If the ground feels spongy but your footprint barely shows, you're good to begin light cleanup like hand-raking leaves and picking up branches. If it still squishes underfoot, wait another week. In NB's river valley areas around Fredericton and along the Saint John River, spring flooding can delay cleanup even further — some properties aren't accessible for lawn work until early May in high-water years.

Once the ground is firm, start with debris removal — fallen branches from winter storms and ice events, any remaining leaves that weren't cleaned up in fall, and litter that accumulated over winter. NB's periodic ice storms often leave behind significant branch debris that needs clearing before you can do anything else. Next, rake matted grass areas to break up snow mold and improve air circulation. Focus on shaded areas and north-facing slopes where snow sat longest, as these are prime spots for grey and pink snow mold.

Hold off on heavy tasks like power raking, aeration, and fertilizing until the lawn is actively growing, usually mid-May. Applying fertilizer to dormant or semi-dormant grass is wasteful — the nutrients simply wash away with spring rains. Similarly, aerating soggy soil does more harm than good. A good sequence is: debris cleanup in mid-April, raking and assessment in late April, and then treatments and fertilizing through May. Professional spring cleanup services in NB typically cost \$200-500 and are worth considering if you have a large property or significant storm debris to manage.

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Q5

What should be on my fall garden winterization checklist for NB?

Your fall garden winterization checklist for New Brunswick should begin in mid-September and wrap up by late October, covering everything from soil amendments to physical plant protection before the ground freezes. NB's winters are long and harsh — with 250-300 cm of snow and temperatures dropping to -25°C or colder — so thorough fall prep makes the difference between a garden that bounces back in spring and one that suffers significant losses.

Start in September with a fall fertilizer application on your lawn using a high-potassium formula (such as 10-0-20 or similar). Potassium strengthens cell walls and improves cold hardiness, which is exactly what NB grass needs heading into winter. This is also the time to do final weeding in garden beds, cutting back spent perennials, and dividing any overcrowded plants. Leave ornamental grasses and anything with seed heads standing — they provide winter interest and wildlife value, plus their foliage helps insulate the crown.

In early October, focus on tender plants and bulbs. Dig up dahlias, gladiolus, and cannas after the first light frost blackens their foliage, and store them in a cool, dry location. Plant spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils, and crocuses between early October and mid-November while the ground is still workable. NB's acidic soil (pH 4.5-6.0) can be challenging for some bulbs, so work a handful of bone meal and a bit of lime into each planting hole.

Mid to late October is when physical winter protection goes on. Mound 10-12 inches of soil or compost around the base of hybrid tea roses, then top with mulch after the ground freezes lightly. Wrap vulnerable evergreens in burlap or spray with anti-desiccant to prevent winter burn from drying winds — this is especially important for arborvitae, boxwood, and rhododendrons in exposed locations. Apply 3-4 inches of shredded leaf or straw mulch over perennial beds once the ground has frozen to about an inch deep, which prevents the damaging freeze-thaw heaving cycle.

Don't forget infrastructure tasks. Drain and winterize irrigation systems by late October — burst pipes from frozen water are expensive to repair, and professional winterization typically costs just \$75-150 in NB. Disconnect and store garden hoses, clean and oil tools, and drain fuel from gas-powered equipment or add stabilizer. Do a final

leaf cleanup before the first major snowfall, as matted leaves on the lawn promote snow mold. Complete your final mow in October, cutting to 2.5 inches. A thorough winterization effort in fall saves both money and heartbreak when spring arrives.

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Q6

How do I prepare perennial gardens for a New Brunswick winter?

Preparing perennial gardens for a New Brunswick winter is all about timing your cutbacks, applying the right mulch depth, and protecting marginally hardy specimens — ideally between mid-October and mid-November, after a few hard frosts but before the ground freezes solid. NB's Zone 4a-5b climate means most well-chosen perennials will survive winter without heroic measures, but proper preparation reduces spring dieback and speeds up recovery.

Begin by assessing each plant's needs individually. Cut back perennials that are prone to disease — hostas, peonies, and daylilies should have their foliage removed to ground level after it dies back naturally from frost, which eliminates overwintering fungal spores. However, leave ornamental grasses, echinacea, sedum, and black-eyed Susans standing through winter. Their dried stems catch snow (which acts as natural insulation), provide habitat for beneficial insects, and add visual interest to the winter garden. Many NB gardeners also leave astilbe and rudbeckia seed heads for goldfinches.

