



# January - February - March 2016 Vol. 11, No. 1

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In darkest winter, when the weather is cold and gray and the spirit falters, gardeners can always look towards Spring. The warmth will return, bulbs and flowers will bloom and birds will sing. Gardening shows that you believe in tomorrow and it's worth the wait! For many gardeners, this quiet time of the year is ideal for reflection and planning for the season ahead. Winter shows you the bones of your garden and suggests what new plant material would help you enjoy your garden more. Evergreens are always a restful addition to the landscape and offer a permanent background to many flower beds. A simple box hedge can bring a sense of calm and order to the landscape.

Looking through the garden photos you took last season can help you decide which areas of your garden need improving or re-arranging. Garden books are a great source of inspiration and this is the perfect time to read or re-read some of your favorites (*The World Was My Garden* by David Fairchild - personal favorite). Seeing how other people have solved problems can often help us find solutions to our own garden dilemmas and, indeed, help us to recognize problem areas. Sometimes just looking at your garden in a new way will lead you to the answers you need. Your local library carries some interesting garden DVDs and they are worth watching.

Acer Gardens is really excited about our new perennial, annual and shrub offerings for Spring 2016. Weather permitting, we hope to be open the last weekend in March (please call 860 526-9056 for the actual date as we get into March) and look forward to working with you throughout the season. Plan to come in, look at all the new plants, and talk over your garden plans for the coming garden year! Our current Information Sheets are available on our web site.

February is National Bird Feeding Month. Our over-wintering local birds are primarily seed eaters and feeders should be sited in the sun with wind protection available and shrubbery nearby for warmth and protection in the night. Many bird seed mixtures are available but safflower seeds are particularly popular because squirrels don't like them. Hanging oranges from low tree limbs will attract some birds such as Baltimore orioles, woodpeckers and finches. Many birds also enjoy eating slices of apple or pear... some are said to be fond of peanuts, nuts, pumpkin seeds, popcorn and Cheerios!

## **Gardens and Flower Shows**

With the excitement of the holidays over, many gardeners look out at winter and long to see gardens and things in bloom. Fortunately, your computer can take you visiting all over the country! Go to [www.Ilovegardens.com](http://www.Ilovegardens.com) and see the listings for every state. Some famous viewable gardens include Connecticut's New Canaan Nature Center ([www.newcanaannature.org](http://www.newcanaannature.org)), Massachusetts's Arnold Arboretum at ([www.Harvard.edu](http://www.Harvard.edu)), Rhode Island's Blithewold Garden ([www.Blithewold.org](http://www.Blithewold.org)), Pennsylvania's Longwood

Gardens ([www.longwoodgardens.org](http://www.longwoodgardens.org)), New York's Botanical Garden ([www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org)), Wave Hill ([www.Wavehill.org](http://www.Wavehill.org)), the Brooklyn Botanic Garden ([www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org)), Chanticleer Gardens ([www.chanticleergarden.org](http://www.chanticleergarden.org)) and San Francisco's Filoli ([www.filoli.org](http://www.filoli.org)).

Visiting famous gardens by computer is an easy way to get new ideas and to see how other gardeners have organized their specialties. Even if you can't grow everything the gardens feature because of climate restrictions you are bound to get a fresh perspective. Tropicals can be grown in containers or as houseplants; landscapes can be miniaturized and adapted to smaller areas. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello ([www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)) remains one of the most visited gardens in the United States with the general landscape still reflecting Jefferson's plan. The outstanding feature in the garden is a 1,000 by 80 foot long terrace covering 2 acres and growing many of the over 330 vegetable and fruit varieties grown by Jefferson.

