

# JANUARY

Best wishes for a happy, healthy new year for you and your plants!



## PRUNE

Sharpen your pruners, loppers (the long handled ones) and saws, but just as important sharpen your eyes.

Here are some reasons for pruning:

- To remove diseased wood.
  - To remove dead wood.
  - To reduce size (height and/or breadth)
  - To shape for design purposes.
  - To encourage production of large flowers or fruits.
  - To aid air circulation to plant's interior (to reduce chance of fungal disease.)
  - To encourage fullness on leggy plants.
- Now, make a list of the deciduous shrubs in your yard. List them in order of when they flower and you will have a guide as to what gets pruned when. Spring flowering plants are best done in the two weeks after the flowers fade. Summer flowering plants should be pruned in the winter.
- Do not cut off shoots carrying flower buds. Plants that flower in March, April and May tend to produce their flower buds on wood grown the previous season. Plants that wait until June, July, August or September to flower, generally have time to produce buds on wood grown fresh each spring.
- After your list is done, stroll outside and look at the bare winter twigs. All should have flat pointed buds and will produce shoots. Some plants will also have round, plump buds. These are flower buds and will produce flowers and fruit. Make your pruning cuts to just above the growth buds. When you cut back make the cut slant in the same direction as the bud.

- Continue the inspection and locate growth buds that are on the inside of the plant, facing toward the interior. These are usually undesirable because they produce inward growing shoots that overlap, cut off air and light and generally make the shrub look tangled. These inward branches that are already on the shrub should also selectively be pruned out. When pruning hedges, trim them so that the narrower part will be at the top to admit light to the base of the hedge.

- Improper pruning techniques are a major cause of tree damage. Frost, cracking, decay and borer entry are often results of cutting flush with the trunk. Do not cut into the collar of the branch (the swollen area where the branch joins the trunk) First cut partially through the underside of the branch several inches out from where the final cut will be depending on the thickness of the branch. This takes pressure and weight off the collar and trunk. Next cut the branch off at a convenient place beyond the first cut. Remove the stub by cutting flush to the edge of the collar. Do not paint the wound, Remember: sharp tools make clean cuts.

## FERTILIZE

- For peonies, roses, lilacs, clematis, iris, daffodils, grape vines and vegetable garden, use wood ashes from your fireplace which add both lime and potash to the soil. Do not use wood ashes on acid loving plants.

- For house plants use tepid water with liquid fertilizer once a month or more often when showing new growth.



- Side dress pansies every 4 weeks with 5-10-5 when ground is not frozen and water thoroughly after fertilizing. Also continue watering shallow rooted plants, like azalea and other broadleaf evergreens thru the winter when soil is dry and whenever a prolonged freeze is forecast.

- If vacationing , place house plants in the bath tub on tub mats in an inch of water and then shower them and wipe clean. If there are just a few small plants, soak shoe laces in water after cutting off tips and place one end in water and other in plant soil.



## PLANT

- Plant spring flowering bulbs outdoors if weather permits. They will develop roots for the next growing season and bloom more fully in their second spring. (Planting in fall is preferable.)

- Place bulbs, like paper white narcissus, in a shallow bowl filled with pebbles and water. Place in a dark room. When roots are developed and tips are green, place in a warm sunny spot to bloom. Space planting at two week intervals for a succession of blooms.

## CHORES

- Schedule major tree work: pruning or removal.
- Get a head start on spring: build or install a cold frame with a southern exposure, protected from snow slides for growing annuals, perennials, and vegetables from seed, for hardening off seedlings, for forcing bulbs, and for over wintering hardy vegetables.
- Spray broad leaf evergreens with an anti-desiccant to prevent foliage dehydration when the temperature is above 45 degrees
- Remove heavy snow from evergreens by tapping lightly with an inverted shovel under branches. Let ice coating melt naturally.
- Use sand, ashes, kitty litter or calcium carbonate salt on icy walks and drives. Do not use rock salt which can damage lawns and plants. Salt is ineffective if high temperature for the day is not above 30 degrees F.
- Feed the birds that stay all winter mixed seeds and suet.

## GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

The evergreens, nandina, ornamental grasses and tree silhouettes are outstanding now but the star perennial is the Helleborus which loves the sun in winter and shade in summer. Try all three varieties for bloom Jan- March: the H.niger (Christmas Rose), H. orientalis (Lenten Rose), and H.foetidus.