Once you've done selective cutbacks, focus on mulching. Wait until the ground freezes to about an inch deep — usually late October to early November in the Fredericton area, slightly later along the coast near Moncton and Saint John. The goal of winter mulch is not to keep the ground warm but to keep it consistently frozen, preventing the freeze-thaw cycles that heave plant crowns out of the soil. Apply 4-6 inches of shredded leaves, straw, or

evergreen boughs over the entire bed. Avoid packing mulch directly against plant stems, as this traps moisture and invites rot.

Pay special attention to marginally hardy perennials. Plants rated for Zone 5 or warmer that you're growing in NB's Zone 4 areas (Fredericton, Woodstock, Campbellton) need extra protection. Lavender, certain Japanese anemones, and some newer hydrangea varieties fall into this category. For these, mound extra mulch around the crown and consider placing a loose cage of chicken wire filled with dry leaves over the plant for added insulation.

New plantings from late summer or fall are particularly vulnerable because their root systems haven't fully established. Give them an extra 2-3 inches of mulch beyond what you'd apply to established plants. Avoid fertilizing perennials after mid-August — late feeding encourages soft new growth that won't harden off before NB's first frosts arrive in late September to mid-October. If you planted new perennials, water them deeply in late October before the ground freezes so roots go into winter hydrated. A well-prepared perennial garden requires about an hour of work per 100 square feet, or \$200-400 if you hire a professional for a typical residential garden in NB.

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When should I wrap shrubs and trees for winter protection in NB?

The ideal window for wrapping shrubs and trees in New Brunswick is late October through mid-November, after the plants have gone fully dormant but before heavy snowfall and sustained freezing temperatures arrive. Wrapping too early traps heat and moisture, encouraging fungal growth, while waiting too long means working with frozen materials and risking damage from early winter storms.

Not every shrub or tree needs wrapping — focus your efforts on the most vulnerable specimens. Broadleaf evergreens like rhododendrons, azaleas, boxwood, and holly are the top candidates because their leaves continue to lose moisture through winter while frozen roots can't replace it. This desiccation — often called winter burn — turns leaves brown and crispy, and it's particularly severe in NB's Zone 4a-4b inland areas around Fredericton and Woodstock where wind chill regularly reaches -30°C or colder. Newly planted evergreens, arborvitae hedges, and any Zone 5 plants growing near their hardiness limit also benefit from protection.

Burlap screens are the gold standard for NB winter protection. Drive three or four wooden stakes around the plant and staple burlap to them, creating a windbreak without the burlap touching the foliage. Direct contact between burlap and leaves causes abrasion damage and can freeze to the plant tissue. Leave the top open to allow air circulation and let snow settle naturally on the plant, which actually provides insulation. For individual specimen shrubs, you can create a burlap tent supported by a central stake.

Anti-desiccant sprays offer an alternative or complement to burlap. Products like Wilt-Pruf create a waxy coating on evergreen needles and leaves that reduces moisture loss by up to 80%. Apply these on a dry day when temperatures are above 4°C — typically in late October or early November in NB. One application usually lasts through winter, though exposed coastal locations near the Bay of Fundy may need a second application in February if there's a mid-winter thaw.

Young deciduous trees with thin bark — especially maples, lindens, and fruit trees — benefit from trunk wraps to prevent sunscald. NB's winter sun reflecting off snow can heat the south-facing bark during the day, then plummeting overnight temperatures cause the bark to crack. Wrap trunks with commercial tree wrap or plastic spiral guards from the base to the first branch, installing them in November and removing in April. Budget about \$5-15 per shrub for burlap and stakes, or \$10-25 per tree for trunk wrap. Professional winter wrapping services in New Brunswick typically cost \$15-30 per plant plus materials, making it worthwhile for properties with many vulnerable specimens.

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Q8

When is the best time to apply fall fertilizer to my NB lawn?

The best time to apply fall fertilizer to your New Brunswick lawn is September — specifically the first two to three weeks of the month — while the grass is still actively growing but daytime temperatures have moderated from summer highs. This timing gives the fertilizer 4-6 weeks of active uptake before the grass goes dormant in late October, building the root reserves and cold hardiness your lawn needs to survive NB's harsh winters.

