



Patty's Plants December Newsletter

Is Winter For the Birds, Bunnies, Deer, or Us?

Don't forget the gardener this winter. We have gardening gifts!

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All of the above, I would say. Some of us may enjoy everything about winter and some of us may move to warmer climates this time of year. As I was just out shoveling here at Patty's Plants this morning with our first snowfall, I was thinking someplace warmer might actually be nice. Then I said no, no, this is good exercise and it was so beautiful this morning with all the fresh snow cover. In this newsletter there will be a little bit about feeding the birds for the bird lover, what you can try to use to keep the bunnies and deer from eating your trees and shrubs, growing rosemary indoors in the winter to give us a bit of aroma therapy and maybe even keep our memories sharp. I will repeat a couple of articles



that I believe to be important enough to remind people about during the holidays. Plus, we just got in an **eco-friendly de-icer** for sidewalks. "**Ice Melt Down**", will not harm trees and shrubs. There's no messy white residue tracking into your home or office. It does not harm carpeting or flooring and doesn't harm most common metals. Your children and pets will thank you because Ice Melt-Down is an organic compound that's **safer** for children and pets. It will melt below zero too. I only have it in 45# buckets right now but I am trying to get them in smaller jugs too.

Happy Safe Holidays
To One and All!

Indoor Plants need protection from outdoor winter weather.

Important Tip When Purchasing Plants In Winter

Since plants don't like cold, you must never take them outside in the winter without some kind of protection. Use the plant sleeve they came in to take them to their final destination. A couple of garage bags will help. Also warm up the car. If the shop you're at doesn't offer you a bag, ask for one. Plants don't have body heat. The cover only helps to keep the wind and chill off temporarily. Please don't leave them in the



car in the winter even with the protective covering on unless you have the heat on. Leaving your plants to do more shopping will surely damage or kill them once the temperature in the car dips. This can happen in less than 5 minutes when it's freezing out here in the mid-west. When you get them home take off the cover as soon as possible to prevent any more stress to your plants.

Poisonous & Non Poisonous Holiday Plants

Considered Safer

Norfolk Island Pine

Christmas Cactus

Pine trees (Scotch, Norway & White)

Fir trees (Balsam, Fraser, Noble)

Use Caution

Paperwhites-the bulbs are mildly toxic if eaten.

Poinsettias- the milky sap can cause skin irritation.

Ferns- (not Boston type),

can cause skin irritation & nausea.

English Ivies-Mild enough to be around children

Poisonous

Mistletoe- all parts; leaves, berries & stems

Amaryllis- bulbs if eaten

Azalea-all parts; leaves, flowers & stems

Junipers- the needles are toxic

Holly- all parts: leaves, the berries are very toxic

Jerusalem Cherry- the fruits can cause serious problems if eaten. Keep away from children and pets.

(They look like cherry tomatoes)

The Indoor Christmas Tree- Norfolk Island Pine- Araucaria excelsa.

These are the only evergreen conifer that will grow happily indoors. We use them as living Christmas trees. Norfolk Island Pines are tropical and native to islands in the South Pacific. In their natural habitat they will grow over 100 feet tall, but will stay 10 feet or less when grown indoors. Long ago, sailing ships scouted the islands for these pines to use as masts.

To select a healthy Norfolk Island Pine, look for one that has rich green foliage. The growth, especially the tips, might still be light green. Look for strong, straight trunks. If it looks like its an usual green color, it was probably sprayed that way for the Holidays. It will get new growth that will make the unnatural green look funny. Choose one that's not sprayed.

Tips for Growing Healthy Norfolk Island Pines

*They like bright light but prefer not to be in the direct sunlight. They will tolerate shade for short periods, they tend to get thin and begin leaning toward the light if kept in low light more than a few weeks.

*They like to be kept slightly dry. Don't let water sit in the saucer for more than an few hours.

*Keep them in a cool location (60°-65). They can tol-

erate temperatures as low as 40° and will summer successfully outdoors in our area in a shady area.

*When kept indoors, these plants need to be misted for humidity or use a humidity tray.

*During late spring and early summer while they are doing most of their growing, feed them twice a month with a water soluble or liquid plant food. Mix the fertilizer at 1/2 the recommended rate. During the winter, feed once or twice a month with an good organic fertilizer.

*It won't need repotting very often and prefers to be a little bit pot bound. When you do repot it, use a good houseplant soil with worm castings or add worm castings to the mix.

*You may have to prune off a few branches from the bottom of the plant.

They do shed the lower layers as they grow.

For more information contact me at :

patty@pattysplants.com

or

www.pattysplants.com



Great tropical Christmas tree!

