

# Winter 2008



Dear Customers:

I hope this finds you well and warm. This early taste of winter got me hopping – winter proofing the barn, the birds: guineas, peacocks, chickens and, of course, getting the feeders for the wild birds clean for the winter. Then, finding the many layers of blankets to keep the ponies warm. The guineas are making an improvement on the tick situation as they love the taste of ticks. The employees think the guineas are so cute as they run hither and yon. Hopefully the good weather will hold, for on December 6<sup>th</sup> when my pony, John Frye, the handsome gig carriage he pulls, Ashlynn and myself as driver will appear in the Middleburg parade. Getting ready for an event like this takes many long hours of cleaning harness, polishing brass and patent leather. I need to get more sleigh bells too for the full effect. We are very busy with the ponies now that soccer is over. Ashlynn is jumping 2’7”, but has a bit of stage fright. She prefers not to perform in front of a crowd. Mommy even rides once in awhile to relive her childhood. Ashlynn has gone to a few shows and done well – some great ribbons – but *please* don’t tell her I bragged. At ten years old, mom is not so “cool” anymore. Very different from when I was ten. The kids grow up so fast these days.

Slowly, but surely, my garden is being put to bed for winter because, and I say this thankfully, our crews are still busy. Thank you for your support and references. It means so much to all of us here at Plant A Plant. You, our customer, are our most important asset and we aim to please. Let us know how we can be of service. I look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lisbeth Prins". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Lisbeth Prins  
President

# Raised Beds

Raised beds are used for plants that 1) require well-drained soil, 2) are to be spatially separated from the surrounding area/plants, or 3) are more accessible to the gardener. You can make raised beds simply by mounding the soil into a growing bed or by constructing them with sides made of wood or other materials. Raised beds offer several advantages to the gardener. 1) Soil in raised beds is better drained than soil outside the bed. This increased drainage is especially helpful when growing plants in low-lying or poorly drained areas. If your native garden soil has a high clay content, then the soil will take a long time to drain and may stay too wet for those species that require good drainage. Either import “good” garden soil for the raised bed or amend the existing soil by adding organic matter that will improve the soil structure, and thereby increase drainage. Landscape plants that characteristically require good drainage include azaleas and rhododendrons (*Rhododendron* spp.), mountain laurel (*kalmia latifolia*), yews (*Taxus* sp.), and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). 2) The soil in raised beds will warm up faster in the spring, effectively extending the growing season. 3) The soil in raised beds does not become compacted since no one walks in raised beds. 4) There is no need for pathways between rows, as there is for level-ground gardening, thus you can achieve a higher plant density. An increased density usually results in higher yields. 5) Beds are more easily maintained than ground beds since the increased height of the bed reduces bending distance.

## Current Drought Situation

Recent rainfall from January through May has provided enough precipitation to end the drought in most areas of Virginia. The intense drought last year means that groundwater tables, which refill surface waters, are still low. The Drought Monitoring Taskforce and DEQ are concerned that if there is a period without rainfall in the coming months; Virginia will find itself in a critical drought situation very quickly. During the 2002 drought, there was a span of only 3 weeks in August when situations for many local water supplies went from “adequate” to “critical”. To track DEQ’s drought monitoring, visit:

<http://www.deq.state.va.us/waterresources/drought.php#DroughtStatusReports>.

*Both above articles published in VNLA Newsletter, July/August 2008*

# Lenten Rose

Ever wish for a winter-blooming perennial? Here it is! Lenten rose's flowers begin to open in mid-winter or early spring. And because it's cool when they bloom, the flowers can last more than 10 weeks. Even as the seed pods form, the petals hang on.

If there hasn't been snow cover, the glossy evergreen leaves can look tired and tattered before the flowers open. No problem. Simply cut them off before the flower stalks start to stretch or carefully cut away foliage after flower stalks start to stretch.

Some Lenten roses bloom in deep shades of burgundy to pink. Or they may open to a pale green-white. Some have lots of speckles, while others are plain. If you want a specific color, buy your plants when they are in bloom. Or pick up one of the named hybrids, such as 'White Lady' or 'Red Lady', with the color you're after.

