

In the Garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



December 4, 2009

Things to do in December

Don't let the number of tasks fool you. You've probably got many of them done. Several are routine and simple and some, you may not need to do at all. However, do go through the list!

1. Since the ground is not yet frozen, you can finish planting spring blooming bulbs.
2. As temperatures get low, protect roses and other vulnerable plants with burlap wraps or fences.
3. Mulch the flower beds.
4. Put away remaining outdoor tools and furniture. Clean everything first!
5. Keep bird feeders filled.
6. If you have plants in window boxes, water as needed. Otherwise, plants will suffer.
7. Remove fall decorations. Get ready for the holidays. As far as possible, keep it natural. Plastic berries and other artificial material are often mistaken as potential food by birds and squirrels.

8. Pot up amaryllis and paperwhites for indoor display during the holidays.
9. Secure wayward limbs and branches so they will not break in a winter storm.
10. Finish the leaf raking and general clean-up. Don't be too thorough! Keep available places for toads and such to stay safe in winter.
11. Be certain that all taps and hoses are emptied and shut off or put away.
12. Keep non-toxic ice-melting material such as sand or grit and snow shovels handy.
13. Collect seed and plant catalogs for perusal and planning for next year's garden.
14. Tidy up the storage and work area. Then it'll be all set for spring gardening.
15. If you are getting a live Christmas tree, prepare the hole at the place where it will eventually be planted. Cover the hole securely. Come early spring, planting will be that much easier.
16. When it snows and it will, brush it off vulnerable tree limbs promptly.
17. While the weather is still mild, treat timber sheds, decks and fences with wood preservatives.
18. Make paths safe by fixing broken or loose pavers.
19. Keep an eye on indoor plants. Water regularly and turn plants around periodically.

I've had several inquiries about the pictures of my cauliflower (See ["Giving Thanks,"](#) November 20, 2009).



As strange and lovely as it looks, this type of cauliflower is not a new variety. It dates way back to the Roman times! In fact, it is called Romanesco and seeds are readily available from various seed companies. The flavor is sweeter and nuttier than the regular white sort. Baked whole with some sage butter and bread crumb topping, it tastes simply divine.

Shobha Vanchiswar has been gardening all her life, the last 21 years in Chappaqua. She received the Golden Trowel Award for garden design in 2007 from Garden Design magazine. Her jewel-of-a-garden here in New Castle was on view in this year's Garden Conservancy Open Day program. She has a

*garden design business, **Seeds of Design**. Write her at seedsofdesign@verizon.net. The frontpage painting is Shobha's work.*

