

JANUARY GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

THE CITY LOT

CLEAN-UP. Continue cleaning up old plant debris which might shelter pests and diseases. If last summer's dead Morning Glories still adorn the fence, tear them off to make room for new ones; next spring consider planting perennial twining vines such as Trumpet Vine Clematis, Silver Lace, Wisteria, Akebia, Honeysuckle or a Climbing Rose that will eliminate the annual chore of clearing the fence.

FROST. During a mild spell thoroughly inspect all the perennials and newly planted shrubs to detect any that have been heaved out of the ground by the frost; if so, carefully replant them. Continue planting shrubs and trees as long as the ground is not frozen.

WINTER MULCH. Now is the time to recycle Christmas trees, the branches of which make an excellent winter mulch for perennials, vines and newly planted material. It is important to distinguish between the Spruces which are worthless as mulch, because of the needles drop off, and the more expensive fir and Pine trees which stay green. Pines have long needles, Spruce and Fir needles are short and rather similar, but Spruce needles pulled from a twig leave no mark while Fir needles leave a distinct depressed scar. Always lay down mulch during a frost period as it is then less likely to shelter rodents. If available, a shredder will grind Christmas trees into acid woodchip mulch for broadleaf evergreens. Collecting leaf litter in the neighborhood and laying it on the soil makes good mulch too.

SNOW. Snow, of course, makes an excellent mulch, but be careful to remove any snow originating in an adjoining street that may be contaminated with salt. With a broom carefully knock heavy snow off evergreens, especially if it is added to a previous load of frozen rain. In times of heavy snow, children are likely to forget the existence of a garden. Discourage their walking and playing in it. Helpful to put up posts with string between to mark garden boundaries; height of string should be such that children cannot go under it.

BIRDS. If you cannot feed the birds daily, at least fill the bird-bath with fresh water. Discourage pigeons by using feeders with small openings and avoid scattering seed on the ground. Birds' tastes in food vary: doughnuts, suet and bacon drippings will tempt chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers; an occasional winter resident robin or mockingbird savors dried currants and raisins; cardinals, nuthatches, titmice and pine skins will revel in a meal of ground raw peanuts; and an ear of corn is gourmet heaven for cardinals. Sunflower, Millet, Bachelor Button, Coreopsis, Marigold and Butterfly Weed seeds will attract chickadees, song sparrows and juncos. Build a winter bird-shelter of brush, evergreen, and tree limbs in a protected corner of your garden to protect birds during inclement weather.

SEEDS. If you have not ordered your spring catalogues by now, do so! Good sources of seed are: Herbst Bros, 1000 No. Main St., Brewster, NY 10509; W. Atlee Burpee Co., Warminster, Pa. 18971; Geo. W. Park Seed Co., Greenwood, S.C. 29647. Recycle packets of old seeds by mixing them with more recent packages of the same variety. The old seeds that do not germinate will reduce your need for sowing thinly and/or thinning the seedlings. Some seeds lose viability quickly even when stored in the proper manner. Members of the Allium family (onion) must be ordered each year (some will be all right for two years). Lettuce, Parsley, Salsify, Sweet Corn and Parsnip seeds should be planted within two years of purchase. Watermelon, Spinach, Radish, Pepper, Pea, Okra, Endive, Chicory, Celery, Carrot, Cabbage and bean may germinate, if kept in good condition, for up to five years. Tomato, Cucumber, Mustard and Beet seeds may remain viable indefinitely if stored in a dry spot at room temperature about 68 degrees. To test old seeds for viability, Place them between pieces of damp blotter and wait a reasonable period of time to see if they sprout, or immerse them in a glass of water – dead seeds are more likely to rise to the surface. Continue collecting the fruits of Hawthorne and Barberries not yet eaten by birds. Sow these seeds in places where such trees and shrubs will be an asset and no impediment. Seedling flats and ingredients for sterilized soil mix should be purchased now.

PLANNING. The winter solstice has come and lengthened the dark Christmas days. A prolonged mild spell will fatten the glistening pussy-willow buds. Snowdrops and Winter Aconite may flower only to brave a heavy snowfall. The Christmas rose or Hellebores (poisonous) will Flower until spring. It is one of the perennial plants not yet grown much, if at all, in city lots.

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When the seed catalogues arrive, consider upgrading some annual beds by planting work-saving perennials and small shrubs. Also prolific self-sowing biennials, especially such "old-fashioned" plants as fragrant Dames Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), Silver Dollar (*Lunaria*), Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis sylvestris*). These three withstand some dappled shade from trees but not deep shade on the northwest side of the building.

In choosing plants, always remember the light conditions of your site: for shade (*Hosta*); for dappled shade (*Nicotiana*); for sun (*Portulaca*, Marigold, Annual Phlox); for the dry site (*Prickly Pear*, Yarrow); for the damp site (*Astilbe*, King-cups). Obtain seeds to plant according to your requirements, not according to mass marketers' powers of persuasion. Be aware that horticulture, because of the demand for cheap mass-produced products, threatens to degenerate into a monotonous suburban sprawl of red Azaleas and Marigolds; it is up to pioneer city-lot gardeners to revive the growing of almost forgotten plants such as Dame's Rocket.

Prepare seed trays for annuals needing February sowing – such as *Nicotiana*, *Torenia*, *Browallia* and *Heliotrope*.

BULBS. Make sure that stored bulbs and tubers are not suffering due to excessive moisture or heat. Check them for rot, shriveling and sprouting. Adjust and correct storage conditions if any of the three symptoms exist.

COMPOST PILE. When all autumn plant debris has been piled up, continue to add kitchen vegetable material to your heap.