



# HORTICULTURE TIPS



Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources \* Oklahoma State University

December 2017

## GARDEN TIPS FOR DECEMBER!

*David Hillock*

### Lawn & Turf

- ❖ Remove leaves from cool-season grasses or mow with a mulching mower. ([HLA-6420](#))
- ❖ Continue mowing cool-season lawns on a regular basis. ([HLA-6420](#))
- ❖ Continue to control broadleaf weeds in well-established warm- or cool-season lawns with a post-emergent broadleaf weed killer.

### Tree & Shrubs

- ❖ Select a freshly cut Christmas tree. Make a new cut prior to placing in tree stand. Add water daily.
- ❖ Live Christmas trees are a wise investment, as they become permanent additions to the landscape after the holidays.
- ❖ Light prunings of evergreens can be used for holiday decorations. Be careful with sap that can mar surfaces.

### Flowers

- ❖ Apply winter mulch to protect rose bush bud unions and other perennials. Wait until after several early freezes or you will give insects a good place to winter.
- ❖ Poinsettias must have at least six hours of bright, indirect light daily. Keep plants away from drafts.

### Fruits & Nuts

- ❖ Cover strawberry plants with a mulch about 3 to 4 inches thick if plants are prone to winter injury.
- ❖ Wait to prune fruit trees until late February or March.

### General

- ❖ Keep all plants watered during dry conditions even though some may be dormant.
- ❖ Irrigate all plantings at least 24 hours before hard-freezing weather if soil is dry. ([HLA-6404](#))
- ❖ Order gardening supplies for next season.
- ❖ Now is a great time to design and make structural improvements in your garden and landscape.
- ❖ Send for mail-order catalogs if you are not already on their mailing lists.
- ❖ Christmas gift ideas for the gardener might include tools, garden books, magazine subscriptions, or membership to The Botanic Garden at OSU (<http://www.osubotanicalgarden.okstate.edu/>).
- ❖ Clean and fill bird feeders.
- ❖ Make sure indoor plants are receiving enough light, or set up an indoor fluorescent plant light.
- ❖ Till garden plots without a cover crop to further expose garden pests to harsh winter conditions.
- ❖ Visit your county extension office to obtain gardening fact sheets for the new gardening season.
- ❖ Join a horticulture, plant, or urban forestry society and support community “greening” or “beautification” projects.

- ❖ Review your garden records so you can correct past mistakes. Purchase a new gardening journal or calendar to keep the New Year's gardening records.

## **GARDEN TIPS FOR JANUARY!**

- ❖ If precipitation has been deficient (1" of snow = ~ 1/10" of water), water lawns, trees, and shrubs, especially broadleaf and narrowleaf evergreens. Double check moisture in protected or raised planters.
- ❖ Check on supplies of pesticides. Secure a copy of current recommendations and post them in a convenient place. Dilution and quantity tables are also useful.
- ❖ If you did not treat young pines for tip borers in November, do so before March.
- ❖ Check that gardening tools and equipment are in good repair—sharpen, paint, and repair mowers, edgers, sprayers, and dusters.
- ❖ Inspect your irrigation system and replace worn or broken parts.
- ❖ Control overwintering insects on deciduous trees or shrubs with dormant oil sprays applied when the temperature is above 40°F in late fall and winter. Do not use "dormant" oils on evergreens. ([EPP-7306](#))
- ❖ A product containing glyphosate plus a postemergent broadleaf herbicide can be used on dormant bermudagrass in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control.

### **Narcissus**

*David Hillock*

Paper white narcissus can add some bloom to the dreary winter days. The bulbs are some of the easiest for forcing as they do not require any chilling before they will bloom. Supplies needed include a low, flat container without drain holes that is anywhere from 3 to 5 inches deep, some gravel – 1/2 inch or less in diameter, bulbs, and water. Place the gravel in the bottom of the container filling to 1/2 to 3/4 full. Place the bulbs on top of the gravel so they are close to each other, but not touching. Fill in around the bulbs with gravel so that the bottom 1/2 to 1/3 of the bulb is covered and then fill the container with water so that the water level is just below the bottom of the bulb. If the bulbs actually sit in the water they will start to rot. Do not let the container run dry after root growth has begun as the roots will die if they are allowed to dry out. Place the container in a cool, dark place for about 3 weeks in order to get good root growth and then move it into an area with brighter light so the tops can grow. Turn the container daily so that the leaves do not have to stretch towards the light. When the paper whites start to bloom, move them to an area with filtered light so the blooms will last longer. This whole process takes about 6 weeks. Potting up a succession of bulbs every 2 weeks will insure bloom throughout the winter months.