Choose a fertilizer with a high potassium ratio for fall application. Look for formulas like 10-0-20 or 8-4-16 where the third number (potassium) is the highest. Potassium strengthens cell walls, improves drought tolerance, and most critically for New Brunswick, enhances freezing resistance. Avoid high-nitrogen fall fertilizers that push top growth — lush blade growth heading into winter is a recipe for snow mold, which is already one of NB's most common lawn problems due to Maritime humidity and 250-300 cm of average snowfall.

Application rate matters as much as timing. Follow the bag's recommended rate, typically 3-4 lbs of product per 1,000 square feet, and use a broadcast spreader for even distribution. Apply when the lawn is dry but rain is expected within 24-48 hours to water the granules in. If no rain is forecast, run your irrigation system or sprinkler for 15-20 minutes after application. NB's typically acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) can interfere with nutrient uptake, so if you haven't limed recently, consider applying pelletized lime a few weeks before or after your fall fertilizer — don't apply them simultaneously.

Timing adjustments by region are important. In southern NB and coastal areas like Moncton, Saint John, and the Fundy coast, you can push fall fertilization into the third week of September since first frosts typically don't arrive until early to mid-October. In northern NB around Bathurst and Campbellton (Zone 3b-4a), apply in the first week of September since the growing season is shorter and first frosts come earlier, sometimes by late September. Fredericton falls in between — mid-September is ideal.

Some NB lawn care professionals recommend a second, lighter application in late October using a slow-release winterizer formula, applied just before the ground freezes. This dormant feeding provides nutrients that grass roots absorb slowly through late fall and very early spring, giving the lawn a head start when it breaks dormancy. However, this technique works best on well-established lawns and isn't recommended for newly seeded areas. A 15,000 square foot bag of quality fall fertilizer costs \$40-70 at NB garden centres, and professional fall fertilization services run about \$60-120 per application for an average residential lawn.

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Q9

How do I protect rose bushes through New Brunswick's harsh winters?

The key to overwintering roses in New Brunswick is a combination of proper timing, mounding, and insulation, applied after the first hard frost in late October but before the ground freezes solid. Roses are one of the most vulnerable garden plants in NB's Zone 4-5 climate, but with the right preparation, even hybrid teas can survive winters that regularly hit -25°C to -30°C.

Start by stopping deadheading and fertilizing by mid-August. This signals the plant to begin hardening off for winter rather than pushing new growth. In early October, once nighttime temperatures consistently drop below 0°C, cut canes back to about 18-24 inches to prevent wind whipping and breakage. Remove any remaining leaves to reduce disease carryover — NB's Maritime humidity makes black spot and powdery mildew persistent problems that overwinter on fallen foliage.

The most reliable winter protection method for NB is the **mound-and-mulch approach**. Mound 10-12 inches of soil or compost around the base of each plant, bringing this material from elsewhere in the garden rather than scraping it from around the roots. Once the ground freezes lightly in November, add another 6-8 inches of straw, shredded

leaves, or evergreen boughs on top of the mound. Some NB gardeners also use rose cones or burlap wraps for extra wind protection, especially in exposed locations along the Bay of Fundy coast where wind chill intensifies the cold.

For climbing roses, the approach differs slightly. If possible, lay the canes down on the ground and pin them with landscape staples, then cover with 6-8 inches of mulch. In NB, climbing rose canes left upright through winter will typically die back to the snow line. Hardy shrub roses like the Canadian Explorer series — bred specifically for Canadian climates — need much less fuss. A simple mound of mulch at the base is usually enough for varieties like 'John Cabot' and 'William Baffin,' which are rated hardy to Zone 3.

Timing the removal of winter protection in spring is just as important. Start uncovering gradually in mid-April when daytime temperatures consistently reach 5-10°C, but keep mulch nearby for frosty nights. Removing protection too early exposes tender new growth to late NB frosts — Saint John's last frost date averages around May 15, and Fredericton around May 20. Leaving protection on too late promotes rot and fungal growth in the warming, humid spring air. Budget about \$15-30 per plant for winter protection materials, or \$200-500 if you hire a professional to winterize an entire rose garden. For homeowners tired of the annual effort, consider replacing tender roses with Explorer or Parkland series varieties that thrive in NB without any winter protection.

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When should I remove winter wraps and protection from plants in NB spring?

Begin removing winter wraps and protection from plants in New Brunswick in mid-April, when daytime temperatures consistently reach 5-10°C and nighttime lows stay above -5°C for a sustained period. The key word is gradually — removing everything at once on the first warm day risks shocking plants with sudden sun exposure and late spring frosts that are common in NB well into May.

