

January Garden Tips

Do you have little ones visiting and need entertainment ideas? Why not create a bird garden. Make garlands with unshelled nuts, fruit/berries, seedy flower heads that can be strung on a fence. Fill your empty birdbaths with different kinds of food - ear corn, seeds, etc. Water is very important in the winter months too. If you do leave water in your birdbaths, be sure to use a deicing device to keep the water flowing - and to keep ceramic bowls from cracking. Place small rocks around the edge so the birds can drink without getting their feet wet.

There are so many different kinds of bird seeds on the market now to choose from. Use them to attract a variety of birds to your yard. Black oil sunflower seeds are a good choice if only using one kind of seed - the cardinals will love you! Suet is the most concentrated form of energy you can give birds. Since it includes a variety of foods it will attract many different birds. Fat plays a major role in a bird's diet and is especially important during the winter months.

Back yard ponds? Keep a hole in your pond to let the gases escape. Dead leaves, algae, etc. that accumulated over the summer are slowly breaking down, using the available oxygen in the water, and can produce toxic levels of hydrogen sulfide. Keeping the pump going will not only oxygenate the water, but keep a portion of the pond from freezing. Be sure to set the pump on rocks/bricks to keep from disturbing the warmer waters on the bottom where your fish are overwintering.

We all have problems with squirrels invading the birdfeeders. I actually love to watch their antics and therefore put out a squirrel mix for them. However, I also have squirrel-proof feeders scattered around the yard - they really do work! If you don't want to invest in the squirrel-proof feeders, which tend to be a bit pricey - I suggest metal birdfeeders that the furry critters can't chew through.

Move your holiday plants inside. They all will last longer in cool temperatures. Christmas cactus, Cyclamen, and Kalanchoe (50-55), poinsettia (55-60) and amaryllis (60-65). They don't need full sun but good light is necessary. Use a 20-20-20 fertilizer on poinsettias whenever the soil goes dry - to prevent the leaves from dropping off (lack of nitrogen).

When the Christmas cactus flowers fade, pinch them off and start a 5-week dormant period. Don't do anything to them - not even water. The second week of February begin bi-weekly feedings of a 20-20-20 fertilizer. This should give you another blooming around the middle of March.

UNTIL NEXT THYME, GWEN