

Fall 2008



From the Ground Up ↑

Keeping the Birds

When you invite birds into your yard by feeding them, they do a fantastic job of keeping the insect population in check, which means you don't have to spray or dust as often to control pests. Now is the time to clean bird feeders and re-stock for the approaching winter season.



DON'T FORGET THE SHED!

Perhaps not the most enjoyable gardening chore, but now you probably have time to clean your garden storage area, tossing old chemicals — responsibly of course — and taking note of what you'll need to replenish before next spring. A number of gardening products have a shelf life and may lose their effectiveness over time or if they get too hot or too cold. That's particularly true of botanical insecticides such as BTK. Never allow your liquid products to freeze.

And of course you should tend to your tools. Rub metal tool surfaces with a light coating of oil; rub wooden tool handles with boiled linseed oil; and sharpen everything that needs it with a proper file.



FALL PRUNING...YES OR NO?



A note of caution: Resist the urge to prune, because the tender new growth that would result may not have a chance to harden off sufficiently before cold weather arrives, and that can lead to a greater possibility of winter damage. Avoid pruning after July 15th unless you have broken or diseased branches.

STORING TENDER BULBS AND TUBERS

After several light frosts have begun to yellow the foliage on your gladiolus, begonia, canna and other tender summer blooming bulbs, dig bulbs from the soil or remove them from their pots. Examine the bulbs, removing dead and broken parts and all remaining soil. Break apart large roots for those which are tubers, such as dahlia and canna. Store the bulbs in vermiculite, perlite or peat moss, making sure to cover each bulb with the material. The container in which you store the bulbs should be breathable--a biodegradable pot, cardboard box or paper or fabric bag. Do not store your bulbs in plastic bags or pots. Place the container in a cool, dark and relatively dry area. Check once a month over the winter and mist very lightly with water if the tubers or bulbs are becoming too dry.

SAFELY STORE YOUR PRECIOUS POTS

Move terra-cotta and ceramic containers to a protected location like a garden shed or garage. If there is any possibility of freezing where you are storing them, it is best to remove soil from clay and ceramic pots and ensure they are bone dry and will remain that way until spring, to reduce the possibility of frost cracks or the surface finish peeling away. Stock pile your old potting mix into other plastic containers, or a tarped space and improve it now with compost or earthworm castings. Tarp to keep it dry and it will be ready for next springs' hectic planting season.



TIME TO MOVE IN THE TROPICALS

If you've placed any of your tropical house plants outdoors for their summer vacation, watch as cooler nights approach. Most tropicals would be damaged by night lows of 5 Celsius and cooler. Now is the time to move your tender container plants indoors.



Herbs usually don't do well inside unless there's plenty of light, definitely a south window or grow lights for 10-12 hours daily.

Many of the annuals we use in our gardens and pots would be perennial in milder climates, and can be successfully overwintered indoors as potted plants or take cuttings in late summer and root them in either water or a potting medium such as vermiculite, perlite or soil-less potting mix. Just remember to strip all but the top few leaves off the stem, keep the potting medium moist at all times and keep plants out of direct sunlight. Within a few weeks the plants should develop a dense mass of roots, at which point you can pot them up and grow them as houseplants. This doesn't work with all annuals, but it's fun to experiment.



Spotlight On

Our “Spotlight On” page provides information on a different tree, shrub and perennial in each addition of “From the Ground Up”



Sea Lavender

Limonium latifolium

Sea lavender is a handsome perennial; it features a low growing cluster of leaves with beautiful tall spikes that bear miniature purple blooms in late summer. It makes an excellent addition to any garden, as well as a dried cut flower. It grows 24” tall and 24” wide and loves full sun. It’s hardy zone 4 but with a little extra care it will winter here.

Barberry ‘Rose Glow’

Berberis thunbergii ‘Rose Glow’

The barberry is a compact shrub with deep purple foliage and arching branches. New foliage is rosy pink with deep red blotches. It makes an excellent border and foundation plant. It can reside anywhere that’s full sun to part shade, grows to 5’ tall and 5’ wide, and will thrive successfully in our climate even though it’s a zone 4 plant.



Goodland Apple

Malus ‘Goodland’

This particular apple tree produces red tinged fruit with a crisp and juicy aromatic flesh. The fruit is rated very well for cooking and eating fresh and stores for 20 weeks in cool conditions. The tree is very productive and the fruit ripens mid September. Prefers full sun, is a zone 3 tree, and it grows to be 20’ tall and 16’ wide.

LAST CHORES IN THE VEGETABLE PATCH

In the vegetable garden, where virtually everything is an annual, prepare the soil by removing any dead plants and place them in the compost pile (if you have one) otherwise pests will have a cozy place to overwinter. Discard diseased plants in the trash.



Then, turn the soil, preferably with a pitchfork. Caution: don't work soil when it's wet! By turning the soil, you will also eliminate the most destructive insect pests by exposing them to the freezing temperatures. Continue down the length of each bed, stabbing and lifting the soil, then flipping it over. After flipping the soil over, loosen the subsoil with a broad fork by stabbing it into the ground, and gently rocking it back and forth. Next, add compost, in a four- to six-inch layer. As a

finishing touch, place a six-inch deep blanket of shredded leaves on the bed and top it off with a three-inch layer of straw. Sprinkle each bed with fertilizer to get the process going and give it a good soak with the water hose.

Another option to enhance and protect your garden soil over the winter is planting a cover crop. Sown over the area after summer crops are removed, and tilled into the soil first thing next spring a cover crop can help reduce soil erosion, capture nutrients, reduce weeds and enrich the soil. Some of the most popular choices are annual rye grass and white dutch clover.



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