### **Tool Cleanup**

*David Hillock*

This is a good time to clean and sharpen tools before storing them for the winter. A little time now will ensure that they are ready to go as soon as it warms up in the spring. Shovels and hoes can be cleaned, sharpened at a 45-70 degree angle and coated with oil to prevent rust. If the tool has a wooden handle, it can be coated with a layer of boiled linseed oil to keep it weatherproof. Tools such as pruners, loppers and saws should be sharpened professionally unless you have the proper equipment to sharpen them.

## **Don't Forget to Water this Winter**

*David Hillock*

Lack of adequate soil moisture is often a major cause of winter damage. Dry soil coupled with strong winter winds can cause havoc on a plant. All plants, but especially narrowleaf and broadleaf evergreens, use water during winter. When little or no soil moisture is present, plants can become desiccated and it is more likely root damage will also occur.

When dry cold fronts are predicted, water the landscape at least 24 hours in advance of the front. Apply about ½ inch of water at the time of watering. A sunny day on moist soil helps warm the soil and root area thus reducing the amount of time the roots will be exposed to cold temperatures.

Moisture must be available below the frost line or frozen soil. When the soil freezes, if moisture is not present in soil pore spaces, moisture is pulled from plant roots to form the ice crystals resulting in desiccated roots, thus what some would refer to as “winter kill.”

Of course some common sense needs to be practiced at this time of year; do not allow the sprinklers to come on during a hard freeze. Ice forming on some plants could result in some serious damage and you could create a hazardous situation for you, pedestrians, or even passing vehicles.

Too much water can also result on problems during the winter. Cold wet soils can lead to rotting roots. Soils with more than ample moisture may also encourage winter weeds to germinate and flourish. Water only every three to four weeks and apply only enough water to moisten the top 6 or so inches of soil.

Do not forget plants growing in aboveground planters protected from rain. They need watering even in a wet season. Also, remember to water plants that are located under the eaves of a building or home since they often receive little natural precipitation.

## **Feeding Birds**

*David Hillock*

It's time to remember our fine, feathered friends for the winter months. If you already have birdfeeders, it's a good time to clean them. Wash them in soapy water, then rinse in a 10% bleach solution and allow to dry completely.

It's important to match your birdfeeders to the type of bird you want to attract. Smaller birds such as chickadee, tufted titmouse, and finches prefer the tube feeders. Larger birds such as cardinals and blue jays prefer hopper or platform feeders, and birds such as the morning dove eat seed on the ground. Just as people prefer different types of food, birds prefer different types of food. Thistle and black oil sunflowers are good for smaller birds, cardinals like sunflowers of all types and millet is good for ground feeding birds. A good general bird feeding mix is white proso millet and black oil sunflower. Suet is good for woodpeckers and nuthatches.

Water is also an important feature, not only for the birds to drink, but also to keep them clean as clean feathers insulate better from the cold weather. If you have a birdbath heater, be sure that it will shut off automatically when the water reaches about 40 degrees F so it doesn't get too warm. It is also important to keep the water and

the birdbath clean. For more information on attracting birds to the landscape see the OSU Extension Fact Sheet [HLA-6435](#) Landscaping and Gardening for Birds.

## Continuing Education/In-service Opportunity for Master Gardeners and County Educators *David Hillock*

Register now for the Horticulture Industry Show (HIS) on January 5-6, 2018. HIS provides an opportunity to learn more about vegetables, fruits, sustainable Ag, farmer's markets, Christmas trees, and Master Gardener and Public Gardens. This year's theme is Growing New Roots with Urban Agriculture. Cary Rivard, Fruit and Vegetable Extension Specialist at Kansas State University and Director of the Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center located near Kansas City, will be our keynote speaker.

This year HIS will be held at the Tulsa Community College NE Campus, 3727 E Apache, Tulsa. All Master Gardeners and County Educators are invited to attend. If you are a returning Master Gardener you can receive Continuing Education hours that will count towards your recertification hours. If you are a County Educator you can receive in-service hours by attending.

Register today by going to the conference web site [www.hortindustriesshow.org](http://www.hortindustriesshow.org). Registration before December 29 is \$55 for the two day conference or \$42 for Friday only or \$25 Saturday only. After December 29 registration goes up to \$75 for two days and \$60 for Friday only and \$35 for Saturday only so don't delay and register before December 29.

This should be another great conference, hope to see you there!



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