Start with burlap windscreens and trunk wraps on deciduous trees around mid-April. These are the least critical protections to keep in place since the plants are still dormant and aren't at risk of overheating underneath the wraps. Remove burlap from evergreen shrubs like rhododendrons, boxwood, and arborvitae next, ideally on an overcast day to avoid sudden sunscald. Plants that have been shaded by burlap all winter have lost their UV tolerance, and full sun exposure on the first day can cause leaf burn that looks worse than the winter damage you were trying to prevent.

Rose mounds should come off in stages. Around mid to late April, scrape away the top layer of mulch to let the crowns breathe, but leave the soil mound in place. Once you see new red buds emerging on the canes — usually late April to early May — carefully remove the remaining soil mound. Keep loose mulch nearby to throw back over the plants if a hard frost is forecast, which is entirely possible in NB until mid-May in coastal areas and late May inland around Fredericton.

Remove winter mulch from perennial beds between late April and early May. Pull it back gradually — take off half the depth first, then the rest a week later as you see new growth emerging. Leaving heavy mulch on too long smothers emerging shoots and creates ideal conditions for slugs and fungal diseases, both of which thrive in NB's humid spring climate. If you see green shoots already pushing through the mulch, carefully pull it away from around the new growth to prevent etiolation (weak, pale stems from lack of light).

Regional timing varies across New Brunswick. Coastal areas around Moncton and Saint John (Zone 5a-5b) can generally start unwrapping a week earlier than inland areas. Fredericton and the Saint John River valley (Zone 4b-5a) follow about a week later, while northern NB around Bathurst and Campbellton (Zone 3b-4a) should wait until late April or even early May to begin the process. Watch local conditions rather than the calendar — a warm March can tempt you to act early, but NB frequently gets hard frosts and even snowstorms in April. If you're unsure about timing, hiring a professional for spring garden opening costs \$200-400 and ensures proper technique and timing for your specific plants and location.

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Q11

What is the ideal summer lawn care schedule for the Moncton area?

The ideal summer lawn care schedule for the Moncton area follows a weekly rhythm of mowing, targeted watering, and pest monitoring from June through August, taking advantage of Moncton's Zone 5a-5b climate and relatively longer growing season compared to inland NB. Summer is when your lawn faces its biggest stresses — heat, drought periods, insect pressure, and heavy use — so consistency matters more than any single treatment.

Mowing is your most important summer task. Set your mower height to 3-3.5 inches throughout summer. Taller grass shades the soil, reduces moisture loss, and crowds out weeds naturally. Mow weekly, or every 5-6 days during peak growth in June. Never cut more than one-third of the blade height at once, and leave clippings on the lawn — they decompose quickly in Moncton's humid climate and return nitrogen to the soil, reducing your fertilizer needs by up to 25%. Mow in the morning after dew has dried but before afternoon heat stress peaks. Weekly mowing services in the Moncton area run \$35-65 per visit, or \$800-2,000 for a full seasonal contract.

Water deeply but infrequently — this is especially important for Moncton's sandy coastal soils, which drain quickly and don't hold moisture as well as the clay soils found further up the Saint John River valley. Apply 1-1.5 inches of water per week, either from rainfall or irrigation, delivered in 2-3 deep sessions rather than daily light sprinkling. Water early in the morning between 5-9 AM to minimize evaporation and fungal risk. Set out a few tuna cans on your lawn to measure how long your sprinkler takes to deliver half an inch — that's your session length.

June is the time for your summer fertilizer application if you choose to do one. Use a slow-release nitrogen formula applied in early to mid-June. Avoid fertilizing in July and August when heat stress is highest — pushing growth during hot periods weakens the lawn. If your lawn is looking pale in midsummer, it's more likely a watering issue than a fertility issue.

July and August bring the highest risk for grub damage and chinch bugs in the Moncton area. Watch for irregular brown patches that don't respond to watering — lift a section of turf in the affected area and check for white C-shaped grubs. If you find more than 5-10 per square foot, treatment is warranted. Moncton's proximity to the coast can also bring higher humidity that encourages fungal issues like dollar spot and brown patch. Improving air circulation by pruning overhanging branches and avoiding evening watering helps prevent these problems.

Late August is the golden window for overseeding thin or bare areas. Moncton's warm soil temperatures and increasingly cool nights create ideal germination conditions. Overseed between August 15 and September 1 for best results.

