

December 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to December - the last month of the year!

While the natural world outside lays fallow, we are invited to retreat. The icy winds and roads encourage us to take shelter for awhile, to limit our orbit and look within ourselves. Amid the holiday bustle lies a unique opportunity for reflection and introspection. A chance to sit beside the fire and just be here, right now, and nowhere else.

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
ALL IS CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT

There, in the moments when we slow, we can find the gift we most want to receive. While the weather howls and swirls, there is an opportunity for each one of us to embrace the stillness, give ourselves over to wonder, and be a light of love in the world.

Then, perhaps, we will experience the kind of peace that comes with a silent night, the wonder that arrives on a holy night. Perhaps this season, when all is calm, all will be bright ...

Merry Christmas to all!

DECEMBER MEETING:

Date: December 13, 2023

Time: 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Business Meeting

10:30 AM - Potluck Lunch and Sale Table shopping

12:15 - 12:45 PM - Clean-up

Location: Our Savior Lutheran Church
745 Front Street South
Issaquah, WA

Lunch Committee:

Hostess: Everyone participates

A - L bring a savory dish

M - Z bring a sweet treat

Holiday sale table:

We will also have a sales table with donations provided by club members so start thinking about what to bring. Also, remember the bring your wallet and come prepared to buy. Items will be “priced low to go” as Dianne likes to say ...

***** If you are a coffee or tea drinker please remember the **BRING YOUR OWN CUP**

Winter is “flu season”:

The vaccine requirements have been lifted but it’s still important to remember to evaluate your state of health prior to each meeting. Obviously, if anyone is feeling unwell or you’ve had recent known exposure to COVID, RSV or flu you should stay home and not attend the IGC meeting ...

YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED:

Blue Start Marker - Veteran’s Day Celebration:

Thank you to all who participated in this event - Dianne, Gale, Debbie (and her husband Doug) and Joan F.

Dianne did a lovely red, white and blue floral arrangement and brought a flag to add to the marker for the day. The ROTC from the high school presented the colors.

November 8 MEETING:

“What we do to the land, we do to ourselves” ... Wendell Berry

The speaker was Laura Matter about Fall Garden Preparations. Laura is a Master Gardener and Program Director of National Yardcare, Tilth Alliance.

Laura shared information sheets, magnets and business cards about the Tilth Alliance and the Garden Hotline.

She started her talk with an overview of the Maritime Northwest Climate and then talked about a number of aspects important to keeping our soil healthy and our plants happy though the winter:

- ** Know your light:
 - * Consider reflection from objects such as metal or windows
 - * Keep in mind the arc of the sun
 - * Deciduous trees stop the light until bare
- ** Know your temperature:
 - * Stone, brick and concrete get hot
 - * Evergreens create shade all year and breath creating warmer air
 - * Wind exposure
 - * Plants around water are cooler
- ** Healthy soil:
 - * Decreases need for fertilizer and pesticides
 - * Drain well
 - * Decrease need for irrigation
 - * Will filter out urban pollutants
 - * Holds stormwater
 - * Stores carbon
 - * Provides habitat
- ** Mulch is beneficial:

* Try not to remove all leaves as this provides a good habitat and can protect tender plants

* Fall application protects soil and nourishes plants

** Northwest cover crops are primarily cereal grasses or peas

** If soil is about 50 degrees is good for planted. But, DO NOT work (or walk) on frozen soil ... very damaging.

** King Conservation District (KCD) will test soil from one property five times for free. After that there is a charge.

SAVE THE DATES:

January 10, 2024: First meeting of the New Year and speaker will be “Winter Gardening” presented by Squak Mt. Nursery

Snack Committee:

Hostess: Lois

Crew: Jean, Janet, Georgann and Debbie

February 14 - 18: Flower and Garden Show in Seattle

February 26, 2024: General Membership Meeting (GMM) - details to be coming out shortly

Time: Start arriving at 9:30

Cost: \$10.00 which includes two programs (one horticulture and one design) as well as lunch

Location: St. Andrews Lutheran Church

2650 148th Ave. SE

Bellevue

EDUCATIONAL CORNER

How to protect container plants from winter weather – prevent frost, rain, and wind from damaging your pots

With cold and inclement weather on the horizon, here's how to keep your outdoor planters safe from harm

Whether it's heavy downpours saturating potting soil, gusts of wind tipping planters over, or freezing temperatures cracking containers, winter weather can be hard on our outdoor potted plants.

Tender plants in containers should simply be [brought indoors](#) if you want them to survive. However, even the hardier species – including the [best winter plants for pots](#) – can benefit from a bit of protection when the outdoor elements get tough.

Luckily, there are a few simple steps you can take to be prepared and minimize the risks of damage. **Protecting potted plants from inclement weather – 5 top ti**

Help your [container plants](#) stand up to challenging winter weather with this practical advice.

1. Move them out of harm's way

As mentioned, many [plants are better off moved indoors](#) when temperatures drop. These include [pelargoniums](#), [citrus trees](#), and any [tropical houseplants](#) that you moved onto your patio during the warmer months. A bright conservatory is ideal for most – or even a sunny windowsill for smaller plants.