Winters can be long in New England. Look ahead and think about planning a day trip to the CT Flower Show in Hartford. The 34th annual CT Garden Show will take place from Thursday, February 18 through Sunday, February 21, 2016 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. with a theme of "Ports of Call". There will be well over 300 booths, landscaped gardens and 80 hours of seminars and demonstrations (which are free with your ticket.) Vendors will man booths featuring fresh flowers, plants, herbs, bulbs, seeds, gardening books and equipment. You can even bring a ½ cup of soil to the UConn Co-op booth for free soil testing. Go to [www.ctflowershow.com](http://www.ctflowershow.com) for further information, hours and ticket availability. What a great way to get ready for spring!

At the same time, the 2016 Rhode Island Spring Flower and Garden show will be taking place in the RI Convention Center in Providence from February 18-21. This year's theme is "Spring Fling" and is billed as being completely interactive, delighting all the senses. The show also features lectures and demonstrations and an expanded garden display area as well as a Garden Marketplace. Check out [www.flowershow.com](http://www.flowershow.com) for further information.

The 2016 Philadelphia International Flower Show ([www.theflowershow.com](http://www.theflowershow.com)) will be held March 5-13, 2016 and is themed "Explore America: 100 Years of the National Park Service". Exhibitions inspired by 40 parks will be featured with rangers on hand to give presentations about local plant life. The 10-acre Convention Center will be turned into a living canvas of exquisite landscapes, gardens and floral arrangements. The PHS is the world's oldest and largest indoor flower show and attracts more than 260,000 visitors annually.

### **The Really-Must-Do-Now List**

This is the time of year many gardeners don't really have an urgent list! Now is the time for dreaming and planning and hoping ... for thinking about all the things your garden could be in the future. Just be a little realistic! There are only so many hours in the day and the CT gardening season is only so long.

Take the time to really look through all the garden catalogs that will pour in! What a perfect time to consider changes to your own garden: new additions to flower beds, new colors and new foliage choices. Plan your garden's over-all look for this coming season including container placement, cutting gardens, hanging baskets, perennial beds and ground covers. Location is everything! You may want to screen unsightly views with evergreens or flowering shrubs. Make sure your terrace or deck includes some fragrant plant material. All gardens change as they mature and careful editing and/or additions will help you enjoy what you have created even more. In fact, the surrounding background landscape also changes over time and may alter the way you look at and use your garden. All these factors affect your over-all garden plan.

You may actually find that your garden is exactly right for your way of life. Certain plants become “hot” in gardening circles but that doesn’t mean they’re right for you and that you should change your garden just to accommodate them. Be selective. If you’re attracted to a plant but it doesn’t really “fit” perhaps it would work as a container plant. Your garden is a reflection of your style, not someone else’s. It’s meant for your enjoyment.

### **Forcing Flowering Branches**

Look ahead to Spring! Branches of Forsythia, Witch Hazel and Pussy Willow can be cut and forced in February. Crab Apple and flowering Cherry, cut in March, will usually bloom in 3 weeks. Many gardeners find that forcing flowering bushes is easier than forcing spring-blooming trees.

Count back 6 weeks from the time a flowering shrub would be in bloom in order to establish the earliest time you can force a plant. Cut the branches and bring them into a cool spot and plunge the stems into warm water. (Many people put the bottoms of the stems on a cutting board and smash the cut end with a hammer first.) After a few days, move the vase to regular house temperatures and keep it filled with water. Change the water every few days. Once the blooms appear, display the branches in a warm area.

### **Organizing Garden Records**

Winter is a good time to organize your garden records and to write down thoughts and impressions of your garden, either in a journal or on your computer. It will help you plan for the future and will be a good record of what did well and what didn’t. Knowing when you planted a perennial, bush or tree helps you establish a pruning and fertilizing schedule. You will find a Template on the Acer Garden web site. Just print it out on 3-holed paper, as needed, and fill in the suggested information, using the little white labels that come in the nursery pots as well as your own books and information available on the Internet. (Try to look up your exact cultivars). Filed alphabetically in a loose-leaf folder, the templates will provide you with a permanent record of what you grow and what each plant needs to thrive. You could also divide your garden notes by section or flower bed. This is a handy way to keep good records and will help you maintain an inventory of which plants/bushes are growing where.