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Q12

How do I winterize my sprinkler system before NB's first freeze?

You should winterize your sprinkler system in New Brunswick by late October at the latest, using compressed air to blow out all remaining water from the lines, valves, and heads before the ground freezes to frost depth. NB's frost depth reaches 1.2-1.5 metres, which means any water left in buried irrigation lines will freeze, expand, and crack pipes, fittings, and valve bodies. Repair costs from freeze damage typically run \$300-1,000 or more, making the \$75-150 cost of professional winterization one of the best investments in fall property maintenance.

The blow-out method is the industry standard in New Brunswick and the only reliable approach for our climate. Simply draining the system by opening valves relies on gravity and won't remove water trapped in low spots, elbows, or sprinkler heads. You need an air compressor capable of delivering 80-100 PSI and at least 20 CFM (cubic feet per minute) of volume. Most homeowner shop compressors don't have enough volume — they can

reach the right pressure but can't sustain airflow long enough to clear the lines. Renting a commercial compressor costs \$50-100 per day from NB equipment rental shops.

To blow out the system, start by shutting off the water supply to the irrigation system at the main shut-off valve, which is typically in the basement or mechanical room. Open the manual drain valve (if your system has one) and let water flow out. Then connect your air compressor to the blow-out fitting — this is usually a quick-connect or threaded port near the backflow preventer. Start at the zone farthest from the compressor and work your way closer. Run each zone for 2-3 minutes until only air (no water mist) comes out of the heads. Never exceed 80 PSI for PVC pipe systems or 50 PSI for polyethylene pipe — over-pressurizing can crack fittings or blow out seals.

After blowing out all zones, open the drain valves on the backflow preventer and leave them at a 45-degree angle for the winter. Remove any above-ground backflow prevention devices and store them indoors if possible. Shut off the controller and either disconnect it or set it to "rain" mode so it doesn't try to run cycles over winter.

Timing varies slightly across New Brunswick. Southern and coastal areas like Saint John and Moncton can usually wait until the last week of October, while inland areas around Fredericton should aim for mid-October, and northern NB around Bathurst and Campbellton should winterize by early October. A good rule of thumb is to have the system blown out at least two weeks before the average date of the ground freezing. Most NB irrigation companies book up quickly in October, so schedule your winterization appointment by early September to get your preferred date. If you prefer DIY, make sure you have the right compressor specifications — an undersized compressor that takes too long can overheat and damage itself while still leaving water in the lines.

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When should I do my final fall leaf cleanup to protect my NB lawn?

Your final fall leaf cleanup in New Brunswick should be completed by late October to early November, before the first lasting snowfall buries the leaves and traps them against your lawn for the entire winter.

Leaves left on the lawn through winter create a wet, matted layer that blocks sunlight and air circulation, creating ideal conditions for snow mold — one of the most common lawn diseases in NB's Maritime climate.

The timing depends partly on where you live in the province. Coastal areas around Moncton and Saint John typically see their last significant leaf drop by mid to late October, and the first major snowfall usually holds off until mid-November, giving you a comfortable window. Inland areas around Fredericton see similar leaf drop timing but can get early snow events by late October. Northern NB around Bathurst and Campbellton has an earlier leaf drop cycle — often done by mid-October — but also earlier snow, so the window is tighter.

You don't need to be fanatical about removing every single leaf. A light scatter of leaves on the lawn will break down naturally and even add organic matter to the soil. The problem occurs when leaves pile up thickly enough to mat together when wet, which happens at about 2-3 leaves deep. Areas under large maples, oaks, and birches accumulate the heaviest leaf loads and need the most attention. Oak leaves are particularly problematic because they're slow to decompose and their high tannin content makes them extra acidic — the last thing NB's already acidic soils need.

Mulch-mowing is often more practical than raking for your final cleanup. Run your mower over the leaves at the highest setting, which chops them into small pieces that filter down into the turf and decompose quickly. This works well when the leaf layer is moderate, but if you have thick accumulations, you'll need to rake or blow them first and then mulch-mow the remainder. The chopped leaf material actually benefits your lawn by adding organic matter that feeds soil microbes through fall and spring.