Lenten roses can be slow to establish. For a quick start, buy the largest one you can find. Then give it a year or two to settle in and start flowering.

## IN THE LANDSCAPE

This perennial is great under small, low-spreading trees, such as Japanese maples or large shrubs, such as witchhazel. Both cast dappled shade that's perfect for Lenten roses. And for year-round interest, place clumps next to broadleaf evergreens like camellias. Plant the Lenten roses on the east side so they can bask in the morning sun and relax in the afternoon shade. Mix them with early spring bulbs, such as snowdrops, crocus or wind flowers. For a low-maintenance shade garden, plant Lenten rose with epimedium, vinca and European wild ginger. They're all plants that tolerate some neglect. (Mine have thinned this year on neglect).

## THE BEST CONDITIONS

Lenten roses will bloom best with four to six hours of morning sun. But during the growing season, they need afternoon shade to keep the foliage from withering.

Compost-enriched, well-drained soil will grow the best Lenten roses – planting them in heavy clay or soil that stays wet spells certain death.

Each spring, spread a 2-inch layer of mulch, compost or decomposing leaves around the base of the plant. It'll help improve the soil and keep the roots cool and moist.

## MAKING MORE

Divide Lenten roses in late August or early September. Flower buds are already formed for next year, so new divisions will probably bloom the following spring. But for a year or two after transplanting, the divisions make take a break from blooming.

Seedlings can be a blessing or a curse. If you want more plants and you like the natural look of a woodland garden, by all means, let the seeds sprout. Most seedlings will start to flower in two or three years. But if you have special hybrids or colors you want to maintain, make sure you remove seedlings as they will not be your hybrid variety.

There are lots of named hybrids, and they're all wonderful additions to any shaded garden, but new and improved isn't always best.

*Article published in Garden Gate, Editor's Choice, August 2008*

# How to Enjoy Your Holiday Tree




## **LIVE TREE**

- ◇ Decide where you will plant the tree after the holidays. Consider a containerized evergreen like boxwood, arborvitae, dwarf Alberta spruce, or cypress, moving the plant will be easy. While the soil is not frozen, dig a hole greater than the root ball and mark the area to avoid a dangerous fall. Mulch the hole and surrounding area to keep the soil from freezing.
- ◇ Select a locally grown tree – it will adapt best to your specific climate and soil conditions.
- ◇ Keep the root ball or pot moist. Place the tree in a tub with pre-moistened peat moss or mulch, and add water as needed to maintain moisture. Acclimatize tree in an unheated building for 7 to 10 days before bringing in and again before planting to prevent freezing. Keep the tree indoors for a maximum of 10 days no higher than 68° F. Add water every day, if necessary. Fire experts recommend using no lighting on live trees.
- ◇ Plant the tree in the prepared hole after post-acclimatizing period. If the soil is frozen, mulch until to soil is workable and maintain proper moisture, until planting.

## **CUT TREE**

- ◇ For good selection, purchase early. Cover during transport to your home.
- ◇ At the base of trunk, cut an inch or two and place in water in an unheated area (ie - garage).
- ◇ Tree stand should be sturdy and well balanced and hold at least a gallon of water. Place tree away from heat sources and drafts or anything that could dry needles.
- ◇ Make sure light cords are tested and UL approved.
- ◇ Check water level EVERY DAY.
- ◇ ALWAYS unplug lights before leaving the house or retiring. If tree begins to dry out, do not turn on lights.
- ◇ Disposal of tree is mandated by your county. Please contact your extension office regarding procedures. NEVER burn any part of tree in fireplace due to its dry conditions.

