



Garden Recognitions

With increased urbanization, homeowners have incorporated more wildlife friendly elements into their landscape. A balanced habitat creates a natural system of checks and balances by promoting a diverse wildlife population. A way to encourage a wildlife friendly landscape is to acquire recognitions for your garden.

One option is to become a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the National Wildlife Federation. With this certification your wildlife garden should include food, cover, water, places to raise young, and be maintained through sustainable practices. For more information on becoming a Certified Wildlife Habitat, visit <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Create-and-Certify>.



By becoming certified as a Monarch Waystation by Monarch Watch, you can support monarch butterfly conservation and be included in the Monarch Waystation Registry. With this certification your habitat should have sufficient size, sun exposure, milkweed plants, shelter, nectar plants, and proper management. For more information on becoming a Monarch Waystation, visit <https://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations>.

The last recognition I am going to talk about today is registering your garden with the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail. This program is inspired by Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter to help propagate monarch butterfly habitats. Your garden should include host plants, nectar plants, and a habitat conducive for a healthy butterfly lifecycle. For more information on the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail, visit <https://rosalynncarterbutterflytrail.org/join-the-rosalynn-carter-butterfly-trail/>.



See Extension Publication P2402, *Establishing a Backyard Wildlife Habitat* for information on how you can adapt your landscape to be a wildlife habitat.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Reflect & Make Plans for a New Gardening Year	2
Garden Calendar	3
Pruning	4
Watering Landscape Plants During Winter	5
Tips for Protecting Plants During the Winter	6
Calendar of Events	
Alternatives for Discarding Your Christmas Tree	7

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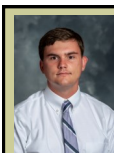
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Reflect & Make Plans for a New Gardening Year

Happy New Year! As we embark on a new year, gardeners and plant enthusiasts alike are gearing up for a fresh season of growth, color and the promise of a bountiful harvest.

Whether you're a seasoned green-thumb gardener or a novice with dreams of a flourishing garden, the new year is the perfect time to sow the seeds of your botanical aspirations. Let's explore essential tips and resolutions to help you cultivate a vibrant and thriving garden in the coming months.

Before you plunge hands first into the soil, take a moment to reflect on your successes and challenges of the past growing season. Consider what worked well and what could be improved.

Use this reflection as a foundation for your gardening resolutions and plans for the new year.

What do you hope to achieve with your garden this year? Whether it's enhancing curb appeal, growing your own vegetables, creating a haven for pollinators or simply enjoying a more colorful landscape, clearly define your goals. Setting specific objectives will guide your plant choices and gardening activities.

I always like to make the new year an opportunity to diversify my garden.

If you feel like trying something new, explore new plant varieties, colors and textures to add interest and complexity to your outdoor space. Consider incorporating native plants that are well-suited to your region. This promotes biodiversity and supports the local ecosystems.

Another preparation to make is to develop a planting calendar tailored to your local climate and growing zone.

Research the optimal times for planting different types of plants, considering frost dates, temperature fluctuations and seasonal changes. This strategic approach makes it possible for you to create a garden that remains in a constant state of bloom and productivity.

Healthy soil is the foundation for a thriving garden; be sure to conduct a soil test to assess its composition and nutrient levels.

Based on the results, amend your soil with nutrients and organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure. Healthy soil provides the necessary nutrients and structure for plants to flourish.

Consider making a commitment to incorporate some sustainable practices in your garden. You can reduce your environmental footprint by composting kitchen and garden waste, using organic fertilizers or minimizing the use of chemical pesticides.

These steps can help you create a garden that not only flourishes aesthetically but also harmonizes with the natural ecosystem.

Gardening is a journey of continuous learning. Dedicate time to expand your horticultural knowledge through books, online resources and local gardening events. Stay informed about new gardening techniques, plant varieties and sustainable practices. This allows you to evolve as a knowledgeable and skilled gardener.

Remember the Mississippi State University Extension Service has offices in every county and staff to assist you in becoming a successful gardener. Visit your local Extension office to see what resources are available to you.

I truly believe that with thoughtful planning, sustainable practices and a spirit of continuous learning, you'll cultivate a garden that not only thrives in the new year but also brings joy and fulfillment every season. Happy gardening!



Garden Calendar: January

Now is the time of year that Cabin Fever and garden catalogs in our mailboxes get us dreaming about getting out into the garden.

Planning

- Start plans on paper for changes or improvements in the garden.
- Order seed for early planting.

Equipment

- Repair and sharpen mowers and tools. Order new pots and markers.
- Check condition of sprayers.

Planting

- Set out trees and shrubs.
- Plant Sweet Peas, Poppies, and Larkspur.

Fertilizing

- January - March is the proper time to fertilize trees and shrubs.
- Apply lime to lawns if needed.

Pest Control

- Scale on broad-leaf evergreens should be sprayed with dormant oil for control.

Pruning

- Trim Nandinas.

