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GARDENING TIPS FOR JANUARY

Planting:

Geraniums: If you want to start geraniums from seed, remember they take several weeks to sprout and they need temperatures of 55-60 degrees. Keep them cool, but in a sunny spot.

Bare Root Fruits: Cane fruit, grapes, currants and fruit trees will start to become available this month. Do not plant if the soil is too wet or if you have a high water table (when you dig a hole, it fills full of water). If the soil is too wet it packs too tightly around the roots and prevents good growth. When planting bare root plants, be sure to dig a hole at least 1 foot larger than the roots. Mix bone meal (1 cup for trees and less for shrubs) in with compost or good soil in the bottom of the hole. A good way to help the plant achieve good growth is to add some Root Stimulator when watering your plant in.

Seeds: Seeds that you have held over from last year should be tested to make sure they are still viable. Put a few of the seeds between two damp paper towels. If they sprout vigorously, then you know that your seed is still good. There's nothing worse than planting a whole row and have not one seed sprout.

Fertilizing:

Rhubarb, asparagus: Add compost or well-rotted manure late in January.

Pruning:

Fruit and Shade Trees: This month is one of the best for pruning, but don't prune when it is freezing. Cut out diseased and dead wood and open trees' centers to allow more light. Cut back as much as a third of the tree, (especially fruit trees) if very neglected. Disinfect pruning shears in a bleach solution after cutting each plant to avoid spreading fungus diseases. Clean shears thoroughly when done.

Blueberries: Usually taller, upper branches don't need pruning for the first three years. Prune older, lower branches lightly. Concentrate on cutting out the crossing and non-productive branches.

Trees: After wind storms, inspect trees for broken limbs. Cut off cleanly, close to trunk. If you don't cut these ragged limbs, disease can enter your tree.

Spray for Insect and Disease Control:

Fruit Trees: Use a dormant spray during a mild, clear spell. Spray isn't as effective if rain falls within 8 hrs. (24 hrs. is even better). Try to choose a day with little wind. A lime-sulphur spray can damage painted surfaces. Also keep spray away from acid-loving plants (blueberries, azaleas, rhododendrons, etc.). Cover them with a plastic sheet if they are too close to where you must spray.

Peach Trees: These need two sprays between December and January to prevent leaf curl.

Camellias: Use diluted spray oil if needed for scale.

Gardening Tips:

Dahlia Tubers: Sprinkle lightly with water if they are dried or shriveled. Be sure they are in cold storage, but kept above freezing.

Root Crop Storage: Check for and use any that are soft quickly. Check your conditions by checking the roots: If they mildew, it is too damp: If they are stringy it means it is too warm: If they are sprouting it is too bright.

Wood Ashes: They are best stored in a covered container until needed. The potash leaches out quickly in northwest rains. In spring or summer put them around grapes, fruit trees or roses. The potash helps fruits and flowers. Do not apply to acid loving plants.

Geraniums and Fuchsias: Don't let containers become completely dry. Sprinkle them lightly.

Snow: If a lot accumulates in the branches, use an upward sweeping motion to dislodge it, so the branches won't break.

Garden Tools: Now is a good time to clean and oil them. Sharpen your shovels and pruners, as this will make your spring gardening a lot easier.