

In the Garden

Remember the Winter Garden

I bet you look outside at the soggy wind battered garden and think "Next year it will be fabulous! I am finished gardening for the year." Your house is toasty warm. Outside it's raining/snowing/blowing/and hailing. It's basically weather behaving badly. Garden tools are away and you are complete. Really? Given a sunny bright winter day most of us gardeners are out there poking away at the soil, peeking under protective plant covers, and checking out the empty greenhouse. What will you grow here in the spring? Maybe you should go and get some new pots now? There is very little competition at the garden centre! Well let me

tell you there are some real beauties at the garden center this time of year. These are the plants that bloom in the winter. Why you may ask? Ah that's because there are so many winter insects that pollinate them.

One of my favourite winter shrubs is the Chinese Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis mollis*. It has yellow spidery blooms that smell heavenly. How about Cyclamen? They are so easy to grow and have tiny pink blooms over variegated green leaves. They produce seeds that are sticky and will spew them all over the surrounding area. That's why you get Cyclamen leaves popping up in the lawn.

There are indoor Cyclamen too that you should pick up to adorn the house over the winter. As I write this, my Japanese Aralia is bursting into bloom in the back yard. This is an absolutely excellent plant



that is tough and hardy. I try to remember to cut those flower spikes off when they are spent as they can rot and contaminate the leaves. Winter heather is also a real treat to plant in the garden and you get some nice colour choices.

Viburnums are really great for winter colour as well as Sweet Box (*Sarcococca*) and Hellebores. Most of these are waiting patiently for you to go to the garden centre and adopt them. Whatever this darn pandemic throws at us I am determined to pick up some fresh colourful houseplants and carry on! As none of us are going to be traveling to tropical climes this year let's bring some of the tropics to us! *Happy gardening!*

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& Happy New Year!

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