# December Gardening Checklist

- \* **Plant Bulbs** – as long as the soil is not frozen, you still have time. Plant fragrant varieties near entries to offer an early spring welcome. Narcissus, crocus, colchicum, allium, scilla and fritillaria are alternatives to tulips and daffodils are deer resistant.
  - \* **Water Evergreens Deeply and Thoroughly BEFORE Freezing Temperatures Set In** - Continue to check soil through winter and water as needed. Evergreens are never dormant.
  - \* **Spray Broadleaf Evergreens in Windy Areas with Wilt-Pruf** - (an anti-desiccant) to prevent winter moisture loss and injury before temperatures remain at 45° F or below. Reminder: Most transpiration takes place on the underside of the leaves. Follow anti-desiccant directions carefully and reapply when necessary.
  - \* **Spray Liquid Fence on Plants that the Deer Favor** – Liquid fence works wonders! Use larger hole netting if you net your plants.
  - \* **Loose Soil may Settle** – during cold months. Add fill where necessary and grade, especially around foundation so you have drainage away from the house.
  - \* **Gently Trim Erratic Growth** – on hollies and other evergreens. First, you get material for holiday decorations and second, you shape the plant growth. Limit cutting to mild shaping and thinning being careful not to harm plants. Boxwoods should not be trimmed when temperatures are below 40° F. For safety, never place live arrangements near fireplace, candles, lamps, electric lights or heat registers. When leaves or needles begin to drop, remove arrangements to prevent a hazard.
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- \* **Winterize Hardy Aquatic Plants** – Hardy water lilies, cattails, sedges and rushes: leave outside in a pond that is a minimum of 18” deep. They can be moved in the spring, but the deep water insulates the plants through the winter. Cut back foliage to reduce leaf build-up in pond. Cold sensitive plants, like tropical water lilies and taro, should be placed inside where temperatures remain at least 50° F. Oxygenators, like fairy moss, *azolla*, place in an aquarium. An aerator may be required, especially if you have fish. A floating heater helps maintain proper oxygen levels. Call Plant A Plant if you need any assistance with the winterization of your water feature.
  - \* **Garden Accessories and Ornaments** – bring indoors or store under deck. Clean with a soft brush or cloth and a mild detergent so not to damage. Use a white vinegar/water mixture for hard to remove mildew and stains. If containers cannot be moved, cover or invert so water does not collect, freeze and cause breakage.
  - \* **Un-Planted Beds** – may be turned during winter months to keep soil workable and reduce insect habitation. And remember “crop rotation” especially for vegetables and annuals.
  - \* **Lawnmower** – service and clean now before storing for winter. Disconnect and remove spark plug and battery (if battery operated), and store in a cool, dry place to avoid freezing. Drain fuel, or add a fuel stabilizer. Change oil. Replace oil and air filter and worn parts. Sharpen blades if rusting can be avoided, or sharpen before first mow. Or send your lawnmower out for service!
  - \* **Hand Tools** – Clean and dry well before storing and coat with lubricating oil to prevent rusting. Drain hoses and to avoid kinking and cracking, hang on a hose rack in the garage rather than on one nail or one hook.

# January Gardening Checklist



❄ **Snow Shovel** – can be coated with a “no-stick” cooking spray so the snow will slide right off!

❄ **Do Not Spray Firewood with Insecticides.**

❄ **Do not Shovel** – or blow snow towards plants. This will keep plants from being damaged and water accumulating after snow melts. Let ice melt naturally on plants to avoid breakage. Use Calcium magnesium acetate as a deicer.

❄ **Plant Shrubs, Conifers and Plants with Interest** – weather permitting, in the winter garden: white forsythis, Cornelian cherry, beautyberry, nandina, ‘Sparkleberry’ holly, sweetbox, winter flowering jasmine, and wintersweet. Do not plant anything in 4” pots or smaller.

❄ **Thin Apple and Peach Trees** - with weak, non-productive growth, to allow sunlight to reach ripening fruit. Wait until late winter or early spring to prune canker-prone trees, such as: Bradford and Callory pears, cherry, plum, maple, spruce, willow, poplar and conifers.

❄ **Avoid Walking on Grass or Ground Cover While Frozen** – They are brittle and easily damaged.

