

JUNGLE TAMING

MONTHLY HORTICULTURAL NEWSLETTER

803.463.2655

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December, 2012

Helping to minimize the effects of original sin in your Garden of Eden!

Amy's December Horticultural Tasks

Written by Amy Bledsoe

Annuals



Turf



Perennials



Roses



Shrubs



Trees



Annuals

Continue to water cool season annuals. Garden centers are stocked with poinsettias this time of year. Be sure to protect them from drafts from doors, windows and heat vents. If they are wrapped in foil, be sure to remove or puncture the foil to allow water to drain - they can easily drown if this is not done. Poinsettias are tropical plants native to Mexico, and cannot tolerate our winters if planted outside. It is best to throw them away when the season is over.



Turf

Relax! Enjoy the break from the heat and mowing.

Perennials

Most perennials have gone dormant for winter by now. Some exceptions are Lenten Rose, Japanese Tassel Ferns, Holly Ferns, Autumn Ferns, Thyme, Hardy Ice Plants, Heucheras, some daylilies, Cast Iron Plants, Sedums, Carex, Acorus Grass, some Dianthus, Creeping Raspberry, Ivy, and Wire Vine.



Sedum



Heucheras



Acorus Grass

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Monthly Horticultural Newsletter is distributed free of charge each month by Jungle Taming, LLC, an up-scale yard restoration landscaping company proudly serving the Columbia, SC area.

Visit www.JungleTaming.com for more information.

Disclaimer

The information in this newsletter has been compiled by local experts in horticulture and landscaping, and combines scientific and practical applications of horticultural theory. Suggestions are general, and individual results may vary. Opinions of authors do not always reflect Jungle Taming's opinion.

Professor Ron's Timely Tips**December: A Time of Endings and Beginnings***Written by Ron Cowart*

As I sit at my keyboard, gazing out the glass office doors, pondering the selection of this month's newsletter article, it dawns on me that this is a season of endings and beginnings. The vegetables in the garden have been harvested, except the collards, spinach and leaf lettuce, the fallen leaves have been raked, pine straw mulch has been spread, and the lawn mower has been serviced and parked. There may be a few more chores to do that I may have forgotten, but I'll think of them later. I guess that is what comes with age.

The month of December is an interesting time of year. Humanly speaking, a flurry of activity begins and builds to a high pitch through the end of December with parties, gift exchanges, and the friendship of old acquaintances being rekindled. Our priorities have been shifted, and our yards move to the bottom of the list. Therefore, there is no reason to bore ourselves with a monotony of do's and don'ts relating to everyday gardening and yard work.

Wait a minute! Something in nature will occur Saturday, December 22. The length of days will begin to increase with the occurrence of the Winter Solstice. **It is time to plan our 2013 vegetable and flower gardens!** If we wait until the bees are buzzing and the birds are singing to make our garden plans, we may encounter some problems. In nature what **can** happen, **will** happen. Plan ahead!

When Planning Your Garden, Make Do With What You've Got!!!

Consider:

- Garden Space (Area)
- Physical Abilities
- Willingness to be a Good Steward of the Garden

**Garden Space #1: Container Gardening**

Those of you who live in a home with only a patio for your outdoor space, there is hope: Container gardening. A benefit of small containers is that you can move the garden indoors on cold nights and outside on warmer days. Use clean potting mix, and you should have no weeds or diseases. There is no crop rotation—just change the potting mix.

**Garden Space #2: Raised Gardening**

Please take note: I did not use the term "raised bed gardening." A seed bed is where you plant a seed, and can be a furrow bed, flat bed or a raised bed on flat ground. A raised garden is constructed with containment walls with heights as low as 8 inches, up to waist high connected to the soil beneath. An ideal structure size is 4' by 8' with a soil mixture containing soil and soil amendments. Crop rotation needs to be practiced.

Garden Space #3: Traditional Gardening or Flat Land Gardening

Traditional gardening can be rewarding, yielding a large quantity of produce, but it is for the hardy of soul and body. This is my opinion and does not come out of the books: You will have a higher incidence of insects and diseases.



HAPPY GARDENING!



Subscribe to Monthly Horticultural Tasks!
EMAIL: JungleTaming@earthlink.net. TEXT: JUNGLETAMING to 22828.

Gardening for Everyone

Plant a Tree for Arbor Day

By Donald McInnes, Ph.D.

Since 1934, the first Friday in December has been celebrated as Arbor Day in South Carolina. In most states, Arbor Day is celebrated in the spring, but in South Carolina, autumn is a better time to plant trees. Trees planted in fall have as long as possible to settle into their new home before the most stressful time of year for them—the heat of summer. Because our soils don't freeze, tree roots will grow year round in South Carolina, and the better developed a tree's root system, the more likely it is to survive its first summer.