Consider setting up a chart to monitor the sequence of bloom from your bushes and flowering trees and to make note of what you see from the house. Many garden designers like to ensure that the inside and outside colors used complement each other and that you always have something attractive to look at from the house. Even in winter, the shape of evergreens can echo the flow of your garden.

Photograph your bulbs as they begin to bloom and keep them as a permanent record. The photos will be helpful next fall as you plan where to plant new bulbs. (Don’t forget to deadhead the daffodils but let the stem and leaves turn brown before you cut them down completely). Photographing your garden as the season progresses is the best record of all your hard work.

### **Seasonal Reminders**

In the middle of February, re-apply Wilt-Stop to your evergreens and rhododendrons. Try to spray during a dry period when the temperature is above 32 degrees.

If you are using deer repellents remember that deer quickly get used to certain scents and are lazy about changing established routes so it’s a good idea to change repellents often. Re-apply repellents after heavy rain or snow.

Clean, oil and sharpen all your garden tools and shovels now. You'll be too busy in the spring! Some gardeners paint a splash of red on handles so that they can find their tools easily if they are dropped in the grass or at the edge of a bed. Treat yourself to a new pair of gardening gloves.

In mid-March, cut ornamental grasses down to the ground. Use strong garden twine to tie the grass together about 12" off the ground. Cut below the twine and the grass will be already bundled for removal.

### **Care of Popular House Plants**

Many herbs make wonderful houseplants and will thrive indoors. Although it is a Mediterranean plant, rosemary needs to be misted regularly or it will not do well in the house. Sage, thyme, bay leaves and parsley will all flourish ... the more you cut them to use in your cooking, the happier the plants will be. Give them as much sun and light as you can and don't over water.

Remember to turn your houseplants regularly to keep them from growing and leaning towards the light source. Do not water your plants on a strict schedule but only as the plant needs it.

Hanging Spider Plant babies can be easily rooted. Cut off the baby and float it on top of a small glass of water. Keep the water topped up and you will have roots very quickly. Plant in a good soil mixture and keep watered.

African Violets like a rich soil (special mixes are sold) and bright light but not sunlight...an east window is perfect. Don't fertilize too often (again, special mixtures are available. Use luke-warm water when watering and water from the bottom. They propagate easily from leaf cuttings, which are usually taken in the spring. Put plastic wrap over a jar filled with water and secure with a rubber band. Poke a hole in the middle of the plastic wrap and insert the stem. the cutting. Roots will develop in a short time and the leaf can then be planted.

### **Keeping Winter Blooms Going**

As you enjoy the bulbs you have forced, remember that paper whites will not bloom again and should be discarded.

When the amaryllis bloom is finished, cut off the stem but keep caring for the plant. Give it a bright, sunny location in the house and fertilize regularly. In summer, when all danger of frost has passed, put the amaryllis out in a protected part of the garden where it will receive about 5 hours of sunlight and some afternoon shade. Fertilize lightly until August and leave the plant alone until Labor Day. Then, cut off the leaves, and place the pot in a dark cellar, withholding all water, and store in the dark for at least 2-3 months. They need to rest about 8-12 weeks and are happy being pot-bound. Gradually bring them upstairs, water, and place in the light. Before you know it you will see new leaves and a developing bud.

Poinsettias prefer a day temperature of 67 degrees and like a humid environment. The bright, indirect light of an east window suits them but avoid drafts. Put the plants outside for the summer, trim back and repot in late summer and, well before frost, bring them back into the the house as the daylight begins to shorten.

## Getting Ready for Spring

Clean-up and rake the garden beds. Dead leaves blow around all winter and lodge in bushes and plants. You need to remove these before mice and voles decide to move in! Take this opportunity to cut down and clear off dead Daylily and Hosta foliage and tidy up anything you overlooked in the fall.

Remove winter mulch from flower beds gradually. Any bulbs coming up now will not be bothered by a late frost.