❄ **Ice** – Here is an alternative – use a fertilizer spreader to apply sand, sawdust or kitty litter on driveways and walkways instead of salt or de-icing compounds, particularly near trees, shrubs or perennials. Red maples, tulip poplars, white pines, oaks, Norway and white spruces are particularly sensitive to salt (so are black walnuts–get my drift?).

❄ **Keep Leaves Raked** - from lawn. This provides good light and ventilator to the lawn. Leaves can be added to beds for protection against winter’s fluctuating temperatures and nutrients.

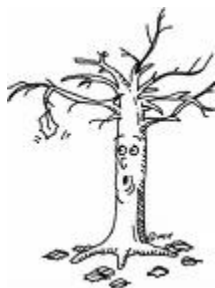
❄ **Create a Safe Haven for the Birds** – Offer seeds, berries and fresh water. Birds will remain and devour tree-boring pests and other insects during spring and summer. Place feeders at different levels and with a variety of seeds to encourage diversified species. Store seeds in air-tight containers to keep fresh. Provide shallow water containers in sunny locations to discourage freezing. Clean and change water frequently. American beautyberry, holly, nandina, pyracantha, common juniper, creeping wintergreen, Eastern hemlock, Northern bayberry and cedar are some of their favorites!

❄ **House Plants** – For winter care, keep in cooler areas, away from heat sources, but near sunny windows. Keep sensitive plants away from windows at night and during cold winter days. Check for spider mites, mealy bugs, whiteflies, aphids and scale (backside of leaves with a magnifying glass). Pinch off irregular growth to promote bushy plants and maintain desired shape. Apply comfortably warm water to avoid root rot, and check each plant individually before watering. Warning: leaf shine products can reduce the amount of light reaching the interior of the leaves where food is manufactured.

**CALL US IF YOU NEED HELP!**  
Applying Anti-desiccants • Fertilizer • Mulch  
Burlap Wraps • Special Watering Instructions • Liquid Fence  
Winter Enhancements • Stone Work  
703 – 327 - 6844

# February Gardening Checklist

- \* **Looking for Very Early Spring Blooms?** – Plant dormant sweetbox, Japanese flowering apricot, winter jasmine, winter-flowering heath and Christmas rose.
- \* **Cut Back** – ornamental grasses, liriope, buddleia, althea, beautyberry, butterfly bush, caryopteris, clematis, hybrid spiraea and other woody plants.
- \* **Prune Roses** – while in dormancy. Pruning helps maintain form, eliminates non-producing or damaged growth depleting the plant's stamina, and provides better circulation of air within the plant decreasing the possibility of fungus.
- \* **Prune Crape Myrtle** – no earlier than the end of February to avoid plant stress.



Wait until March to avoid breaking the plant's dormancy if temperatures fluctuate between the 20's and the 60's. Remove any small twigs, and crossing, damaged or congested limbs to train the plant rather than change its habit. Thin branches to promote good air circulation. This will reduce mildew and help to create a plant with special interest and accentuate its colorful bark during winter. Remove suckers when they appear. To stimulate re-bloom, clip off spent blossoms after flowering.

blossoms after flowering.

- \* **To Control Diseases** – prune watersprouts on dogwoods growing from large branches or the trunk. Only prune suckers or broken limbs from spring bloomers. Deciduous trees: either prune before the 10<sup>th</sup> or wait until leaves appear in spring before removing damaged branches. Remove by cutting several inches below the injury, above the node, where the bud forms.
- \* **Look for Colorful Blooms During the Latter Part of this Month** – snowdrops, winter aconite, Lenten rose and witchhazel. You may even find 'February Gold' daffodil and 'Tete a Tete' in warmer spots!
- \* **Water as Needed** – Rinse off evergreens to remove insects. Spray dwarf Alberta, bird's nest spruce, mugo pine and other dwarf evergreens with a sweeper-type water nozzle to wash away spider mites – continue during the growing season.
- \* **Want to Make Maintenance Easier?** – Reduce the "hard to mow" places by eliminating acute angles in beds and borders. Combine single trees or shrubs into a large planting area connected with ground covers. Blend evergreen and deciduous ground cover. Install a soaker hose or irrigation when planting ground cover around trees so ground cover does not take up all the water. Extend beds around trees to their drip lines. This helps the trees grow faster and decreases your chance encounters with branches.
- \* **Dispose of Un-Needed Gardening Chemicals** – and containers according to the label directions. Do not pour down the drain or throw in the yard. This will protect the water supply and prevent contaminating sewer sludge. Call your local county office for proper disposal. Please remember always store chemicals in a shed, away from the house. Buy the least toxic chemicals when you shop and remember that organic does not always mean least toxic – no rotenone!

