

JANUARY GARDEN CHECKLIST

In this week's article I want to mention things gardeners need to be considering for January. The following is a garden checklist:

- A herbicide containing glyphosate can be used on dormant bermudagrass lawns in January or February when temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit for winter weed control. Make sure your bermuda lawn is completely dormant or you will damage it.
- Mulch is important in protecting young plants from frost heaving. A 2 to 3 inch mulch will reduce heaving problems which occurs with alternate freezing and thawing. Newly planted plants (2 inch potted plants) can be pushed completely out of the ground.
- January through February is a good time of year to move plants from one location in the landscape to another. Water and mulch transplanted plants well.
- More on trees. Remove grass and maintain 3' to 4' diameter of grass free area around young trees. Many research studies have all come to the same conclusion, that eliminating competition from around the immediate area of the tree contributes to a dramatic increase in growth of the tree. Keep a 2 to 3 inch layer mulch in this grass free area.
- Staking newly planted trees is recommended for large trees however, stakes should be removed after the first growing season. Stakes should be loose to allow the tree to sway in the wind. Trees allowed to sway develop a stronger root system and a sturdier trunk.
- A word on watering trees. Water as needed but let the soil dry down somewhat between irrigation. Waterlogged soils kill many tree species. Remember, plant roots need to have fresh air to breath, they will drown as you would in a bucket of water.
- Winter is pruning time for most landscape trees. You may need to remove lower limbs of young trees each winter as it matures. Ideally you would want your lowest limb six feet from the ground. Do any corrective pruning while trees are young, removing narrow crotch angles, double forks, etc. Remember to cut limbs back to the trunk leaving only the small ridge. No sealants are necessary. You can expect a wound from a 1 inch limb to heal over by the second year after cutting if not by the end of the first year. Larger wounds will take longer to seal.
- Vegetable gardens need to be cleaned up if you haven't done so. Winter cleanup reduces insect and disease pressure for the coming growing season. This refuse probably needs to stay out of the compost pile. Our compost piles may not get hot enough to kill harmful pathogens. Asparagus stalks can be cut back and beds need a new layer of compost (2 to 3 inches).
- Till garden plots without a cover crop to expose overwintering insects to the winters cold. Do not till when soil moisture is high causing clods to form. Incorporate compost, animal manures, etc. at the same time to garden plots needing organic matter.
- This winter, remove bagworm bags from shrubs which were infested this past summer. Eggs were deposited within the bags by female worms, shortly before

they died. Physically removing and destroying the bags will reduce or eliminate problems this summer.

- Winter months are an ideal time to submit soil samples to our office. The accuracy of the soil test is a reflection of the sample taken. Be sure the sample is representative of the area to be treated. As a general rule pull soil from 15-20 random spots of area to be tested at a depth of four to six inches. Mix these samples together and submit a **pint** of soil for testing. You are not limited to the number of samples submitted. Test results will be returned to you within two to three weeks of being submitted.
- This is a good time of year to cut poison ivy vines from trees at the ground level and paint the cut end with full strength Brush-B-Gon or glyphosate. Handle vines with plastic gloves and wash up thoroughly to avoid itching results.
- Avoid the temptation to fertilize houseplants during the winter months unless they are under grow lights or very high light conditions.
- When the temperatures are below freezing, avoid much contact with plant material outside. Frozen plants are brittle, and limbs can be broken easily. If ice or snow are on your plants, use caution around them. Heavy loads of snow can be lightly brushed off, but stay away from ice-laden plants. You can't remove the ice without breaking off branches.
- Mulch strawberry beds now with straw. Keep the straw off the crowns. The straw will keep fruit from touching the soil and rotting.
- Don't forget about the birds. Make sure they have fresh water to drink and food to eat.

For more information on any of the above points, contact the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension office at 425-2335.