Cut down any perennials you left standing in the fall. (Cut back Gaura, Lavender, Perovskia and Montauk Daisies later when you start to see bud-break.) Watch for frost-heaved plants and push them gently but firmly back into the ground.

Weed! It's amazing, but weeds can and do grow in and survive Connecticut winters all the time. The Spring Garden Chores Information Sheet is available on the web site: ([www.AcerGardens.com](http://www.AcerGardens.com)) . Available Spring products at the nursery will include pelletized lime, pre-emergent fertilizer, lawn and garden fertilizer, Milorganite, organic lawn and garden products, grass seed, straw and control products for deer, insects, rabbits, voles, weeds, and disease. Late April/early May is the ideal time to apply lime, if needed, to the lawn; fertilize and use pre-emergent weed control.

## Roses

Although Acer Gardens offers many roses, both Own Root and Budded varieties, this year we are showcasing varieties that have been "Tried and True" for some time, ... plants that are disease resistant and completely hardy in what can be a difficult climate. These roses consistently give season-long enjoyment with a minimum of effort. Many repeat readily, blooming on both new and old wood. Consider using:

New Dawn (OR)	18-20'	Pale Pink	Proven performance. Blooms on and off until fall. Long-lived climber. Introduced in 1930!
Iceberg (B)	Medium-Tall	Ice White	Very floriferous. Best in mass plantings or hedge. This floribunda needs little care.
Sweet Vigorosa (OR)	Ground-cover	Pink	Double flowers set off by a white "eye". Vigorous and clean with arching habit.
White Meidland (OR)	Ground-cover	White	Large flowers, heavily petaled. Repeat flowering. Dependable spreader.
Carefree Wonder (OR)	Medium-Tall	Pink	Flower has a white eye and cream reverse. Very hardy and disease resistant. Bushy.

All roses need at least 6+ hours of sun a day during the growing season and a rich, loamy, well-drained soil. Apply slow release or organic fertilizers once or twice during the growing season and water deeply once a week. Roses do not like to have wet leaves so good soil watering techniques will help minimize any possible problems. Mulching will help the rose roots stay cool. Like all plants, roses respond to a little extra attention and will reward you many times over if you meet their basic needs.

## **Outstanding New Nursery Selections Available for the 2016 Season**

Acer Gardens is excited about the many new plant introductions offered this coming season. If you are unsure about where a new perennial or annual might fit in your existing garden, put it in a container and move it around at will. You can then observe how the new plant will fit with what you already grow and where it will show to the garden's best advantage.

### **Perennials**

Part of the fun of growing perennials is tucking-in new versions of old favorites or adding a little spice with new colors. Think about adding some of these:

Astilbe 'Purple Candles'	35-41"	Tall, with large purple flowers blooming late in the shade garden. Excellent for cutting and thrives in containers. Fertilize in April and June. Deer and rabbit resistant.
Astilbe 'Little Vision in Purple'	14-16"	Dwarf form with raspberry-purple plumes over a compact mound of bronze-green leaves. Tolerates sun and heat. Cut back for re-bloom. Blooms mid to late summer.
Astilbe 'Chocolate Shogun'	18-24"	Dark chocolate-purple foliage with blooms in soft pink. Blooms late August into September. Will tolerate sun if kept moist.
Dianthus 'Coral Reef'	8-10"	One of the Scent First series of Border Pinks. Long bloom season. Salmon flowers. Happy in a sunny rock garden or alpine trough. Attracts butterflies. Drought tolerant.
Dianthus 'Passion'	6-10"	Double spicy flowers in bright cherry-red. Long bloom season. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies. Trim lightly after bloom to maintain mound shape. Rabbit resistant.
Dianthus 'Sugar Plum'	6-10"	Semi-double, frilly flowers in maroon, pink and white top grey-green foliage. Takes full sun and is an excellent edger. Drought tolerant. Deer resistant.
Heuchera 'Stainless Steel'	8-12"	Unusual. New foliage is silver with light purple veining, maturing to seafoam green. White flowers on chocolate stems. Do not trim back in the fall.
Pulmonaria 'Silver Bouquet'	18-24"	Spring bloomer with large pink bells that change to bright blue as they mature. Heat tolerant and vigorous. Plants prefer a rich, moist soil. Can mass as a groundcover.

