



### Arbor Day in Houston is the third Friday in January

1. Plant a native fruit tree for the Cedar Waxwings, citrus tree for butterfly caterpillars.
2. Plant a shade tree for someone who needs one in their yard.
3. If you have a tall tree, set up an owl's nest box. Owls eat rats and mice.

### Freeze Protection

1. A day or two before a hard freeze is predicted water your yard during your allotted irrigation day.
2. Take moveable potted plants into the garage or inside your home. Alternatively, you can group them snugly together close to the house. Water and cover them with a fibrous material (see below)
3. Cover with fibrous material (see below) in ground tropical plants and those potted plants that are too large or heavy to move:
  - Cover them to a practical height. It is much better to save as much of the bottom of the plant.
  - With the return of warm weather they should sprout new growth from the protected portion, and you can then prune away the frost damaged areas.
4. Use fibrous material (i.e. containing small pores) to cover plants.
  - Good candidates are frost-cloth, light canvas tarps, blankets, towels, bed sheets, and corrugated boxes. These keep the cold off the plants, and allow them to breathe at the same time. If left on as the day warms up, it will not roast the plants.
  - Do Not Cover Plants Directly With Any Type of Plastic. It is non-porous, trapping the moisture-laden cold air onto their branches, leaves, stems and flowers -- freezing them. If left on as the day warms up, it acts as an oven trapping the heat and roasting the plants.
5. Create an instant mini-greenhouse, where needed:



- Place a work light outfitted with an incandescent 60 watt bulb on the ground then cover the plant with fibrous material (see above). **Note:** Do not let a bare light bulb touch the ground. Do not use halogen lights -- they're too hot. Do not use CFL or LED bulbs – they emit very little heat.
- Or wrap incandescent Christmas lights around your plants, then cover them with fibrous material (see above). For low plants, just wind the light strand through the plants on the ground, then cover with fibrous material. **Note:** Make sure the light strands you use are in good working condition, and waterproof. Do not use LED lights – they emit very little heat.

### Winter Drought Protection

- ✓ Deeply water shrubs and young trees once per week.
- ✓ Deeply water mature trees every 2 weeks.
- ✓ Irrigate the lawn once per week. Grass roots need a drink to remain healthy. To see whether your lawn is receiving enough water, use the screwdriver test. Stick a long flat-head screwdriver into the soil. If it easily penetrates, then the lawn is receiving enough moisture.



### Annuals

- ✓ Plant your tulips now!
- ✓ This month brighten flowerbeds, and redo all those tired container plantings with cheerful annuals. There are plenty of plants, which love this cooler weather and produce an incredible show of brilliant color.
  - In sunny locations plant Ageratum, Dianthus, English Daisy, Linaria, Nasturtium, Ornamental Kale, Pansies, large-flowered Petunias, Pot Marigold, Snapdragons, South African Daisy, Stock, Sweet Alyssum, Sweet Peas and Wallflower.
  - In partly sunny locations, Dianthus can become perennial, making a nice groundcover while not in bloom.
  - Plant Delphiniums, Sweet Pea, and Zebrina Hollyhocks for spring blooms. They'll grow during the winter to a height of 3 feet, and bloom in March/April.
  - For shady areas try Lobelia, Primrose and Viola. Primroses are known to perennialize. They become dormant during our warm season, but may return when the weather cools down.
  - Another plant that does well in bright locations is Fuschia - a wonderful plant with nodding bell-shaped, tubular flowers. While it loves our cool season, it is frost tender. So it is best planted in a container that can be moved to a garage during freezing weather. During the summer, move it indoors and it will continue to bloom for you there.
  - Swiss Chard 'Bright Lights' has beautiful beet-red leaves. Combined with Nasturtium and Violas, not only do you get beautiful color that will last through the winter, you can use the Chard's leaves and the flowers of the Nasturtiums and Violas to dress up salads!
- ✓ Fertilize beds and containers with a soluble liquid fertilizer. Always follow the label directions.

### Exotics and Tropicals

- ✓ Refrain from feeding your indoor plants. They need a rest from growing.
- ✓ Poinsettias can be forced to bloom next year. Place them in a sunny, warm window, and keep their soil evenly moist. Remove dead leaves and any of the colorful bracts that do not look healthy. Refrain from feeding them until they can be moved outdoors, usually in mid-March.

### Fruits, Herbs and Vegetables

- ✓ Prune Blackberry and Raspberry canes that were infected with Powery Mildew down to the ground.
- ✓ Prune your deciduous fruit trees for larger fruit and healthier trees.
- ✓ Plant dormant fruit trees, berries and grapes this month.
- ✓ Fruit tree bloom buds often begin appearing this month. To bright a winter room, select a 1 - 3 foot branch covered with buds. Crush the bottom 3 inches of the branch and set in a tall vase with warm water in a dark corner. As the buds begin to open, move the vase into brighter light.
- ✓ Towards the end of this month plant fennel, garlic, chamomile and rosemary.
- ✓ Plant beets, cabbage, carrots, green bunching onions (scallions), lettuce, multiplying onions, and peas..



