

Think Organic

Elements of Organic Gardening

Organic gardening brings a more holistic approach to the process of gardening. These are a few key points to get you started:

Start with a Solid Foundation

- Healthy soil is the key to strong, more resistant and productive plants. Understand the soil you have and the nutrients and conditions a healthy plant requires.
- Realize some of the chemicals you add may decrease the health of your soil.

Understand What May Cause Problems in Your Garden

- Be proactive in preventive measures.
- Put water where it is needed, at the roots. You will eliminate a potential variable in some disease development.
- Select resistant varieties of plants.

Aim for Balance in Your Garden

- Bare soil is an invitation to weeds. Space your plants appropriately, mulch around your plants, and do not allow weed seeds to develop.
- Most bugs or insects are not bad. Creating a more balanced ecosystem allows nature to handle the problems.

The Right Plant for the Right Place

- Know your garden and the plants you choose. A plant not suited for your garden environment will be stressed and thus a target for pests and disease.

Observe Your Garden

- Notice a problem as it begins, rather than after it has invaded your entire garden.

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GARDENING TIPS

W I N T E R

A Month-By-Month Guide

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Winter Gardening Tips

December

- Prune evergreens carefully for holiday decorations.
- Explore the gardens for interesting seeds, vines, berries, and ground covers to add to holiday decorations.
- Provide holiday plants correct light, humidity, day and nighttime temperature conditions to prolong their bloom.
- Avoid walking on frozen grass, which causes bare spots.
- Mulch bulb beds to protect from thawing and freezing and to conserve moisture. Check all hardy bulbs potted earlier; move indoors into good light when roots develop and 2"-3" of new growth is visible.
- After leaf fall, mulch perennials and other small plants with straw, pine needles, leaves or branches of evergreens.

Some seeds are extremely tiny. Our volunteers find ways to make planting easier.



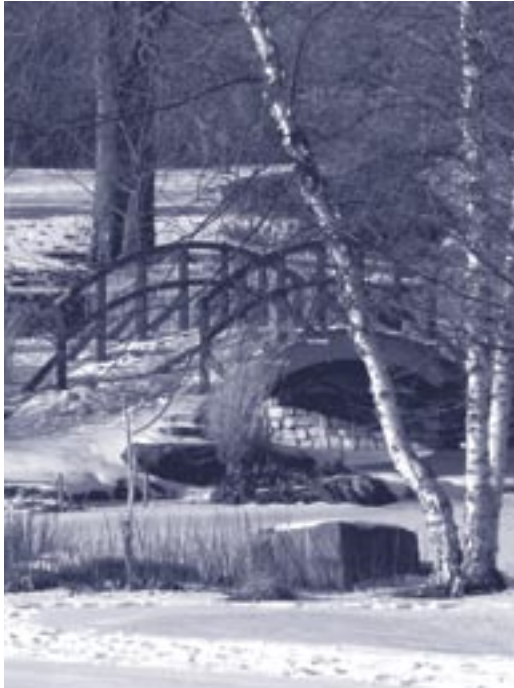
Indoor plants can give us that gardening feeling year 'round.

- Set tree guards to protect ornamental apples and cherries from rodent damage.
- Ventilate cold frames until ground freezes and then close and mulch lightly or cover with straw matting.
- Inventory leftover supplies. Store remaining insecticides or herbicides safely and protect from freezing.
- Watch for houseplant pests.
- Keep houseplants away from drafty windows and cold glass.
- Turn houseplants regularly to promote balanced growth.

January

- Visit Conservation Corner at the Arboretum after a snowfall for a magical experience.
- Prune plants while dormant; including fruit trees, summer and fall blooming shrubs and vines.

(Continued on reverse side)



Enjoy the winter wonderland at the Arboretum and discover things that you can add to your landscape.

(Continued from reverse side)

- Prune berry bushes to encourage new growth and fruit production.
- Call arborist to prune and thin major trees to avoid winter storm damage.
- Fertilize acid loving plants, such as azalea, holly, laurel, leucothoe, and rhododendron with oak leaf compost, manure or organic fertilizer rated 5-10-5, if not fed in late fall.
- Check winter mulches.
- Check shrubs and trees for rodent damage. Protect trees and shrubs with wire mesh or tree wrap.
- Check guy wires on newly planted trees, tighten if heaved by frost.

- Use boughs of discarded Christmas trees to protect tender broadleaf evergreens from sunscald and small plants from frost heave.
- Spray broadleaf evergreens with antidesiccant if not done in late fall to prevent drying when temperature is above 40°.
- Water broadleaf and needle evergreens during thaw. These plants still need appropriate moisture.
- Shake or sweep snow from evergreens; let icy covering melt naturally.
- Use sand or ashes on icy walks and drives instead of salt. It can be toxic to plants and create poor conditions in the soil.
- Plant paper-white narcissus in pebbles and water.
- Force branches of flowering shrubs and trees. Pussy willow, crabapple, deutzia, forsythia, peach, plum, quince, and witch hazel are good to try.
- Sow bibb, buttercrunch, black seeded Simpson, and oakleaf lettuces; arugula; chervil; corn-salad; basil; Italian parsley under fluorescent light.
- Plan spring and summer landscape changes. Consider adding some of the edible plants into your landscape.
- Plan next summer's vegetable garden. Remember to rotate crops to a different location each year.
- Check stored roots of cannas, dahlias, and other tropical bulbs. Discard any that are discolored or rotted.
- Fertilize houseplants showing signs of new growth with a water soluble organic fertilizer for houseplants or fish emulsion.
- Groom houseplants each time you water.
- Pinch back houseplants to maintain shape.

- Turn houseplants regularly to prevent onesided growth.
- Watch for mites, scale and whiteflies.

February

- Prune plants while dormant; including fruit trees, summer and fall blooming shrubs and vines.
- Limit pruning of spring bloomers to removal of sucker growth and rubbing, overgrown or broken branches.
- Continue to put cut branches of magnolia, crabapple, or forsythia in vases for forcing blooms indoors.
- Finish pruning berry bushes
- Check protective screening and mulches, loosen if matted by snow.
- Check plant stakes and guy wires.
- Reapply antidesiccants to young, exposed evergreens if temperature remains above 40° for several days.

Taking care of seedlings indoors can create year 'round gardening.



Pruning can be done in the winter when plants are dormant. It is easier to see what needs to be done without the leaves.

- Water broadleaf and needle evergreens during thaw.
- Make valentines from natural materials.
- Open and ventilate cold frames if temperature is above 45°.
- Wash and scrub pots and flats used for seedlings.
- Clean and sharpen tools.
- Order bare-root trees and shrubs.
- Order flower, vegetable and herb seeds.
- Start slow-growing annuals and spring and summer perennials indoors.
- Fertilize houseplants showing signs of new growth with fish emulsion or a water soluble organic fertilizer for houseplants.
- Groom houseplants each time you water.
- Pinch back houseplants to maintain shape.
- Turn houseplants regularly.
- Watch for mites, scale and whiteflies.

To learn more about programs on aspects of gardening, contact Yvonne Dunphe, Adult Education Supervisor, at 434-9005