A frost-free greenhouse is often suitable, too. Remember to keep the transitions gentle, since sudden temperature changes are not good for the health of plants.

In cold regions, tender bulb plants, such as [dahlias](#) and [gladiolus](#), should be lifted from their pots. The bulbs should then be dried and stored somewhere frost-free, ready for replanting in the spring when it's warmer again.

For remaining outdoor potted plants, think about moving them somewhere that's slightly more sheltered than out in the open.

Move your pots close to one another, preferably near a house wall. Doing this creates an insulated microclimate which helps protect them against harsh winter conditions.

If you have a large enough porch, even better, as this will keep off heavy rainfall and snow.

2. Choose your pots carefully

When planting in pots, it's always worth considering the container itself carefully. This can help prevent problems later on.

The first thing to ensure is that your planters have drainage holes in the bottom. This will prevent the soil from becoming waterlogged during bouts of heavy winter rain and the plant roots rotting as a result.

It's also best to opt for pots made from materials that can withstand freezing temperatures. Although they have a rustic charm, terracotta planters are porous and susceptible to cracking when temperatures drop. Glazed ceramic, fiberstone, and plastic-composite containers tend

to be tougher. Look for 'frostproof' on the label when buying for extra peace of mind.

Think about the weight of your pots, too. Tall plants should, ideally, be planted in heavier containers to reduce the risks of them blowing over in high winds.

3. Improve drainage

As well as checking your containers have drainage holes, it's a good idea to elevate them slightly off the ground. This prevents the containers from sitting in puddles. Use pot feet or even bricks. It helps excess water escape and prevents waterlogging.

You can shop [pot feet at Amazon](#). Pot risers also prevent containers from sitting directly on cold surfaces, adds Anna.

The soil your plants are in should also be well-draining to prevent waterlogging. Adding horticultural grit can help.

Remember, too, to drain excess water from any saucers sat underneath smaller plant pots.

Top tip: While it's important to try and prevent your plants from becoming waterlogged, letting them dry out too much – for instance, if you've moved them under cover – can also be problematic. 'Dry and under-watered plants are more likely to suffer damage from the cold and may not recover quickly,' says Autumn. However, if you do need to give them a drink, she advises only watering when it is

over 40°F and avoiding the leaves to help prevent frost damage.

4. Wrap them up

Extremely cold temperatures can put stress on your potted plants. To avoid this, it's worth wrapping a layer or two of material around the containers to [protect them from frost](#).

You can use bubble wrap, burlap, or even old blankets to insulate the roots, says Tom. Alternatively – and if you have the space – you can temporarily sink pots into holes in the ground which will provide some warmth.

The top part of the plant can be covered with frost cloth or a similar fabric on particularly cold nights. This will keep away the cold air but let the plant breathe.

As a temporary fix for some plants, you can alternatively try [drawstring covers – at Amazon](#) are well-rated and have been awarded 'Amazon's Choice'. Remove the covers during milder temperatures to prevent the plants from overheating.

Top tip: Note that putting plastic tarps over the tops of plants should be done with caution. They trap moisture inside, and if they touch the foliage, can actually cause more harm than good. If using, be sure to support them away from the plant with some sort of structure.

5. Add a layer of mulch

Apply a layer of [mulch](#), about 2-3 inches deep, on top of the soil in your pots. Mulch helps insulate the soil and roots, keeping them warmer and preventing rapid moisture loss. It helps to suppress weeds, too.

You can use [homemade compost](#), wood chips, or straw, or put [fallen leaves](#) to good use by making leaf mold – all will also add nutrients to the soil as they break down.

Top tip: Mulching is also an effective way to help [protect trees from winter weather](#), as well as flower beds.

In Summary:FAQs

When should you protect potted plants from winter weather?

Choosing winter-resistant pots, using well-draining soil, and installing pot feet can all be done well in advance of winter weather. However, protective measures such as frost cloths and moving plants indoors should be done just before frosty or stormy weather begins. For many regions, the first frost usually happens around the end of fall, however it's worth checking your local predictions.

How can you protect container plants from winter pests?

If you've planted bulbs in pots outdoors, keep an eye out for hungry [squirrels](#) who are renown for digging them up. [Slugs](#) can also be a nuisance for potted plants in winter, as they love damp conditions.

How should you protect potted plants from heavy snow?

Stay updated on weather forecasts in your area. Be prepared to take additional protective measures if your region is expected to receive heavy snowfall, as this can break or damage healthy branches on your potted plant. You could assemble a framework to keep snowfall off, or move plants inside temporarily.

As well as protecting your potted plants, there are other ways to prepare your backyard for winter to keep it in top condition. These include [weatherproofing a shed](#), [winterizing your lawn](#), and sorting out your [sprinkler system](#).

Don't forget to give visiting wildlife a helping hand, too, throughout these trickier months – [putting out bird feed](#) is an easy and rewarding task.

General tips for planting in pots:

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A frost-free greenhouse is often suitable, too. 'Remember to keep the transitions gentle, since sudden temperature changes are not good for the health of plants,' advises gardening and landscape experts.

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