Pulmonaria 'Moonshine'	8-10"	Spring bloomer with pale blue flowers over silver leaves edged in deep green. At home in alpine and rock gardens, containers and the edge of woodlands. Prefers partial to full shade.
Rudbeckia 'Little Henry'	30-34"	Narrow, upright grower. Yellow, quilled flowers with brown eyes appear in late summer and cut well. Long-blooming. Cut back to the ground in early spring.

## **Annuals**

Annuals continue to provide a wide range of choice. This year, new color combinations are dazzling and sure to catch your eye. Whether used to brighten containers or flower beds, there are annual choices for everyone. This summer, think about adding:

Calibrachoa 'Candy Bouquet'	12-14"	Very floriferous. Bright magenta with golden-yellow stars. Stunning in hanging baskets and patio planters. Full to part sun.
Calibrachoa 'Can Can Red Splash'	10-15'	Free-flowering, trailing plant with bright red flowers. Fertilize weekly for best results.
Coleus 'Campfire'	14-36"	Eye-catching orange foliage. Excellent patio plant. Stays vibrant in full sun and shade.
Coleus Flamethrower 'Chili Pepper'	18-24"	Bold foliage in shade of green and maroon. Sun tolerant. Ideal for small pots and mixed containers.
Dahlia 'Braveheart'	18-24"	Compact plant with purple-fuschia flowers. Prefers rich soil and full sun. Remove spent flowers.
Dahlia 'Hyp. Tequila Sunrise'	12-24"	Large. Bi-colored flowers in orange-yellow mix. Tolerant of rain, heat and mildew. Short stems need little support.
Petunia Headliner 'Electric Orange'	10-16"	Compact, mounded petunia in a dramatic color. Heat tolerant.
Thunbergia 'Arizona Glow'	60-96"	Orange flowers on this vine bloom steadily. Give full sun and well-drained soil. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.

## **Seeds**

### **Vines**

Morning Glory 'Chocolate'	10'	Large, rosy-chocolate blossoms. Vigorous vine blooms midsummer to frost. Foliage may be variegated.
Nasturtium Trailing Single Blend	5-6'	Mixed shades of scarlet, gold, orange and yellow appear on this late spring to fall bloomer. Give it full sun to light shade. Well-known deer and rabbit deterrent.

### **Vegetables**

Kale Dwarf Blue Curled		Grows best in cool weather. Extremely hardy. Rich in vitamins and minerals. Sow 1-2 weeks before average last frost.
Kale Chinese Kaillan		Also called Chinese broccoli. Sow as soon as soil can be worked. Will tolerate some heat.
Lettuce Lolla Rossa		Italian looseleaf with deep red, tightly curled leaves. Mild flavor. Slow to bolt. Ideal baby leaf variety. Seed as soon as soil can be worked.
Zebrune Shallot Onion		French heirloom yields long bulbs. Flesh is mild and sweet. Excellent keeping quality gives them a long season.

## **Rock and Alpine Gardens**

Growing Alpine plants is an increasingly popular hobby. Here in Connecticut, it is almost impossible not to look around and see existing rocks in your garden which could become the foundation of your Alpine plantings. You don't need much space to tuck in a lot of plants as most true Alpines are not quick spreaders; this makes them ideal for containers and troughs.