# **10% DISCOUNT**

on

## **WINTER SERVICES**

if work is contracted from  
January 5<sup>th</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009

*Completion of these Projects  
is Dependent on Weather Permitting*

PLANT INSTALLATION

PLANT IMPLEMENTATION

INTERIOR PLANTING

PRUNING ORNAMENTAL TREES and  
SHRUBS (under 15 feet)

TRANSPLANTING by HAND

DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

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TRELLISES – ARBORS

CLEAN-UP of AREAS NOT  
USUALLY MAINTAINED

**Please note:**

This discount does not apply to any  
existing discounts,  
maintenance contracts, patios, or any  
other work performed by  
sub-contractors.

# The Magic of Winter

by Joan Adams Burchell

**Winter and snow is a child's delight - things dreamed of in July;**

**Sleds and hills, squeals and spills, waving, as the world rushes by.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**Angels they make in the blanket of white, and tomorrow will remember how**

**Snowflakes felt on their tiny tongues - like magic to them now.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**Snow-people are made and all decked out with colours and a happy smile;**

**Forts are built with utmost care so they will last awhile.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**Snowballs rolled and piled with glee; tots laughing merrily;**

**Adults watch, remembering - secrets bubbling free.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**Skiers fly the well-packed slopes, independence lighting their eyes;**

**Blending with snow as they descend like magic from the skies.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**The ice is cleared so skaters glide and maybe spin a dream**

**Of triple loops and a sharp edge and costumes of gold and cream**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow everywhere.**

**At the end of the day all tucked away, they dream of flakes of white**

**Floating from heaven, in a musical dance - an innocent child's insight.**

**There is snow on the ground, snow in the air, snow, snow, EVERYWHERE!**



FROM THE DESK OF VICE PRESIDENT, MARK  
CROMBIE

## Make a Spring Impact

Now is the perfect time to re-examine your garden since there is very little physically to do. Take a moment and evaluate what you like and what you want to improve for next year.

As the days grow shorter and cooler, you will be spending much of your time indoors. Take advantage of this, look outside and view what you may want to enhance, or maybe what you want to obscure. Check out magazines and books, or surf the internet to spark new, creative ideas for the year ahead. Also, call us. We can help fill the voids. This allows for a jumpstart on spring with early discounted installation. This is also a great time to take advantage of your local parks, Skyline Drive, public gardens, battlefields, etc. to see options, and to keep from going stir crazy in the house!

Maybe you are considering filling the “gaps” in your garden with a stone wall, sculpture or *my favorite* a water feature. You may even consider a mass of evergreens, rather than a deciduous or herbaceous layer in your garden.

Though much of the garden is dormant at this time of the year, there are still many plant features of interest. For example, exfoliating bark (river birch and crape myrtle), colorful evergreens (gold thread cypress for yellow and globe blue spruce for some blue), shrubs and trees that retain their fruit (winterberry holly and red jade) or early and late bloomers (witchhazel, camellia, corylopsis and helleborus), all shine this time of the year. Personally, I recommend various grasses with their ornamental seed heads and trees such as crabapple red jade.

How about a sitting area in your garden? During warm, relaxing days, this will allow you to enjoy your garden with your family and friends. A simple fieldstone patio with a few boulders to sit on or a pavilion area and a wood burning fireplace will allow you this luxury you probably deserve and desire.