“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.”

- Anne Bradstreet

The Living Tree

Purchasing a cut Christmas tree is not a bad thing. Most trees sold in western North Carolina were grown in neighboring counties. Your purchase helps support the local farm economy, which helps preserve farmland.

But many homeowners would like to have a living tree that can be planted in the landscape after the holidays. This can be a lovely addition to the landscape as long as you make some wise decisions:

- Select an appropriate species for the space you will have to plant. These grow into very large trees.
- Keep the tree in the house no more than a week to 10 days. The longer it is indoors the less its chances of survival when taken back outdoors.
- Plant promptly, water well and mulch.
CHORES FOR NOVEMBER

LAWNS

- Do not allow leaves to accumulate on newly seeded grass. To avoid damaging tender seedlings, use a leaf blower or rake gently or use the bagging attachment on the mower to pick up the leaves.
- Nitrogen fertilizer can still be applied if you have not put out the fall application yet.

ORNAMENTALS

- Clean up the flower garden. Remove dead annuals. Cut back dead tops on perennials unless they have ornamental value. Some seed heads will feed the birds for a while.
- A few autumn leaves will not hurt the perennial bed as long as they do not cover evergreen plants, but do not leave a heavy cover of leaves over plants as rotting may occur during the winter.
- November is the best time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Plant bulbs to a depth equal to 4 times the diameter of the bulb.
- Plant trees and shrubs. Water thoroughly, mulch, then check soil moisture around the plants weekly.
- This is also a good time to plant evergreen groundcovers such as green-and-gold, periwinkle, lamb’s ears, liriope and ajuga.

FRUITS

- Clean up the orchard. Not only rake leaves, but remove all fruit from the ground and any left hanging in the trees. Good sanitation is important for pest management.
- Do not prune fruit trees until March.

VEGETABLES

- Leafy greens should be ready to harvest. Pull whole plants if the bed needs to be thinned. Otherwise pull lower leaves and allow the plant to continue growing.
- Grow some herbs on the window sill. Plant seeds of chives, parsley or basil.
- Finish removing spent vegetable plants from the garden.
- If you didn’t plant a cover crop, an inch or two of leaves, preferably shredded or chopped with the mower can be used to cover the garden to protect the soil during the winter.

OTHER

- Drain rain barrels and re-install the downspout. Store the barrels for the winter or turn them upside down so they don’t collect water.
- Disconnect and drain garden hoses.

Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.
GARDEN CHORES FOR DECEMBER

LAWNS

• Take a break for a while, as long as the last of the leaves have been raked and the grass has been mowed that last time.

ORNAMENTALS

• Check the water level in the cut Christmas tree daily. A fresh tree can take up a gallon of water a day for the first few days.
• If possible wash the tree thoroughly with the garden hose before bringing into the house. This will help remove pollen and other allergens as well as hitchhiking insects.
• If you are cutting holiday greenery from the landscape, keep good pruning practices in mind. Use sharp pruners to make cuts at branch angles or leaf nodes and keep an eye on the shape of the plant.
• Inspect house plants, especially any that spent the summer outdoors. They often carry in small insects such as scale, mealybugs, whiteflies and spider mites.

FRUITS

• After nighttime temperatures are regularly below freezing, the strawberry bed can be covered with straw or row cover fabric. Pull weeds first.
• Grape vines may be pruned. Use vines for wreath making.

VEGETABLES

• Remove asparagus ferns now that they have died.
• Carrots, parsnips, beets and turnips can be dug all winter if the ground does not freeze. You may want to cover the bed with a few inches of straw to prevent freezing.

OTHER

• Catalog shopping begins in earnest this month. Seed and plant catalogs can be an excellent source of information on vegetable and flower varieties to consider for next year’s garden.

RECYCLING LEAVES

What to do with all those leaves? It seems such a waste to take them to the curb or burn them.

Shredded leaves can be used as an informal mulch in the flower bed or natural area. Put some over the vegetable garden to protect the soil during the winter and turn them into the soil in spring. If you don’t have a leaf shredder, mow over them with the lawn mower and use the bagger to collect them.