Using Alpines replicates a mountain landscape. The plants grow naturally in nutrient-poor soils, prefer open areas and are drought-tolerant and slow-growing. They do not want a lot of fertilizer and are cold-resistant; most are deer-resistant. As you plan your Alpine trough, keep in mind that although many Alpine plants make their biggest showing in the Spring there are so many cultivars to choose from that a little careful planning will keep your trough blooming all summer long. Some Armerias and Achilleas are long-blooming; Dianthus, Erodium, Sedum and Thymus all bloom in the summer. Sempervivums ("Hen and Chicks") cover a wide range of plants and do not require watering. The nursery grows over 200 varieties of Alpine plants and is constantly expanding its collection.

The invention of hypertufa has resulted in the look of weathered stone and many containers are available in this material. One great advantage of the hypertufa troughs and containers is that they are easy to move around the garden and place to advantage. Acer Gardens has a large selection of Alpine troughs ... both empty and pre-planted. Alpine troughs are low-maintenance, hardy, work in a variety of settings and can be tucked into your garden landscape almost at will.

As Alpine trough gardens have become steadily popular in the last few years, some gardeners are re-discovering larger rock gardens. Rock gardens and the Connecticut landscape appear to go hand-in-hand. A rock garden is essentially a re-creation of a mountain landscape, very often on a slope. As you plan, create a scale that suits your growing space. Rock gardens should be placed in full sun as many of the plants you will use are sun lovers. You can use an existing outcropping and add more rocks to repeat the pattern. Make sure some of the rocks you use are large as they are the shapers and keystones of your rock garden.

Combine and space your rock garden plants with their ultimate size in mind. Avoid plants which will quickly outgrow their space or interfere with more slow-growing plants. Take advantage of contrasts in color, foliage and texture. Consider using dwarf conifers to anchor the design and to add a vertical element. (Some cultivars of pines, spruce and false cypress grow very slowly.) Move plants around as you create the effect you have in mind. Many rock garden plants grow slowly and can take several growing seasons to establish. Finally, choose plants with varying heights and include some spreaders and creepers. Good creeper choices include Thyme, Baby's Breath and Irish Moss. Spreading plants might include Aubretia, Ice Plant, Lewisia and Moss Pink.

Before you start your rock garden, take a moment to Internet visit the world's highest botanic garden (8,200'), The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens: [www.bfalpinegardens.org](http://www.bfalpinegardens.org). The web site is full of information and wonderful photos show you their existing rock gardens.

### **Planning for All-Season Color**

All gardeners are interested in getting as much bloom as they can from their plants. Large blocks of color add impact to a garden and the best and easiest way to achieve that goal is to use perennials that are in bloom for extended periods of time and do not require too much maintenance. Deadheading faithfully will help to extend bloom times. Some individual cultivars may need a little pruning or cutting back. Choosing carefully will help you move from bloom time to bloom time without losing the overall look of the garden. Consider adding some of these plants to keep your beds looking full throughout the growing season:

Agastache	Anise-Hyssop	July to first frost
Achillea	Yarrow	June - August
Coreopsis	Tickseed	June to first frost
Echinacea	Cone Flower	June – August
Gaillardia	Blanket Flower	June - August
Gaura	Wand Flower	May - September
Geranium Rozanne	Cranesbill	May – July
Kalimeris	Japanese Aster	June - September
Nepeta	Catmint	June - September
Perovskia	Russian Sage	July – September
Phlox paniculata	Garden Phlox	July – September
Potentilla	Cinquefoil	June – August
Rudbeckia	Black-eyed Susan	July – September
Scabiosa	Pincushion Flower	May – September
Sidalcea	Miniature Hollyhock	July – September

## **Planning for Cool-Season Vegetables**

Every year, more and more gardeners discover the pleasure of growing some of the vegetables they eat. A successful vegetable garden needs 8 hours of full sun daily and some protection from excessive winds. Raised beds and containers make good alternatives to full-size gardens although containers will require more watering. Adding organic matter to the soil (compost or manure) will give your vegetables a boost and help drainage. Vegetables can be tucked into gardens easily. Lettuces are ideal for containers or even the front of garden beds. Tomatoes decorate many a patio or terrace, mixed in with herbs; cucumbers can be grown on a trellis or pergola; new dwarf varieties and bush forms of plants allow space-saving techniques. Adding natural insect repellents to herb and vegetable gardens (basil, nasturtiums and marigolds) will help you grow vegetables successfully. Pre-grown vegetables are best suited for container growing and will give you a head start.

