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Adding Artful Beauty and Value to your Outdoor Spaces



## Around The Garden Newsletter

Hello and welcome to another newsletter.

February can be one of the coldest months of the year here in Northern California. Plants such as citrus, ferns, bougainvillea, fuchsias, tropicals and some succulents can be susceptible when the temperature dips down to freezing. Some protections that may help are: spraying an anti-transpirant such as Wilt-Pruf or Cloud Cover. These can be purchased at any good nursery. Throwing over a cover such as burlap, fabric, old sheets or even plastic can work also. If you are using plastic, the plastic should not touch the leaves or they will still freeze so keep the cover off the foliage with some stakes or a frame. Remember to remove any covering the next morning when the temperature rises.

And lastly I have heard some success with stringing Christmas lights around your frost sensitive plants. Make sure its the older kind of lights and not the new LEDs, you want the warmth the lights give off which LED does not produce.

If after all your efforts you still have plants with frost damage, it's best to leave the damaged foliage on the plant to protect the portions below the damage. When all danger of frost has passed and especially when you see new growth coming up from base of plant, it's safe to prune back. Things may look dead but be patient! Oftentimes the plant makes an astonishing recovery.

Another fun thing to do while waiting for spring to arrive is forcing branches to bloom indoors. Some trees/shrubs that work well for this activity are Forsythia, Pear/ Cherry/ Apple trees, Dogwoods/ Magnolias, Red Bud trees, Crab Apples and Flowering Quince. Prune some medium size branches that have a lot of flower buds on them. Smash the bottoms with a hammer because this opens them up allowing the uptake of water. Place in an sturdy vase with warm water, arrange artistically and enjoy in as little as a few days to a few weeks! Place in a light filled room but out of direct sunlight, they may burn.



The photos below feature another lawn reduction I completed at the end of last year. I created a more interesting front yard by adding a dry creek bed, stone steps from the street to the existing walkway, boulders, and a small rock retaining wall. Low water plantings complete the transformation. Click on each image to see a larger version.







Hang in there, spring is just around the corner! I sure hope we get more rain in February, we still need it. Remember to prune back now, especially roses, before the new flush of spring. Enjoy your gardens. Until next time...

- Lynda

### February Tips and To Do's

- Divide overcrowded perennials this month. Dig out clumps, cut them into a few sections, and replant in amended soil.
- Choose Magnolia's while they are in bloom, to be sure you like the flower.
- Prune fruit trees and roses if not done so last month. Also prune deciduous trees and shrubs, while the leaves are off, as you can see the structure of the plant.
- Apply chelated iron to Azaleas, Citrus and Gardenias if yellowing. This helps them green up for spring.
- Apply the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last dormant spray on fruit trees at the "pink-bud" stage. This controls the Peach –Leaf Curl that Peach and Nectarine trees are likely to get.
- This month there is a good selection of bare root fruit trees, grapes, and berries at your local nurseries, also roses at a lower cost to you than later when they can be bought in bloom.
- Summer blooming bulbs can be purchased and planted now. Asiatic Lilies, Gladiolus, Dahlias, Canna Lilies and Tuberous Begonias are just some of the choices.
- Annuals for early spring color can be planted now. Primroses, Pansies, Violas, Iceland Poppies, Snapdragons and Stock can give some much-needed early spring color.

- If you are interested in Strawberries, Rhubarb and any of the Berries, now is the time to get these at the nursery.

### [Download to do's for February](#)

#### March Garden Tips and To Do's

- Feed Fuchsias with a fertilizer, 0-10-10 ratio.
- To restore a lawn after winter rains, can aerate and/or thatch then fertilize with a high nitrogen feed to restore nutrients again.
- Control snails and slugs. They love the tender new growth of a variety of plants in your garden. A great natural way to rid these hungry critters is to pour out some beer in a low flat dish. The smell attracts them, they crawl in and drown! OR SLUGGO is a good choice for use around pets.
- Feed Azaleas, Camellias, and Rhododendrons with a high nitrogen acid fertilizer and Ironite after blooms are done.
- Feed citrus with a good citrus food from your local nursery. Add a little chelated iron if still yellow.
- Feed fruit trees and berries with a good all-purpose fertilizer, such as 12-12-12 ratio, and a super phosphate such as 0-20-0, to increase fruit production.
- It is good to add to your existing layer of mulch in your gardens. I tend to like a dark black micro bark that can be purchased in bulk or in bags. A deep 2"-3" layer is advised, as this helps keep weeds to a minimum, helps keep in the moisture in the heat of summer, and lastly when it does break down eventually it helps keep our heavy soils loose and light. One word of caution, when adding your mulch keep a little away from the crown of each plant. They need to breathe just like we do, so don't crowd them.
- Now is the time to work some aluminum sulfate into your soil around your Hydrangeas if you want that intense blue. There are several brands on the market at your local nurseries.
- Plant Dahlias this year!! They can be purchased now as tubers, looking like a sweet potato. There are many varieties coming in many colors to choose from. Plant Dahlias in a sunny spot, add plenty of compost and plant deep (6"). You will be rewarded with a spectacular display from summer into fall.

### [Download to do's for March](#)

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