

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



January 1, 2010

Our list for January

A very happy and healthy new year to you all!

1. Survey the garden after every snowfall and storm. If any damage, such as broken branches or torn off protection has occurred, try to fix it as soon as possible. Likewise, large icicles hanging from the edge of roofs pose a threat to plants below; shield the plant if you cannot remove the icicles.
2. Check indoor plants. Be on the lookout for any signs of pests. Rotate the plants for uniform growth and make sure there is adequate humidity and air circulation. Apply a diluted fertilizer if the plant looks needy.
3. Inspect the bulbs cooling for indoor forcing. They should be dry and firm. Make a note of the dates when forcing can begin.
4. Keep bird feeders full. If possible, keep water available as well.
5. If the ground has thawed due to mild temperatures and you have bulbs that have not as yet been planted, this is your last chance.

6. Take an inventory of tools and such. Repair or replace as needed.
7. Peruse seed catalogs and make a wish list. Review this list in a couple of weeks and whittle it down to a realistic list. Then place your order.
8. Do the same with plant catalogs. Naturally, unless you have a place such as a green house or conservatory, ask for orders to be shipped at the right time for planting.
9. Mark May 8, 2010, down on your new calendars. That is the date that Henriette Suhr's Rocky Hills and my garden are being opened to the public through the Garden Conservancy's Open Day Program. Don't make any other plans for that day. Rest assured I will be reminding you nearer to that date.
10. If abundant rains melt the snow and leave the ground wet and soft, take care not to damage the sodden area by walking on it too much. If necessary, put down a temporary path of wood planks over the grass.

When all that snow melted last weekend, I found myself worrying about the plants and bulbs. Even though there wasn't much I could do, I worried. My head told me things would be fine and more snow would fall soon enough, but the heart was a different story. I cheered up significantly when a check on the state of our plot in the community garden revealed that the remaining plants had survived rather well. The last of the collards and leeks were harvested and the resulting meals were delicious. Always a silver lining . . .

Shobha Vanchiswar has been gardening all her life, the last 22 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.