



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – January Helpful Hints

2022

For Northern gardeners, January is the gardening “off-season”. This off-season is a good time to daydream about your garden or new plants. This is also the time to pore over garden catalogs and get orders submitted for spring gardening.

What to do this month...

Recycle your Christmas Tree

- Provide Shelter for Wildlife: Leave the tree right in its stand, and set it out in the yard for the rest of the winter. It can fill in a bare spot, giving you something pretty to look at, but, more importantly, it can provide winter shelter for birds. If you have plenty of trees around, consider laying your tree on its side to provide shelter for mammals such as rabbits.
- Use the Branches to Mulch Perennials: Cut long branches with loppers or pruners, and lay them over perennials. This is especially useful for perennials that are susceptible to frost heaving, as well as those that are only marginally hardy in your zone. A covering of evergreen branches could be the difference between losing a plant this winter and seeing it bloom again next year.
- Start a New Compost Pile: A layer of thin branches—such as evergreen branches—can make a good base for a new compost pile. They allow for a bit of airflow at the bottom of the pile, and will break down slowly. After you've got them in place, go ahead and start adding your kitchen scraps and other compostables as usual.
- Repurpose the Trunk: As far as reusing the trunk of your Christmas tree goes, you can lay it on the ground to use as a rustic garden bed edging or use it as a support to grow vining plants, such as morning glories. Let's put those Christmas trees to work in our gardens!

Garden Chores

- Check for frost heaves around your outdoor plants and apply additional mulch as needed.
- If you are storing bulbs, corms, or tubers, check them to make sure that they are neither rotting nor too dry.
- Prune fruit trees to promote healthy growth and fruit production. Remove any dead or damaged branches.
- Clean and sharpen gardening tools.
- Once snow falls, remove it from paths to the garden for better access to clear away fallen limbs and inspect for damage.

Feed the Birds

During winter, birds are scavenging for food, looking for a place to take it easy for a while.

- Start winter bird feeding to attract birds to the garden. With this trick, you can garden for pollinators all year long!
- Add a large-capacity feeder or multiple feeders, so you only have to refill weekly. Place in a spot where you can see the feeder that also has a tree or shrub about 10' away.
- Put out suet, fruit and peanuts - All birds love these!
- Black-oil sunflower seeds – are a favorite of cardinals, woodpeckers, blue jays, goldfinches, finches, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches.
- Thistle seeds – Goldfinches simply love thistle seeds! Only use in thistle feeders.
- Safflower seeds – cardinals, chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers' snack on safflower. But squirrels don't like them!
- Birds may be slow to find your feeders. Once they do, they're counting on you. Make sure your feeder is always full, or birds will find a more reliable feeder!

Plant an Indoor Herb Garden

- Place indoor herbs in the sunniest spot possible. They love natural light and need at least 4 hours of sun every day. Keep herbs warm by avoiding chilly windows.
- Plant these herbs that grow best inside: mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme, lemongrass, chives and bay.
- Choose pots or upcycle containers with drainage holes on the bottom. Or place stones in the bottom of the pot before adding soil.
- Plant herbs in organic potting soil.
- Use an organic plant food that helps you grow bigger and better herbs. Continue fertilizing herbs once each month.