Dry leaves can be turned into wonderful compost if mixed with green material such as grass clippings and kitchen scraps. The compost will work faster if the leaves are shredded, but whole leaves will work as well.
TREATING HEMLOCKS

If you have hemlock trees that need to be treated for hemlock woolly adelgid infestations, this is a good time to treat. This applies either to sprays with insecticidal soap or horticultural oil, or applying a systemic soil drench treatment. It is best to apply the soil drench when there is moisture in the soil and the ground is not frozen. If you don’t get it done now, you can still make applications in February or March.

CONSIDER GROUND COVERS

Sometimes you just don’t want more lawn grass. Or perhaps you have areas where grass struggles to survive. A common problem area for grass is shady spots. If you have shady or partly shady areas you would like to plant with other plant materials, late fall is a good time to plant.

I have had the best luck planting starts of periwinkle, ajuga or ivy gleaned from established plantings in fall rather than in spring. You could also divide out starts for other groundcover materials now such as mondo grass or liriope.

Some other plantings that you may or may not consider “ground covers” as they get a foot or more tall might include Epimedium, Cranesbill geranium, lamb’s ears or lenten rose.

TIPS FOR THE WATER WISE LANDSCAPE

Once we put away the garden hoses and rain barrels we forget about watering the landscape. While it is true that we usually have adequate precipitation during the winter months to sustain landscape plants, as dry as it has been this year some plants may warrant monitoring. This is especially true of trees and shrubs planted within the past year. Developing root systems still need adequate moisture on a regular basis.

Although mulch is the best measure to keep moisture in the soil, remember that the moisture needs to be there before you apply the mulch. So if you are applying a fresh layer of mulch to protect new shrubs, perennials or pansy beds form alternate freezing and thawing during the winter, you may need to water well before putting out the mulch.

If you are draining the last of the water from the rain barrel, consider giving evergreen shrubs and extra drink. It is best for evergreens to go into freezing temperatures well hydrated because they loose moisture from their leaves even if the ground is frozen.
OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

Extension Master Gardener volunteers have helped thousands of Buncombe County gardeners to improve their gardening practices and to resolve plant problems. Without their time and energy many of your questions would have gone unanswered. We thank all our hard working volunteers for their dedication to urban horticulture education in Buncombe County. On November 13 our outstanding volunteers were recognized for their contributions in 2008.

2008 Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Jane Roberts. Jane has been an active volunteer for 7 years and has participated in numerous activities and served in leadership roles.

The New Sprout award was presented to the outstanding member of the Class of 2008. This year’s recipient is Alice Cook who enthusiastically participated in numerous activities throughout the year.

2008 Extension Master Gardener volunteers receiving certification after completing training and more than 40 hours of service were:

Nell Armstrong    Linda Medeiros
Linda Allen Beach  Cheryl Morrison
Julian Biller      Tom Mosher
Alice Cook         Patsy Norwood
Leila Cort         Paula O’Hara
Sheila Dunn        Chris Pratt
Brian Greenwood    Mary Tavolacci
Suzanne Henry      James Tucker
Daniel Holladay    Sue Wahlquist
Bob Wardwell

GARDEN ALMANACS

With holidays and a new year approaching, this may be a good time to remind you that we have Gardeners’ Almanacs available. This provides a list of garden chores and some instructional material each month, a vegetable planting guide for Buncombe County and more valuable information. For $5 they make a great gift for a new gardener, new neighbor, or yourself. Pick one up at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville.
## COMING EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 21</td>
<td>Extension Master Gardener application deadline.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 6</td>
<td>The Botanical Garden at Asheville, Garden Path Gift Shop closes for the season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 9</td>
<td>Gardening in the Mountains: <em>Planting for Privacy and Security</em>, presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the North Carolina Arboretum at 10:00 am. Tuesday is free admission. No registration required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Gardening in the Mountains: <em>Catalog Shopping</em>, presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the North Carolina Arboretum at 10:00 am. Tuesday is free admission. No registration required.</td>
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Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in this newsletter, but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.