

Garden Calendar

(provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension, Putnam County)

December

- Winterize trees and shrubs: Trees and shrubs exposed to winter winds often suffer from desiccation and winter-burn. Many gardeners find burlap windbreaks and spray-on anti-desiccants helpful. But you need a little planning. For burlap, you must install the stakes before the ground freezes (this also goes for driveway stake which help to minimize plow damage to lawns, trees, and shrubs). Spray-on anti-desiccants should be applied before temperatures dip below forty.
- Early December is not too late to plant bulbs. Remember to water them in; this gets their roots growing. Those roots are needed to keep frost from heaving them out of the ground.
- If you intend to use a live Christmas tree, dig the planting hole early, store soil in buckets where it will not freeze, and cover the hole with planks or plywood to prevent injury. And, since you don't know how big the root ball will be, it's best to be generous with the hole. Remember, a live tree can only stay in the house a few days.
- Do you need to protect trees and shrubs from deer browsing? Consider deer-repellent sprays, but know that netting and fencing work better than repellents in winter when deer are hungry. Get the stakes in place before the ground freezes.
- Check houseplants for critters that might have hitched a ride. So often once indoors, insect hitchhikers like spider mites, white flies, aphids and scale, proliferate. Catch them early and nip them in the "bud."
- Tune up your bird feeders, and stock them with a wide variety of sunflowers seeds, nyjer thistle, nuts and fruit. Birds need these calorie-rich fuels to keep them healthy in winter.
- Clean and store your tools (bucket of sand mixed with oil etc) For most shovels, rakes and garden forks use is enough to keep them clean and rust free. But tools, especially those with working parts like lopping shears and hand-pruners benefit from an end-of-season oiling
- Mulch: It's not too late. In fact, many sources recommend mulching once the ground has frozen.
- Don't forget the compost! Add some leaf mulch and give the compost pile a turn.
- Evergreen overwinter best if they go into the winter months with their "reservoirs" full. In those late fall weeks when we don't have an inch of rain per week water your evergreens (especially transplants) up until the ground freezes.
- Empty and roll up your hoses.