### Insect Control

- ✓ Spray dormant oil to trees and shrubs that may be harboring over wintering insect pests and their eggs. It is very effective against scale, which seems to be the major insect problem for the cool season. Do not apply dormant oil when temperatures fall below 45 F or rise above 85 F.
- ✓ If Giant Aphids make their presence on oak trees, consider not spraying them. Within a couple of weeks they'll be eaten by Lady Bugs and their caterpillars.
- ✓ Regularly inspect your plants for early signs of insect problems. This is the easiest and most important part of pest control.

### Lawn Care

- ✓ Irrigate your lawn at once per week in the absence of rain. Grass roots need a drink to remain healthy. Use the screwdriver test. Stick a long flat-head screwdriver into the soil and if it easily penetrates, then the lawn is receiving enough moisture.
- ✓ Mow the lawn only when it needs it. Because the grass is growing very slowly, if at all, use a lower blade setting, but do not scalp the lawn
- ✓ Use your mower to rake up leaves and debris from lawns so the sun can reach the grass blades. The shredded debris can be used as mulch or put into compost bins.
- ✓ Add organic matter to the soil by spreading and raking in no more than 1/2 inch of humus. The grass will thank you for it.

### Perennials

- ✓ January is the last month to plant wildflower seedlings such as Texas Bluebonnet, Indian Paintbrush, Winecups, Day Primrose, Texas Yellow Columbine for spring blooms.
- ✓ Columbines do best in those garden spots that receive afternoon shade.
- ✓ It's not too early to plant perennials, especially those that attract hummingbirds in their northward spring migration

### Roses

- ✓ Build new rose beds or rework existing ones.
- ✓ Don't prune roses until Valentines Day.

### Shrubs

- ✓ This is one of the best times to transplant both evergreen and deciduous shrubs. You'll give them 3 months to establish themselves before they face our heat.
- ✓ If you see yellow leaves on your azaleas, don't panic. They're most likely old and the azaleas are shedding them to make room for new leaves.
- ✓ Remove old flowers from blooming Camellias and Azaleas to reduce the chance of petal blight.
- ✓ Select your camellias now because they are still blooming. They bloom best when planted in spots sheltered from drying winds. Add several inches of mulch around the new planting. Keep mulch away from the trunk of the plant so it can breathe.
- ✓ Wait to prune spring-flowering shrubs such as Azaleas and Flowering Quince until they have bloomed.
- ✓ Prune established wisterias. You can prune back all of the shoots and limbs that are growing into areas you don't want them in. Anything below the head height that you have selected for the wisteria should be removed. Then, at the head, thin the shoots off the main stems. On the flowering wood, trim back to point where you have 2-3 bud joints for the coming season. Be sure to adequately support any upcoming spurts of growth.



## January Gardening Tips RCW Nurseries, Inc.

### Trees

- ✓ It's too early to prune Crape Myrtles.
- ✓ Now is the time to think of summer shade. Trees planted at this time will get the benefit of a long growing season. If you can't remember what it was like last summer just think of the word hot and where the sun was coming into the home, heating it up like a furnace. An established tree planted in the right spot can reduce the temperature by as much as 20 degrees. Deciduous trees not only give the benefit of summer shade, but also provide an extra dividend by allowing winter's sun to filter through their bare branches into the home to help warm it.
- ✓ If your pine trees are shedding a larger amount of needles than normal, yet the tree generally looks healthy, this can be due to Pine Needle Scale. Check for hard white bumps on the needles of the lower branches. If found, spray the affected pine with dormant oil.
- ✓ Do not prune spring-flowering trees such as Redbuds and Saucer Magnolias until after they have bloomed.
- ✓ Make an appointment with an arborist to prune shade trees during the months of January and February. They can also evaluate the status of your trees' health and make recommendations for corrective action.

### Miscellaneous

- ✓ Keep a water source in the yard for birds wintering in our area. Put out a thistle feeder for Finches wintering in Houston.
- ✓ Pull out your binoculars and count the birds visiting your feeders.
- ✓ Raise/replenish beds with organic matter. If you are creating a new bed, raise it at least 6 - 8 inches. This help plants survive our spring and fall rains.
- ✓ According to Dr. Gary Clark, Associate Professor of Biology at Lone Star Community College, solitary hummingbirds have been observed over wintering in Houston. So keep your keep at least one hummingbird feeder full just in case there is a "snow hummingbird" living in your area. Don't forget to change the solution every week.
- ✓ It's a great time to clean and sharpen the pruners, saws and other garden tools for another exciting season of gardening. To keep them from rusting after cleaning/sharpening, coat the business end with a thin layer of motor oil and stick them in a bucket of sand.