

Gardening Calendar

Connie Geiger

Conditions during each season in your location will determine the actual timing of your garden work. If you have questions regarding the timing of garden activities in your area, please feel free to ask a Master Gardener at HelenaMasterGardeners@hotmail.com.

December

- Check stored flower bulbs, vegetables, fruits for rot and fungus problems. Discard any showing signs of rot. Inspect stored vegetables, fruits and bulbs for any damage. Remove sprouts from potatoes.
- As dry spells occur, check the soil around trees and shrubs and other perennials and water (early in the day).
- Take seed inventory and plan next year's garden. Plan on rotating crops to discourage pests and diseases.

January

- Check storage vegetables and bulbs for mildew and rot, and destroy those affected.
- Reuse natural Christmas trees as a bird feeding station, or as added wind protection for evergreens; or cut limbs to use as winter protection for perennials
- Consult your garden journal and plan for the new growing season
- Plan and construct, or repair, garden projects: hoop houses, tomato cages, fences, gates, cold frames, trellises, benches
- Reapply or redistribute mulches that have blown or been washed away during the winter. Watch for frost heaving of tender perennials and cover if needed
- Replace windbreaks to protect sensitive landscape evergreens
- Moisten root system of stored geraniums (repeat monthly)
- Remember when deicing walkways and driveways to use calcium chloride or potassium chloride products that are less damaging to plants and lawns
- Bring out bulbs from cold storage for "forcing" for early indoor blooms
- Christmas flowering plants like poinsettia and amaryllis need bright light, cooler temps, fertilizing, and reduced watering
- Watch for rodent damage of trees and shrubs. Install mesh, wire or plastic trunk guards as needed
- Brush heavy snow and ice from tree and shrub limbs to prevent later damage. Multistemmed evergreens (arborvitae) can be tied together.
- Wrap tree trunks of young trees, and those with thin bark, to prevent frost cracking during cold sunny days
- Consult garden catalogues and start comparison pricing for Spring seed orders



February

- Check with local nursery and garden stores for seeds and early planting options
- Inventory and check dates of left-over seed packets; sprout a few in a moist paper towel to ensure still viable
- Order new seeds for Spring planting
- Clean, sharpen, and oil garden tools; sand and repaint handles
- Using detergent and mild bleach solution clean old pots and seed trays to prepare for seed starts
- Clean indoor plants; giving them a "shower" helps remove dust that can clog pores or hinder light penetration and can also wash salts from the soil
- Brush heavy snow and ice from tree and shrub limbs to prevent later damage



"There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is the January thaw. The other is the seed catalogues." - Hal Borland

"The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size." - Gertrude S. Wister