If you miss the window and snow covers your leaves, don't panic — but do act in spring. As soon as the snow melts in April, get out and rake those matted leaves off the lawn before the grass begins growing. The longer they sit on a thawing lawn, the more snow mold develops underneath. Professional fall leaf cleanup in New Brunswick costs \$250-600 depending on property size and tree count, and most landscaping companies offer it as a standalone service or bundled with other fall winterization tasks. For large properties with many mature trees, the professional investment is often worthwhile — a full day of leaf cleanup is hard physical work, and most homeowners underestimate the volume of leaves their property produces.

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Q14

When is the right time to stop mowing in fall in New Brunswick?

Stop mowing your New Brunswick lawn in October, with your final cut typically falling between October 10-25 depending on your location in the province and that year's weather pattern. The key indicator is when grass growth slows to the point where it's no longer reaching your mowing height between weekly cuts — once the grass isn't growing, there's nothing to cut, and running a mower over dormant turf just compacts the soil.

Grass growth in NB slows dramatically once soil temperatures drop below 10°C and daytime air temperatures consistently stay below 12-15°C. In northern NB around Bathurst and Campbellton (Zone 3b-4a), this typically happens by early October. In the Fredericton area (Zone 4b-5a), mid-October is the usual transition. Coastal areas around Moncton and Saint John (Zone 5a-5b) may see grass still growing into the third week of October due to the moderating influence of the Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Strait.

Your final mow of the season should be shorter than your usual summer height. During summer, best practice is mowing at 3-3.5 inches. For the last cut, lower your mower to 2.5 inches. This shorter height reduces the risk of snow mold, which thrives under long, matted grass — a significant problem in NB's humid Maritime winter conditions. Don't go shorter than 2.5 inches, though, as extremely short grass exposes the crown to direct cold damage and desiccation from winter winds.

Phase the height reduction over your last 2-3 mowing sessions rather than dropping suddenly. If you've been mowing at 3.5 inches all summer, cut at 3 inches two weeks before your final mow, then at 2.5 inches for the last cut. This gradual reduction puts less stress on the grass than a sudden scalping. Each time you lower the height, the grass plant redirects more energy to its roots, which is exactly what it needs heading into an NB winter.

Timing the final mow also matters relative to leaf cleanup and fall fertilization. Ideally, your final mow should happen after your September fall fertilizer has been absorbed and after the main leaf drop has occurred. If leaves are still falling, use your final mowing sessions to mulch-mow them into the turf rather than doing separate leaf

removal. This kills two birds with one stone and adds organic matter to the soil heading into winter.

One common mistake NB homeowners make is mowing too late into fall on warm days in November. If you've already done your final mow at 2.5 inches and there's a late warm spell that pushes a bit of growth, leave it alone. Re-mowing disrupts the grass's dormancy preparation and the soil is typically too wet for equipment in November without causing compaction damage. Professional seasonal mowing contracts in NB (\$800-2,000) typically include the final cut adjustment and end-of-season timing as part of their service.

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Q15

What is the spring pruning schedule for common NB shrubs and trees?

The spring pruning schedule for New Brunswick shrubs and trees follows one fundamental rule: prune spring-flowering plants AFTER they bloom, and prune summer-flowering plants BEFORE they leaf out in early spring. Getting this wrong — particularly pruning spring bloomers in early spring — is the most common pruning mistake NB gardeners make, and it eliminates that year's entire flower display because spring-flowering plants set their buds the previous fall.

March is the time for dormant pruning of deciduous trees and summer-flowering shrubs. While NB is still firmly in winter, the sap hasn't started flowing yet, and the bare branch structure lets you see exactly what you're cutting. Prune maples, birches, and oaks during March dormancy to minimize sap bleeding and disease risk. Summer-flowering shrubs that bloom on new wood — including panicle hydrangeas (*Hydrangea paniculata*), Rose of Sharon, potentilla, and spiraea (Anthony Waterer and Goldflame types) — should be pruned hard in March to encourage vigorous new growth that produces flowers later that summer. Cut these back by one-third to one-half of their total height.

April brings the pruning window for roses and some broadleaf evergreens. Once you see buds starting to swell on rose canes — typically mid to late April in the Moncton area, late April in Fredericton — prune back to the highest outward-facing healthy bud. Remove any canes that are dead (brown or black), damaged, or crossing other canes. For broadleaf evergreens like boxwood and holly, do light shaping in late April before new growth begins.

