

THE ART & SCIENCE OF SMART GARDENING

Horticulture

get ready for spring

MASTER GARDENERS'
REGIONAL REPORTS

MAXIMIZE YOUR SPACE:
MIX FOOD & FLOWERS

PLANT NOW
FOR BUTTERFLIES



12
all-time
favorite
plants

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2009 HORTMAG.COM



#BXNRFJB *****AUTO**5-DIGIT 10940
#9760100076621332# 0902 JAN10 HTC2
DEBBIE LESTER P115
CORNELL COOP EXT 013454
STE 300
18 SEWARD AVE
MIDDLETOWN NY 10940-1919

PLUS
The Trick to
Early Tomatoes

with a screwdriver to tell how dry or wet it is. Most roots lie in the top six inches of our soil so getting the water down to the bottom sixth inch is important. Trees require deeper and less frequent watering. Watering deeply and infrequently, once plants are established, will insure plant health.

WALDEN, N.Y., ZONE 5B
DEBORAH BELL-LEVEROCK
CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF
ORANGE COUNTY

An accountant by profession, I am a gardener by avocation as well as obsession, for I can never have enough plants and my mantra is, Surely I have room for one more! I graduated from the Cornell Master Gardener program in February 2008 but have been involved in the gardening world nearly all of my life.

What's the most frequently asked question you hear?

Sometimes the questions are related to winter injury or cold damage of woody plant material, but more often involve a discussion of winter pruning. Freezing temperatures may damage plants when cells rupture due to rapid temperature fluctuations when ice crystals form within the cells. Evergreens may suffer injury due to desiccation from dry, blowing winds or when groundwater is frozen and therefore unavailable to the tree. Bark splitting is another type of injury that has a causal relationship to sudden temperature changes. Corrective pruning should not be started until one can fully assess and evaluate the entire scope of injuries. Once the damage is assessed fully, remove all the dead wood to the ground. Little else can be done to revive a plant that has suffered the ill effects of a freezing injury, and watering wilted, cold damaged plants will not help them.

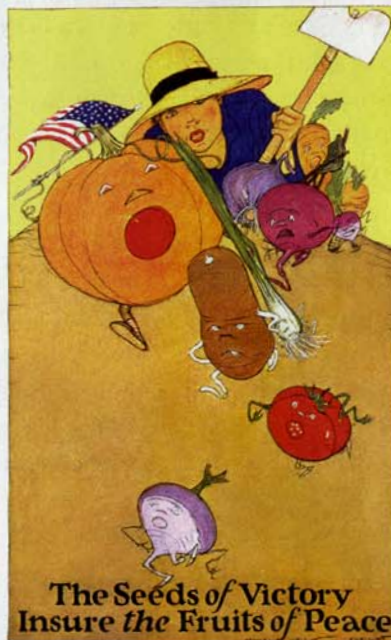
Prevention of cold weather injury is the best way to fend off damage to plants. Watering plants throughout the autumn will prevent drought stress that predisposes them to winter injury and cankers. Wrap prized woody plant materials in exposed positions with burlap to prevent desiccation. Do not stimulate new growth by fertilizing or pruning in early autumn. Allowing plants to harden-off in the fall before the arrival of cold weather will allow them to remain healthy and happy.

That's a strange question!

We've kept a book for years as to the oddest questions we receive. This was the scariest: Can I thaw my turkey in the toilet? Yeah, it was real question!

—Eileen Boyle, Cecil County, Md.

WAR GARDENS OVER THE TOP



The Seeds of Victory
Insure the Fruits of Peace

FOR FREE BOOKS WRITE TO NATIONAL WAR GARDEN COMMISSION
 WASHINGTON, D.C.

Charles Lathrop Pack, President

Percival S. Ridsdale, Secretary

A tough economy and recalls on a variety of produce have gardeners planning and planting victory gardens.

What's on your to-do list right now?

1. Continue to create "gardener's gold" by employing winter composting methods. Over the course of the winter, I will continue layering green and brown plant material within the pile, making sure to use smaller particle sizes due to decreased microbial activity. I'll also maintain a "pre-compost" bin to reduce those cold weather trips out to the pile.

2. Continue with appropriate care for the holiday gift plants purchased and received during the past months. As a general rule, these blooming plants need bright, indirect light, cool night temperatures between 50 and 60 degrees and moist soil conditions. Moving amaryllis to a cooler environment will keep the plants more compact and sturdy. I'll continue to water and feed until mid-May when the bulbs will take a three to four month rest.
3. I'll plan the 2009 vegetable and flower beds with the help of my favorite garden catalogs. I look forward to spending the long, cold, dark and dreary days of January and February in New York curled up with these seed and bulb catalogs, graph paper and a pencil. Flipping through the pages of these catalogs is a cathartic experience and everything looks so beautiful and delicious from my vantage point on the couch.

What trends are you seeing in your area?

We're seeing an increased interest in vegetable or victory gardens on the heels of increasing produce prices at the grocery and a wave of recalled produce for everything from E-coli contamination to Salmonella. There is also an increased interest in organic gardening as a result of better consumer education on the potential toxicity of certain pesticides and residual effects on the soil. Another trend long in the making is garden design based on native plantings.

RICE LAKE, WIS., ZONE 3B

MARILYN SAFFERT

BARRON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS



I've been a Master Gardener for 14 years, but have been a gardening fanatic ever since my husband Paul and I bought our 5-acre place 37 years ago.

What's the most frequent question you hear in January and February?

Folks want to know if they need expensive grow lights to start flower or vegetable seedlings in the house. After gathering information from the seed packet about germination, usually all you need is a good seed-

less mix, a room that's constantly at 60-70 degrees and a decent lighting system. That lighting system does not have to include pricey fluorescent bulbs. A setup using ordinary and very inexpensive shop lights (fluorescent bulbs) works fine. The cool, white bulbs produce short and stocky plants, and this is the type of growth you want from those tiny tomato and petunia seedlings. The pricey grow lights are only necessary when you want to grow flowering plants such as violets in a room that does not have enough natural light.

BATON ROUGE, LA., ZONE 8B

SUSAN BROUSSARD

I've been a Master Gardener since 2002 but I've been rearranging the plants in my yard for 30 years. I recently moved from shade gardening to blazing-hot-sun gardening when Hurricane Gustav removed a large tree from my backyard in September 2008.



What garden trends are you seeing?

Rain gardens. They are a garden area designed to collect rainwater instead of allowing it to run into the city drainage system. In my case, we'd experience the formation of a small lake in the backyard during the winter rainy season. (The alligators loved it.) There was no place for the water to run off into so I installed a rain garden.

A hole was dug at the perimeter of the low spot approximately 3-feet deep and 12-feet long by 3-feet wide. We then layered in large gravel, pea gravel, sand and last, garden soil. We separated each layer with landscape cloth to keep the rocks, sand and soil from sifting into the air pockets through which the water would drain.

A few days later after a major rain, I watched the water collect in the rain garden. The pool of water trickled into the ground and disappeared within a few hours as opposed to sitting there for days on end. Our rain garden has been part of the landscape for about five years and it definitely has been the answer to our drainage problem. (The alligators, however, are still looking for another spot in which to hang out.) **H**

dig deeper

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