



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints



December 2020

Christmas and Hannukah are only a few weeks away. Think about garden tools and gloves, flower pots, garden art and books, seeds, live plants such as poinsettia or Christmas cactus and living wreaths for presents for the holiday season. Holiday mail catalogs are arriving and may have items that fit your budget, and could be the perfect gift!

There are still a few chores that can be done outside on clear, crisp, windless days. Let's look to see what they may be.

MAINTENANCE-Wash down all of your garden tools and give them a wipe of linseed oil on the wooden and metal areas to help prevent rusting. Choose a dry day to clear out the garden shed in preparation for spring. Repair fences and apply a wood preservative to prevent them from rotting. Check tree ties and stakes to ensure that trees are still secure following strong autumn winds. Tighten or loosen ties as necessary. Wash and disinfect bird feeders and bird baths. Turn your compost heap to mix the ingredients and help the contents to decompose.

LAWNS-Do not walk on lawns until frost has melted to prevent damage to the grass blades. Keep clearing leaves off the lawn to let the light in and prevent dead patches appearing. Send your lawnmower to be serviced and sharpened.

VEGETABLE GARDEN- Spread wood ashes evenly on your vegetable garden using no more than 1.5 pounds per 100 square feet per year. Don't use if the soil PH is greater than 7.0 or if potassium levels are excessive. Get a soil test if not sure. Carefully plan your vegetable garden for next year so that you ensure good crop rotation to avoid a buildup of pests and diseases. Order your vegetable seeds for next year and reflect on what worked well this year and what didn't. Don't be afraid to try new ideas.

SHRUBS-If natural precipitation is sparse and ground is not frozen, water evergreen trees and shrubs to ensure they are well hydrated heading into winter.

HOLIDAY DECORATING-Scout the yard for evergreen cuttings, holly berries, dried pods and other natural materials that make nice holiday decorations—both inside and out. Don't overlook other plant choices for

holiday color as poinsettias aren't your only option. Consider kalanchoe, cyclamen, bromeliads, 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia, Christmas cactus, orchids, or blooming mini cactus. Pot up amaryllis, paperwhites or pre-chilled hyacinths so you'll have winter blooms inside for the holidays and beyond.

POTTED PLANTS-Move containers of shrubs or bedding planters to a sheltered spot clustering them together to protect the root systems from suffering frost damage.

PLAN AHEAD-Assess how your gardens fared this past year. Jot down what plants you liked and which you didn't before you forget. Make note of plants that need to be moved. Think about improvements or changes you'd like to make. The notes will be a big help when it comes to seed and plant buying time. Take an inventory of tools and equipment that you need for next year. Add them to your Christmas list.

As the year draws to its close and the days are at their shortest, there is still gardening work to be done to protect tender plants and aid wildlife in your garden. Remember to feed the birds and give them a nice fresh drink of water daily.



Have a healthy, happy holiday season with family and friends. Stay safe, warm, and dream about your gardens!

--Sandy