May through June is when you prune spring-flowering shrubs and trees — but only AFTER their blooms have finished. Forsythia (which blooms in early May in NB), lilacs (mid to late May), rhododendrons (late May to June), and flowering crabapples should all be pruned within 2-3 weeks after their flowers fade. This gives the plant the maximum time to set next year's flower buds over summer. If you wait until late summer or fall to prune these, you'll cut off next spring's developing buds.

Specific NB timing for common species: Prune lilacs immediately after flowering in late May, removing spent flower heads and thinning one-third of the oldest stems to ground level. Prune forsythia right after bloom in mid-May by removing one-quarter of the oldest canes at the base. Prune rhododendrons after flowering in June by snapping off spent flower trusses carefully without damaging the new growth buds just below. Prune cedar hedges (arborvitae) in late June when new growth has emerged but is still soft.

Never prune during active spring leaf-out (typically late April to mid-May in NB), as this is when trees are most vulnerable and diseases spread most easily. Also avoid pruning birch and maple trees after early March, as they bleed sap heavily once the sap starts running. Professional pruning services in NB charge \$150-500 for shrub pruning and \$300-1,500+ for tree work depending on size and accessibility.

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How do I transition my garden from summer to fall in New Brunswick?

Transitioning your garden from summer to fall in New Brunswick is a gradual process that begins in late August and continues through October, involving strategic cleanup, planting fall interest, and beginning winter preparation while the growing season still has weeks of warmth remaining. Rather than a sudden transformation, think of it as a phased handoff where you're simultaneously winding down summer performers and setting up for fall beauty and winter readiness.

In late August, start by removing spent annuals and cutting back perennials that have finished blooming and look tired. Pull out bolted lettuce, spent bean plants, and any vegetable garden crops that are done producing. Cut back daylily foliage to about 6 inches once it starts yellowing. Leave plants that still look good or have interesting seed heads — black-eyed Susans, sedums, and ornamental grasses are just hitting their stride in September and provide essential fall and winter garden interest in NB.

September is the prime month for fall planting in New Brunswick. Plant spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils, alliums, and crocuses between early September and mid-October while the soil is still warm enough for root development. NB's acidic soil benefits from a handful of bone meal and a sprinkle of lime worked into each planting hole. This is also an excellent time to plant or divide perennials — the warm soil and cooling air temperatures create ideal root establishment conditions. Peonies, hostas, daylilies, and irises all transplant best in September in NB's climate.

Add fall colour to your garden with cold-hardy annuals and late-blooming perennials. Mums, ornamental kale, and pansies can handle NB's early frosts and will provide colour well into October. Place them in containers on porches and patios, or tuck them into garden beds where summer annuals have been removed. Asters and Japanese anemones bloom through September and October in NB's Zone 5 areas, while sedum 'Autumn Joy' transitions from pink to copper-bronze as the season progresses.

Begin structural winter prep in October. Move tender container plants indoors before the first hard frost (typically early to mid-October in NB). Dig up dahlia tubers, gladiolus corms, and canna rhizomes after frost blackens their foliage, and store them in a cool, dry location. Apply fall fertilizer to the lawn in September with a high-potassium formula. Start accumulating mulching materials — shredded leaves are abundant and free during NB's fall cleanup season, and they make excellent winter mulch for perennial beds.

Don't forget to capture the season's lessons. Take photos of your garden in September and October, noting what performed well and what struggled during the NB summer. This information is invaluable for making plant selection decisions and planning changes for next year. The summer-to-fall transition costs very little if you're doing your own work — mainly the cost of fall bulbs (\$20-60) and mums or kale for colour (\$3-8 per plant).

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Q17

Is it better to plant grass seed in spring or fall in New Brunswick?

Fall is overwhelmingly the better time to plant grass seed in New Brunswick — specifically mid-August through early September — delivering germination rates and establishment success that spring seeding simply cannot match. The combination of warm soil, cooling air temperatures, reduced weed competition, and reliable fall rainfall creates near-perfect conditions for grass seed establishment in NB's Maritime climate.

The science behind fall's superiority is straightforward. By mid-August, NB soil temperatures are at their annual peak — typically 18-22°C in the top few inches — which is the ideal range for cool-season grass germination. Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and fine fescues (the grasses best suited to NB's Zone 4-5 climate) all germinate fastest between 15-25°C soil temperature. At the same time, air temperatures are cooling from summer highs, reducing stress on new seedlings and lowering their water requirements. The result is rapid, strong germination followed by steady establishment through September and October.