The best time to plant a deciduous tree is as soon as it loses its leaves in fall. Planting can be done at other times, but survival of the tree will be less likely, unless it is doted on like a small child, especially when it comes to irrigation.

How to Plant a Tree

Choose your tree carefully. The right plant in the right place is an often repeated landscaping guideline, but it's especially true for trees, which might live for many decades. Make sure your tree is suitable for the spot in which you want to plant it, that it will thrive with the light, moisture and soil conditions present and won't get too large for the space.



Buy a healthy tree. Consider the branch structure and how it will develop in the future—avoid trees with wounds, very tight branching angles, or co-dominant leaders; don't hesitate to examine the root system to make sure it's healthy and the tree is not excessively pot-bound; roots circling the root ball will have to be cut or removed. Smaller specimens have less immediate visual impact than larger trees, but they are quicker to establish, more likely to survive, and usually "catch-up" to their larger counterparts in a few years. They are also less expensive.

When you're ready to plant your tree, examine the top of the root ball. Locate the top-most root. This should be near the top of the soil. If it is buried deeply under the potting soil, remove the soil over it. After the tree is planted, the top-most root should be at or above ground level. By locating the top-most root, you'll know how deep to dig the planting hole (an inch or two shallower than the distance from the bottom of the root ball to the top-most root). Dig the hole several times as wide as the root ball. Think shallow and wide—shallower is better than deeper, and the wider the better. Leave the excavated soil next to the hole; you'll need most of it to fill in around the root ball.

Remove the tree from its container or unwrap the fabric around the root ball. If there are roots circling the root ball, unwind or cut and remove them. Also remove any damaged or dead roots you see.

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Gardening for Everyone *Cont'd from Page 3*

Place the tree in the hole and position it in the most pleasing orientation. Remove as much fabric and wire as possible if any is present. Backfill the hole with the excavated soil. Don't add any amendments to the soil. Water the soil well so as to remove any air pockets. The soil should be lightly packed into place, not excessively compacted (don't stomp on it). If planting on a slope, you can use any extra soil to create a circular berm around the circumference of the down hill side of the planting hole to direct water to the root ball. Remember not to plant the tree too deep—the top inch or two of the root ball should be above ground level. Planting a tree too deep can cause a long, slow, lingering death.

Newly planted trees can benefit greatly from mulch. Mulch will keep the soil warmer in the winter and cooler and moister in the summer and will help keep weeds from competing with the tree for water and nutrients. As the mulch decomposes, it will improve the soil's texture and nutrient levels. Mulch on top of the original root ball and touching the trunk, however, can do more harm than good. Add 2–4" of mulch from the edge of the root ball out to the tree's drip line or beyond. The mulch should hide the exposed inch or two of the side of the root ball. The material used as mulch is primarily an aesthetic choice, so pick one that looks good and replenish it as needed.

Except in very windy locations, staking is usually not necessary.

Water well. Water religiously for the first year or two, even if you're an atheist. Especially in warm weather and with well draining soil, your tree may need a deep watering more than once per week. Use your finger to check the soil moisture in the tree's root zone—if it's dry, water your tree.

**Resources**

Info on Arbor Day:

www.clemson.edu/extfor/publications/forlf23

Other tree resources:

<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/plan-success.shtml>

www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/prun001.htm

www.treesaregood.org

www.treesofstrength.org

www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/hortinternet/trees_specific.htm

<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu>



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Roses

Do not fertilize roses this month. If ordering from a rose catalog, place your order before the end of the month to have them to plant in March.



Shrubs

Shrubs such as junipers, hollies, false hollies, and rosemary have been used as in seasonal decorations in wreaths, on mantles, and over doorways by southerners for years. Keep these cutting from drying out too fast by placing them away from heat vents and by using **anti-transpirants**, which are sold under names like Wilt Pruf® in garden centers. They coat the foliage with a thin, waxy layer that prohibits transpiration (loss of water) from leaves. Simply spray on the cuttings, and let dry before using them as decorations.



Trees

The first Friday in December is South Carolina's Arbor Day. School children traditionally plant trees at school on this day to celebrate the beginning of optimum tree planting season. December through March is the best time in South Carolina to plant trees. Did you know that trees planted on the western side of a building can lower summer cooling costs? Trees contribute so much to our world. Trees are sources of jobs, food, shade, oxygen, building materials, rayon, ice cream (Yes, ice cream!), paper, rubber and wood products. Trees increase property values, provide homes for wildlife and give kids a place to climb and swing. All this is in addition to adding beauty to our world! There are an abundance of good reasons to plant a tree.

About the Authors

Amy Bledsoe, who has a degree in horticulture, is a Certified Nursery Professional, Pesticide Applicator, Environmental Landscaper, Arborist, and Landscape Technician. She is currently the landscape designer for the City of Columbia. She has consulted on gardening articles for Columbia Metropolitan magazine and The State newspaper, appeared on ETV's "Making It Grow," and has also been a radio guest on "The Andy Thomas Show" to answer questions on gardening. Email Amy at abledsoedesign@msn.com.