Mulch

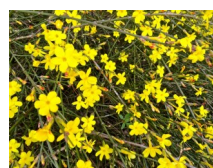
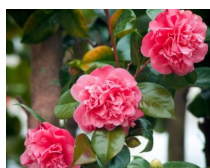
- Mulch Lilies with compost.
- Protect tender plants during periods of extreme cold.

Miscellaneous

- Keep bird feeders stocked. Provide water for birds.
- After freeze, check to make sure plants have not heaved out of the ground.

In Bloom

- Camellia, Winter Honeysuckle, Winter Jasmine, and in mild winters Flowering Quince





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Pruning

We typically have a long window of opportunity to do many of our winter garden/orchard chores and we can usually find a good day to suit our comfort level from late December through early March. With most of our perennials in dormancy, now is a great time to start thinking about our pruning needs and preparing for pruning our landscape plants during January - March.

We recommend waiting until the entire plant is dormant before doing any major pruning, as this can cause unwanted stress to the plant or even cause a flush of new growth, which can then be injured by cold temperatures. It is important to think about the reasons you are pruning before beginning the process. A few reasons to prune include:

1. To keep or limit the size and shape of a plant so it won't overpower the landscape.
2. To remove undesirable growth that distracts from the balance or symmetry of the plant.
3. To remove diseased, insect-infested, dead, or abnormal plant tissue.
4. To stimulate flowering and/or fruit production of old plants.
5. To develop a specific plant form, such as a hedge or an espalier, as in formal landscape designs
6. To direct or train trees to grow in a particular form to eliminate problems.
7. To remove plant parts that may interfere with structures or utility lines or that may create a visibility problem.

Prune after the landscape feature of your plant has passed. For spring flowering plants, prune in late spring as the flowering season is ending. This allows for adequate growth during the summer to produce flower buds for the next year. For fall-flowering plants, such as some of the camellias, use tip-pruning or thinning. Prune as the flowering season is ending. For plants with colorful berries, prune after the berries are gone.

Never prune plants without proper equipment. Be sure your equipment is sharp and clean. Clean equipment helps prevent the spread of disease organisms. Sharp equipment makes cutting easier and helps avoid tearing plants. A proper pruning cut does not leave a stub allowing rot to enter the trunk or cut too deep into the trunk of the tree leaving an entry wound for fungus/disease or insects. A properly pruning location is at the branch collar, just outside with the swollen area known as the branch bark ridge. This will allow a safe and relatively quick healing of wound, while the tree's natural ability to seal off and stop rot from entering the trunk. Some photo examples of this are including in Publication 2729 – Understanding Pruning and Injury Wounds in Fruit Trees.

More detailed information on the correct procedure for pruning, as well as general care of fruit trees, as well as general landscape trees, can be found in the following publications at your local extension office or on the extension.msstate.edu website:

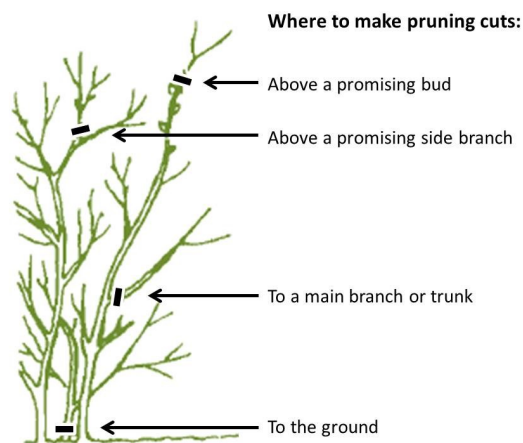
IS1434 - FRUIT AND NUT REVIEW - PEACHES, NECTARINES, AND PLUMS

IS1433 - FRUIT AND NUT REVIEW – APPLES AND PEARS

IS204 – PRUNING LANDSCAPE PLANTS

P2290 – ESTABLISHMENT AND PRODUCTION OF MUSCADINE GRAPES

P1758 – ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF BLUEBERRIES





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Watering Your Landscape Plants During The Winter

Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible to cold damage, so watering plants a few days in advance of a cold snap is beneficial. Watering plants before a freeze can help protect them from cold injury. Soil that is well watered absorbs more heat and then reradiates heat, helping to increase the elevated temperature around the plants thus, moist soil is a better insulative barrier than dry soil. But, should we continue watering during the winter?

It's easy to forget about our plants during the winter months. We often forget that they are still alive and sometimes need care in the winter months. Once plants go dormant for the year many people believe that they need nothing until spring, but that isn't always the case, especially in years with low or no rain throughout the winter months. The roots of landscape plants do not go dormant and are not particularly cold-hardy.

Winter watering is essential in dry winter years. Winter desiccation (drying out) commonly occurs on evergreen types of trees and shrubs. All trees are still transpiring, or losing water, throughout the winter months, evergreen trees are transpiring at a higher rate than deciduous trees. Winter desiccation occurs when the amount of water lost is greater than the amount of water the evergreen takes in throughout the winter months. The branches and needles of our trees will die. The damage from winter desiccation is brown needles out on the ends of branches. However, the damage from winter desiccation will not usually show up in our trees until early spring, so they will stay green through the winter. Drought effects can damage deciduous trees as well. Especially newly planted deciduous trees need to be watered throughout the winter months if natural moisture is absent.