Spring seeding in NB faces several significant disadvantages. First, soil temperatures don't reach the ideal germination range until mid-May to early June, but by that time, weed seeds are also germinating aggressively. Crabgrass, in particular, competes fiercely with new grass seedlings, and you can't use pre-emergent herbicide (which would prevent grass seed from germinating too). Second, spring-seeded grass has to survive its first NB summer as an immature plant, and hot, dry July and August conditions stress young grass severely. Third, NB's spring weather is notoriously unreliable — late frosts, cold snaps, and heavy rains can disrupt germination.

If you must seed in spring, timing and technique adjustments help. Wait until soil temperatures reach at least 10°C, which usually occurs in mid-May in the Moncton area and late May around Fredericton. Choose perennial

ryegrass as your primary species because it germinates the fastest (5-10 days versus 14-21 for Kentucky bluegrass), giving seedlings a head start against weeds. Water lightly but frequently — 2-3 times per day for 5-10 minutes each — to keep the top half-inch of soil consistently moist without creating puddles. Be prepared to water through summer if rainfall is insufficient.

For fall seeding, the optimal NB window is August 15 to September 5. Prepare the soil by raking or power-raking bare areas, apply a starter fertilizer high in phosphorus, and spread seed at the recommended rate (typically 4-6 lbs per 1,000 square feet for overseeding, 6-8 lbs for new lawns). Keep the seed bed moist for the first 2-3 weeks until germination is well established. Fall-seeded grass will develop a strong root system through October and November before going dormant, and it'll come back thick and vigorous the following spring.

If you have bare spots that can't wait until fall, spring seeding is better than no seeding. Just manage your expectations — plan on doing a follow-up overseeding in fall to fill in any gaps. Professional overseeding services in NB run \$200-500 depending on lawn size and condition.

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Q18

How do I prepare a new garden bed in fall for spring planting in NB?

Preparing a new garden bed in fall is the smartest approach in New Brunswick because NB's freeze-thaw cycles over winter naturally break up heavy soil, and organic amendments have months to integrate before spring planting. Start this process in September or October while the ground is still workable, and by May you'll have a bed that's dramatically easier to plant into than anything you could prepare in spring.

Begin by marking out your bed shape and removing the existing turf. For small beds, slice under the sod with a flat spade, cutting 2-3 inches deep, and roll it up for composting or relocating. For larger beds, an easier approach is the smother method — lay cardboard (remove tape and staples) directly over the grass, overlapping sheets by 6 inches, and top with 4-6 inches of compost or topsoil. The cardboard kills the grass over winter and breaks down by spring, while worms are drawn to the decomposing cardboard and naturally till the soil underneath. This no-dig method is particularly effective in NB because heavy fall rains and snowmelt keep the cardboard consistently moist.

If you choose to dig, this is the time to address NB's characteristically acidic soil. Test your soil pH — most NB soils come in at pH 4.5-6.0, which is too acidic for many garden plants that prefer pH 6.0-7.0. Apply pelletized lime at the rate your soil test recommends, typically 50-100 lbs per 1,000 square feet for moderately acidic soil. Fall application is ideal because lime takes 2-3 months to fully react with the soil, so by spring planting time, the pH adjustment will be well underway. Work the lime into the top 6-8 inches of soil.

Amend the soil generously with organic matter. NB soils benefit enormously from compost, aged manure, or leaf mould — spread 3-4 inches across the bed and work it in to a depth of 8-12 inches. For the heavy clay soils common in NB's river valleys around Fredericton and along the Saint John River, organic matter improves drainage and prevents the waterlogged conditions that rot plant roots. For the sandy coastal soils found around Shediac and Miramichi, organic matter improves water and nutrient retention. Either way, you can't add too much organic matter to an NB garden bed.

After amending, top the bed with 3-4 inches of shredded leaf mulch and leave it for winter. This mulch prevents erosion from fall rains and spring snowmelt, suppresses early spring weeds, and continues adding organic matter as it decomposes. NB's freeze-thaw cycles will do the work of further breaking up soil clumps, incorporating amendments, and creating the loose, friable texture that plant roots love.

By April, your fall-prepared bed will be weeks ahead of one started in spring. You can begin planting cold-tolerant perennials and shrubs as soon as the soil thaws and firms up in mid-April. Budget \$50-150 for amendments and mulch for a typical 100-square-foot bed, or \$300-600 for professional bed preparation.

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