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GARDENING TIPS FOR DECEMBER

PLANTING:

Seeds: Test the seeds that you saved from last year. Roll about 20 seeds in a moistened paper towel. Put the towel in a plastic bag in a warm place (no light needed) for about two weeks. Remoisten as needed. If 15 of the twenty seeds sprout, the seeds are still viable so no problem planting them. If only 10 sprout, then you need to plant more thickly than usual. If only 5 seeds sprout, then you might want to either buy new seed or start them indoors. Always store your seed in glass jars away from heat and light.

FERTILIZING:

Wood Ashes: Keep them in a water-tight container for use later on root vegetables and flowers. If you put them out now, all the potash leaches out before the plants can use it.

Mulching: Keep mulch away from the trunks of trees. If mulch sits around the trees, it becomes a soggy mess and can prevent air and water from getting to the root system. Make sure your mulch is not packing around plants.

Compost: Keep your compost pile covered with plastic to keep the rains from leaching out the nutrients. Turn once and add lime to it. This will speed the decay and help correct the acidity.

PRUNING:

Conifers: If your pines or other conifers need trimming, do it this month, and use the cut branches for decorations, or lay the greens over tender young plants.

SPRAYING FOR INSECT AND DISEASE CONTROL:

Poison Oak: This can best be handled now if you know where the plants are. Be careful because the plant still has some of the poison oils on the stems (even though it's not quite so potent.).

Bagworms: If you see any webs of worms, cut them out and burn them.

Fruit Trees: Now is a good time to dormant spray.

Peach Trees: Apply dormant spray two times before Jan. 15 for leaf curl. Spray on a calm day when the temperature is around 40 degrees and rain isn't expected for several hours, preferably 24.

Filberts: This is pollination time, so keep sprays away.

GARDENING HINTS:

Icy Sidewalks: Salt may injure the plants that are near walkways, so the best bet is probably either sand or sawdust. Gravel may end up in your lawn and ruin your mower blade.

Building Your Soil: This is a good time to start thinking about your soil. Stop at your local nursery and see if they have a soil test kit. This will tell you what you need to add.

Vegetable Storage: Check your stored vegetables for mold or rot. Cut out any decay and use quickly, freeze or can.

Bulbs and Tubers: Check your stored bulbs and tubers. This is an important month to look for signs of decay. Cut out small areas that are beginning to rot. If your dahlia tubers are beginning to sprout, they are in an area that is too bright.

Birds: If you like to attract birds to your garden, make sure you keep those feeders full now. If you have pumpkin seeds or squash seeds, they love them.

Mulches: If you use sawdust mixed with manure, you don't have to worry about it robbing nitrogen from the soil to decompose. The manure supplies the nitrogen the sawdust needs when decomposing. The sawdust makes good humus.

Trees: Check trees that are staked. Be sure that they will not move too much in the winter winds. Every fairly light winds can shock tender new roots.