Ensure adequate watering throughout the entire growing season for all trees and shrubs, especially those recently planted. Make sure that they are well watered going into the fall. Also, water throughout the winter when the ground is not frozen to help the plants through a dry winter, if necessary. Winter watering should occur during the day on days when the temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or above and is only necessary 1-2 times per month to the top 6 inches of soil until spring. However, it is not recommended to use an irrigation system during the winter unless it is used responsibly. Freezing temperatures can damage irrigation pipe if not properly winterized, or drained, after use.

One of the major causes of winter damage is lack of adequate soil moisture. Dry soil coupled with strong winter winds can cause severe problems for your plants. While the need for watering during the heat of the summer is obvious, it may not be quite as apparent during the winter. Remember your plants are still alive and need water. You can test the soil moisture using your finger, a garden trowel, moisture meter, or screwdriver. This can help you determine if you have adequate moisture for winter protection.



(Left) Typical winter desiccation injury on arborvitae. (Right) Boxwoods are also prone to winter desiccation injury. (Photo by Sarah Browning.)



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Tips for Protecting Plants During the Winter

Winter months can bring frigid weather and dropping temperatures which can increase the chance of damaging your plants. Preventative measures to help prevent extensive cold damage can include the following:

- Outside plants can be covered with a blanket or sheet to help keep the heat in.
- Mulch can be applied to the soil to help protect the roots of plants and help reduce heat loss.
- Container plants need to be moved inside. The roots of the container plants are more susceptible to damage. If container plants are left outside, you can cover the tops of the plants and wrap the pots to help keep the heat in.
- A good fertilization routine throughout the year can help plants during the winter months. Healthy plants can recover faster from cold weather damage.
- When choosing plants, selecting cold-tolerant plants for your area will help reduce cold damage.
- Watering the plants and soil before a freeze can help reduce cold damage. Soil that is watered well can absorb more heat and keep a warmer temperature around the plants.

For more information on Protecting Plants from Cold Temperatures, refer to Publication 2303. If you have any questions, contact your local Extension Office.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Event
	PINE BELT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION MEETING
Jan 2nd	The Pine Belt Beekeepers Association meeting will be held at the Lamar County Extension office beginning at 6 PM.
	FORGE DAY: BLACKSMITHING & METALWORKING DEMONSTRATIONS
Jan 18th	<u>Crosby Arboretum</u> —Join us from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM for an exciting day of demonstrations by area metalworkers, craftsmen, and blacksmiths. If you are invited to try your hand at the forge, a signed waiver will be required. Wares will be available for purchase. Food vendors will be available on site. Members and non-members, entry is \$5 for adults, Senior 55+/Military/First Responders \$4; children 12 and younger \$2. See http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/ for the programs and event calendar, and a link to sign up. The Crosby Arboretum is located at I-59 Exit 4 at 370 Ridge Road in Picayune. <i>For disability accommodation, contact Barb Medlock or Sherri Lowe at 601-799-2311, Ext. 0</i>
	HANCOCK-HARRISON FORESTRY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM
Jan 21st	The Hancock-Harrison County Forestry & Wildlife Association will host its Annual Business Meeting & Program Tuesday January 21, 2025 at the County Farm Road Shelter located at 15035 County Farm Rd in Gulfport beginning at 6:00 PM with registration. Our guest speaker will be new Extension Forestry Specialist, Dr. Andrea De Stefano, speaking on Pineywoods Cattle research. Preregistration by January 17th is required by calling 228-731-8567 or email tim.ray@msstate.edu .



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Alternatives To Discarding Your Christmas Tree

As we start a new year and recover from the holidays you might be wondering, “what am I going to do with this tree?”. Most people just throw their Christmas trees out or burn them after the holiday season is over. But what if there was a way to get rid of that dying tree by repurposing it! Here are a just a few quick suggestions of other ways to dispose of your tree after Christmas has passed.



One of my favorite uses is recycling it into a habitat for wildlife! There are two different ways you can accomplish this, the first being for aquatic wildlife. Placing your old tree in a pond for aquatic wildlife is great for your smaller fish to find shelter in and have a nice cozy home. Don't have a pond? You could always call a friend or relative who does; or you could even post on social media for someone to come grab it up!

The second way you can use your old tree for a wildlife habitat is by cutting it into smaller pieces and “piling” it up on top of itself. Making a small brush pile in the woods not only can create a habitat for smaller animals, but it will also provide food and shelter for insects that birds and smaller animals feed on. A great way to help wildlife thrive through the colder months ahead.



Do you or you or someone you know have a need for some mulch? A used Christmas tree is a great option! You can simply chop your tree's branches into small pieces to get a material that can be used as mulch. Mulching around shrubs, trees and plants protects the soil from rain erosion and frost damage. And while those pesky needles may be a pain, they make a great addition to your fresh mulch. Especially, when scattering around plants that thrive in acidic conditions.

So, before you throw that tree out; why not consider returning it back to where it came? The great outdoors!!

