

In the Garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



Start the New Year in the garden.

January 11, 2008

As the icy fingers of winter tighten her grip, there seems to be less to do in the garden, but here are some suggestions.

Survey your garden tools. Clean them all thoroughly. Discard the ones that are clearly broken or missing parts. Get the others sharpened. I take mine to Berger Hardware. A couple of weeks later I get them back all sharp and shiny, ready for the hard use they will get soon. I cannot stress the importance of having sharp tools. I store them with sharp edges or blades stuck into a bucket of sand dampened with some used motor oil. Of course, I clean after every use. Well, I try to. Get your mower blade sharpened as well.

Work off that post-holiday lethargy by getting outside and checking for any winter storm damage to trees and shrubs. Remove any damaged areas and prune down to undamaged wood.

Check for blocked gutters. Water dripping from them can form a sheet of ice on plants below.

All de-icing products can harm plants and grass. Those marked "safe" for grass are not effective de-icers. So, if you must use something on slippery areas and paths, I advise the use of sand. This provides reasonably good traction. However, take your boots or shoes off once you get inside. Sand can do a real

number on wood floors.

Cut branches off the now discarded Christmas tree and place them on your flower beds. These will protect the area from the elements. Once spring arrives for certain, remove the branches. Avoid walking on frozen beds and grass. Check your waste management calendar for the tree pick-up date. The New Castle recycling center makes mulch from the trees which you can then get for free in the spring.

Inspect indoor plants for pests or disease. Treat right away, organically.

Last but not least, keep those gardening hands well moisturized!

An “In the Garden” Gem

There exists in our town a gem of a garden that we have every reason to applaud and be proud of. I am talking about the garden at Rocky Hills. Created by William and Henriette Suhr, it has evolved over forty years and continues to do so. If you have never visited Rocky Hills, then you simply must do so. Gardeners and non-gardeners alike will be delighted and inspired. This year, Rocky Hills opens to the public through the Garden Conservancy’s “Open Days Program,” May 4 and 24, 2008. Mark your calenders! I will remind you as we get closer to the dates.

I have been privileged to count on Henriette as a dear friend and garden mentor for over fifteen years. Her energy and vision never cease to amaze. She is a font of garden knowledge, all gathered in the best way possible—through experience.

Tilghman Speaks to Chappaqua Garden Club

Nowadays, Henriette gardens with Timothy Tilghman, her head gardener. Timothy himself is a passionate, knowledgeable and experienced gardener. He also has a good sense of humor. But then, I think in order to be a good gardener one needs it. This Wednesday, January 16, he will be speaking to the Chappaqua Garden Club at 12:45pm. The talk will take place at the First Congregational Church in Chappaqua, on the corner of Rt.117 and Orchard Ridge Road. All are invited and it is free of charge. I think this talk should get your gardening juices flowing. And, you have my permission to pick Timothy’s fabulous gardener’s brain. He has much to share.