Probably the most important concept for a vegetable gardener to live by is: “Rotate the Crops!” Failure to do this can result in declining harvests and plants that do not thrive and grow to expectation. Plotting your garden on graph paper will help you establish boundaries and maximize your available space. If you are using rows be sure to leave access routes for weeding and fertilizing. Square foot gardens (4’ x 4’) have proven very helpful for smaller vegetable gardens. Divide the area into 16 squares and space plants accordingly. Use stakes or a trellis to send vines upright and save space.

Many vegetables can be planted as soon as you can work the soil. Known as “cool season vegetables”, they include Swiss Chard, Spinach, Kale, Leeks, Onions, Cilantro, Peas, Cabbage, Broccoli and Cauliflower. Leaf lettuces, such as Black Seeded Simpson, Arugula, and Mache are harvested young and re-planting every 2 – 3 weeks will keep you harvesting until the heat of the summer.

Do not plant seeds too deeply. The smallest seeds, like lettuce, actually need light to germinate and are best sprinkled on top of your growing medium. Follow the directions on the seed packet for best results.

Our Information sheet on **Growing Vegetables** is available on the web site ([www.acergardens.com](http://www.acergardens.com)) .

## **Often-Asked Questions**

### **My rhododendron leaves look awful. Are my bushes dying?**

Don’t worry when your rhododendron leaves curl up in the cold; the bush is protecting itself from harsh weather. This process actually helps rhododendrons thrive in cold climates. Freeze damage is minimized as the leaves slowly thaw out as the temperature climbs.

### **What’s the best way to get snow off my bushes and ornamental trees?**

Although it is always tempting to try to remove snow covering from evergreens and bushes you may actually do more harm than good by swinging those brooms and rakes! Plants are amazingly resilient and, as the snow melts, most plants will snap back fairly quickly. Give them a little time to readjust and, if you do see damage later in the season, carefully cut out the problem limbs.

### **I feed the birds all winter. Will they stay around to eat bad bugs and insects?**

When we garden, we grow plants that attract bugs and insects. Hungry birds are our first line of defense ... organic pest control! Nearly all birds eat insects. Ground feeders, like robins, are particularly fond of worms and caterpillars. In this area we see different birds at different times. Birds migrating through in the spring feed on the insects on spring-blooming trees. Summer residents are fond of the bugs that reproduce during

the warmer months. Other birds staying through the fall and winter eat insect eggs and larvae. Growing a wide variety of plants will entice an assortment of birds to stop by for a snack.

### **What is Planting by the Moon?**

Long used by farmers, planting by the moon attempts to integrate the moon's cycle and its pull on the earth's tides and water with the planting of vegetable seeds, flowers and bulbs. During the two weeks the moon is waxing (growing), plant flowers and vegetables that bear crops above ground. During the two weeks the moon is waning (shrinking), plant bulbs and vegetables that bear crops below ground. Tests at Northwestern University have proven that seeds will absorb the most water at the time of the full moon and grow better.

### **Garden Help Lines**

As the season kicks off, questions can arise and Uconn's Cooperative Extension System is available to answer questions on many garden topics including plant insects and diseases. They can be reached at 1-877-486-6271 or ([www.ladybug.uconn.edu/index.html](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/index.html))

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station will answer inquiries on lawn problems (860-683-4977), soil testing (203-974-8521) and plant disease issues (203-974-8601).

### **General Reminder**

**Tuesdays** at Acer Gardens are 60+ Discount Days ... 10% off all purchases.

**Wednesday** offers a 10% Nursery **Discount** to all customers.

Acer Gardens  
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Editor

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