

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



December 5, 2008

Things to do in December

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1. Protect vulnerable plants, shrubs, statuary and pots. Create wind breaks with burlap screens. In my case, that means the rose bushes and climbers. The plants get a loose wrapping. To protect hedges and other plants in the clear path of winter wind and road salt, a simple screen all along the exposed side will do. For pots and statuary, cover first with plastic and then burlap. The cloth makes for a more attractive sight.
2. At this time, enclose the plants prone to deer grazing if you can. Evergreens are rather susceptible in winter.
3. Inspect walkways and steps. If they will be used in winter, make all necessary repairs. To provide traction in icy areas use "green" kitty litter or sand. These are better alternatives to salt, which can harm plants and grass. Wipe feet thoroughly before walking indoors. Preferably, remove outdoor footwear. That is a rule I have all year round. It annoys my fashionable friends, but keeps the floors undamaged and clean.

4. Fill bird feeders. Be consistent. The birds come to rely on the seeds.
5. Mulch all the beds.
6. Remove Thanksgiving and autumn decorations. Think green for holiday décor; keep things natural and biodegradable.
7. If you are getting a live tree for Christmas, decide where it will be planted in the spring. Dig the appropriately sized hole now and cover it with a sheet of plastic tarpaulin or wood. Weigh it down so it will not move or fly off in a winter storm. At planting time you will thank yourself for this advance preparation.
8. Check indoor plants. Heat, light and humidity need to be adjusted for optimum growth conditions. Some like it hot and some like it cool. Place the plants accordingly.
9. As paperwhites and amaryllis start to bloom, move them to cooler locations. It will extend the life of the blooms.
10. Clean and put away all furniture that cannot be left outside in winter.
11. I cannot emphasize strongly enough to clean up everywhere in the garden. Organic practices rely on maintaining good hygienic standards. Prevention always trumps the cure.





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