Patsy Cowart, "Miss Patsy," is the eldest of four children, all born in a country house built before 1900. She was taught to cook at an early age by her mother, Miss Mildred Ross. It was and still is a sign of respect in certain pockets of Kershaw county to refer to locals by their name with Miss or Mr. preceding the first name. Simple home cooking was the rule of the day, and nothing was thrown away. A cook book was hardly followed and recipes were shared using terms like "use a pinch of this, pinch of that," and "add to taste." Miss Patsy is a pretty darn good cook—so Professor Ron married her 41 years ago.

Ron Cowart has 40 years of landscaping experience. Since 1975, he has owned and operated Tookeedoo Farms, a landscaping and nursery business. With two degrees from Clemson University, he is also a horticulture and landscape instructor at Midlands Tech, and owner of Cowart Landscaping Consulting, LLC. To contact Ron, call (803) 513.4242 or email cowartconsulting@gmail.com. You can visit Ron's website at www.cowartconsulting.com.

Ruby Haydock DeLoach has an Ed. D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Carolina. After retiring as an educator, she developed her artistic abilities and illustrated her first nonfiction children's science book, **Earth Turns on Its Axis, and...** She has another book under production called **Growing Little Green Thumbs**. To contact Ruby, email rhdeloach@aol.com. Also visit her website at www.crookedcreekart.org/deloach.htm.

Donald McInnes has degrees in biology from Duke, Northwestern and Florida State. He has worked for Clemson Extension in Richland County for more than a decade, assisting thousands of consumers with landscape, garden, wildlife and pest control questions. He is also the owner of Southeastern Environmental Design, a landscape coaching, consulting and design service, and chairs the City of Columbia's Tree and Appearance Commission. He can be reached at seenvdes@aol.com.

About Jungle Taming

Jungle Taming, LLC is an upscale yard and garden restoration company that specializes in pruning, cultivating and uncovering hidden beauty from overgrown landscapes. Call Jungle Taming for fence line cleaning, ivy and weed removal, bed improvement, trimming and cleaning shrubs, tree trimming, debris removal, herbicide application and much, much more.

Owner **Bill Kunze**, certified in Landscape Management, has over 15 years of hands-on experience in the Midlands area. For more information, contact Jungle Taming at (803) 463-2655 or email info@JungleTaming.com. Visit the website: www.JungleTaming.com.

Food for Mind, Body & Soul

Miss Patsy's Secret Weapon Recipes

Cream of Broccoli Soup

Written by Patsy Cowart

This soup is very delicious on a cold wintery evening with your favorite crackers. My husband and I have enjoyed this receipt or similar for over 50 years.

- 20 ounces frozen chopped broccoli**
- 2 cans cream of mushroom soup (undiluted)**
- 1 medium to large onion, chopped**
- 2 carrots, shredded**
- 4 cups milk**
- 4 Tablespoons butter**
- ½ teaspoon tarragon**
- Dash of black pepper or to taste**



Cook broccoli according to package directions and drain well. Sauté onion and carrots in butter in large saucepan until tender. Add all ingredients together in soup pot. Cook over low heat until thoroughly heated, stirring often to keep from sticking. Serve with crackers and a grilled chicken breast as side order. "Enjoy!"

Growing Little Green Thumbs

Plant a Rock Garden

Written by Ruby Haydock DeLoach

South Carolina offers the joy of four beautiful seasons. As summer ends, the cool, fall weather changes every leaf into a flower. Winter brings snow that melts in a few days. Then, spring bursts into blooms.

There is still time to plant bulbs outdoors in the ground for spring blooms. Select bulbs that are firm. Check depth when planting outdoors.

Forcing spring bulbs in an indoor rock garden can brighten late winter days.

"Forcing" spring bulbs encourages the plants to bloom indoors earlier in spring than they would normally flower outdoors. Daffodils, tulips and narcissus are just a few varieties of bulbs that force well. The forced bulbs provide indoor beauty and require little care in order to thrive throughout the flowering period.



Forever Spring
by Ruby DeLoach

- Fill a shallow dish with clean pebbles or floral marbles. Use a dish that is deep enough to hold approximately a 2-inch layer of pebbles.
- Set the bulbs in the pebbles with the flat side down. Push the bulbs into the pebbles just deep enough to hold them upright. Space bulbs approximately 1 inch apart in the dish.
- Add water to the dish until the water just touches the bottom of the bulb. Set the dish in a cool, dark room until the stems begin to emerge. I set my bulbs in the garage with a box over them until the green stems begin to emerge.
- Move the dish to a warm, sunny windowsill when stem growth begins. Replenish the water in the dish to maintain the level as it is used or evaporates.