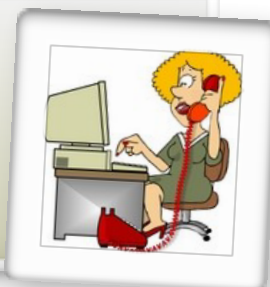


## From the Bedford VCE Master Gardener HELP DESK



January 2014      *A monthly newsletter column for Bedford Extension Master Gardeners*  
Now available at the BAMGA website for interested gardeners, like you!      Editor: Linda E

The Bedford Cooperative Extension office rarely gets calls in January requesting horticulture help. Rather, January, in the garden, is a time of reflection, catching up on long overdue maintenance, dreaming of and preparing for the upcoming growing season, and various other chores. Thus, I thought I would take the opportunity to put together some January gardening suggestions. While neither all inclusive nor exhaustive, all of these can be done in January.

### **Outdoors:**

Make sure all your perennial garden beds have been cleaned and given a light mulching, generally around two inches, to prevent erosion and help with water loss.

If you were able to plant trees and shrubs in either November or December, make sure they receive an adequate amount of water (generally one inch per week) during the winter months to prevent drying out. If you haven't already done so, take extra care and steps to provide protection against winter injury to your trees, especially evergreens, and shrubs. For more information on specific steps to help your plants over-winter, go to Virginia Tech's "Managing Winter Injury to Trees and Shrubs" (pubs 426-500) [1]

January is also a good time to prune some deciduous trees and many shrubs. For more information go to Virginia Tech's "Deciduous Tree Pruning Calendar" (pubs 430-460), and "A Guide to Successful Pruning, Shrub Pruning Calendar," (pubs 430-462), respectively. [2]



In the event of snowfall or ice storms, use a broom to remove excessive snow and ice from evergreens to keep the limbs from bending and breaking. When walking on your lawn, avoid the temptation of using the same path over and over again through snow and ice, as this can damage your grass and create thin spots.

Speaking of lawn care – it is much the same as in December: stay off of frozen grass.

## Garden Shed Maintenance:

If you didn't get around to it last month, January is a good time to inspect, clean, sharpen, repair, or replace all your hand gardening tools as well as your water wands, hoses, and sprayers. It is also a good time to give all your power tools (mowers, hedge trimmers, string trimmers, etcetera) a tune up, including sharpening blades, changing out spark plugs, checking electrical connections.[3]



Check any chemicals that you have stored, making sure all remain within expiration dates and that containers aren't leaking or damaged. Assess what you will need for the following season and discard any chemicals you don't intend to use before they expire. [4]

Contact the Bedford County Landfill (Rt.43), which does have a hazardous waste disposal program which includes pesticides, about how to safely and legally dispose of any chemicals you are not going to use. [5]

## Inspecting Stored Items:

If you have dug-up bulbs in storage, check them now to ensure they remain healthy. Discard any soft, wet or moldy bulbs before the problem spreads to others. If you have seeds saved from previous seasons, check germination now so you can order replacements for any seeds that don't grow. Test germination rates by folding 10 seeds in a damp paper towel and sealing it in a plastic bag. If fewer than half of the seeds germinate, buy new seed. If you have harvested crops from last year's garden in storage, such as potatoes or winter squash, check these and remove any showing signs of rot or mold.

## Indoors:

Review your notes from the past growing season, and evaluate what worked, what didn't, and what you want to change. If you haven't already done so, order your seed catalogues! Seed catalogs begin arriving shortly after the New Year. Don't let them pile up until the spring thaw begins. Ordering your seeds in January ensures your preferred varieties won't sell out and guarantees that the seeds will arrive in time to start plants like tomatoes indoors or set out early-spring seeds as soon as the ground thaws. Alternatively buy seeds, seed starting kits or trays and a seed starting medium mix to get a head start on the gardening season.



Once your seeds arrive, make a sketch of where you'd like to place the vegetables in this year's garden, taking care to rotate crops so that veggies belonging to the same family don't grow in the same spot for two years in a row.

## Indoor plants:

House plants keep you healthy by cleaning the air so don't forget them as you daydream of spring. Give your indoor plants some TLC with a gentle tepid shower (as appropriate) to clean the leaves and avoid bug infestation, plenty of sunlight, fertilize when needed and cut away any dead or dying leaves.

House plants can benefit from extra humidity by grouping plants together. The indoor climate during the winter tends to be dryer as we heat our homes.

## REFERENCES:

[1] <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-500/426-500.html>

[2] [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-460/430-460\\_pdf.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-460/430-460_pdf.pdf) <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-462/430-462.html>

[3] <http://www.cindyshapton.com/category/monthly-garden-chores/>

[4] [January Garden Tips | eHow.com [http://www.ehow.com/info\\_7825912\\_january-garden-tips.html#ixzz2FX7znWHs](http://www.ehow.com/info_7825912_january-garden-tips.html#ixzz2FX7znWHs)]

[5] <http://www.co.bedford.va.us/Res/Waste/index.asp>

Linda E.  
VCE Master Gardener Volunteer  
Help Desk Coordinator



The answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions. These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances. For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

Bedford County Extension Office: (540) 586-7675 / Email: Help Desk @ [BedfordMG@vt.edu](mailto:BedfordMG@vt.edu)

Websites: [www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org](http://www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org) and <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/bedford/>



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