Amaryllis means “Sparkling” (Hippeastrum)

Amaryllis are truly “sparkling” and one of the most beautiful and exotic looking flower to brighten your home in winter. It is native to South America, the Andes

Mountains in Chili and Peru. When purchasing a new Amaryllis bulb, it is one of the easiest bulbs to grow. However, last years bulbs take a little more care. Go to: www.pattysplants.com on

“How to get your Amaryllis to Re-bloom.”

If you want an amaryllis to bloom for Christmas you’ll need to purchase a new one in November or you can find them already started at here at Patty’s Plants. It doesn’t matter what month you buy it in, October or April, you’ll still have to wait 6-10 weeks to see it bloom after you plant it.

- You should prepare the bulb for planting by soaking it’s base and roots in warm water for a couple of hours. This will hydrate the dry root system. If



you can’t plant it right away, keep it in a cool area and hydrate it at the time of planting.

- Use good potting soil with worm castings or add worm castings to it to give it a natural nutritious boost once the roots start growing. Always moisten the soil first. It is much easier to work with and doesn’t sink down when watering it.
- Place only the bottom 3/4 of the bulb un-

der the soil. The neck and top of the bulb should stick out. Never cover the bulb completely with soil as you can rot the bulb easily that way. Make sure the soil is pressed firmly around the bulb. This will keep it from tipping. They can get top heavy as they grow.

- Water sparingly until the plant starts to grow. Then let it dry slightly. They do not like to stay constantly wet.
- Place in a warm sunny window and watch it grow.

Products for Deer, Rabbit and other critters

One of my favorite plant protectors is called **Deer and Rabbit Scram**. It is all natural containing things like; garlic, cloves, dried blood and more. It even works under fresh snow for 100 days. It really worked for me. I didn’t have to replant my lettuce or cole crops for the first time in the spring. Of course, what works for one may not always work for another.

Plantskydd has granular, powder concentrate and ready to use spray. #1 most tested. Acts as a fertilizer

too. **Powder concentrate lasts up to 6 months over the winter on dormant plants.** The liquid is best applied when temps are above freezing, so remember this one next year. There is also a granular which can be applied anytime. Keeps away: Deer, rabbits, **voles, chipmunks, squirrels** and opossum. Dip your bulbs in the liquid formula before planting.

Mole Scram has been proven to quickly and effectively reduce and eliminate mole activity!

Feeding the Birds in Winter

Bird watching is fun anytime but especially in the glooming days of winter. Feeding helps the birds stay near your home so you can watch them and gets through harsh winters when food may be hard to find or buried under the deep snow. Here’s a list of some of my favorite birds to watch:

Northern cardinal -sunflower, safflower, peanuts, insects, cracked corn, white millet, white bread, melon seeds, raisins, bananas, berries, rose hips.

Black-capped chickadee-sunflower, safflower, suet mixtures, peanuts, thistle, peanut butter, insects, sugar water,



pie crust.

White-breasted nuthatch-sunflower, safflower, suet mixtures, peanuts, peanut butter, insects, pumpkin seeds.

Woodpeckers-suet and suet mixtures, cracked corn, peanuts, fruit

Purple finch-sunflower, safflower, thistle, insects, peanuts, suet mixtures, white and red millet

We have suet balls with feeders and Suet Christmas Wreaths for your special birds or bird lover.

Don't forget the gardener this winter. We have gardening gifts!

Patty's Plants
220 S. Janesville St.
Milton, WI
53563

Phone: 608-580-0066
Fax: 866-336-6720
Email: www.pattysplants.com

Natural & Organic Garden Supply

www.pattysplants.com



Patty's Plants

We have Wreaths, Greens, Swags, Roping (Cedar & Douglas Fir Mix), Evergreen Containers that are ready to go and fresh evergreen centerpieces.

Winter care of Rosemary in Wisconsin

Rosemary can be less than easy to grow in the house. But it can be done. I love to have Rosemary in my home in the winter. The aroma therapy I get from it alone will keep me trying to keep it alive all winter not to mention the favor it adds to soups and sauces. New research even shows Rosemary may help with memory too! Here are some tips that I do to keep my Rosemary growing:



- *Too much water will damage the roots and cause the plant to die, so I let the soil dry, then water thoroughly. I always say Ivies don't like wet feet, neither does Rosemary.
- *Rosemary needs a south or southeast exposure, and my kitchen window is perfect for this. I have it in a southeast window.
- *I also make sure it is growing in the best organic potting soil or I would add worm castings to any soil that doesn't have it.

There is no need to mist Rosemary. It can get powdery mildew in the house. I will only mist it to treat it for the mildew with 1 tablespoon of baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon of liquid soap, 1 gallon of water. The soap will help it cling to the leaves.

For your Holiday Table try this recipe:

Rosemary Walnuts

- 2 cup shelled whole walnuts
- 1 t salt
- 2-1/2 T melted butter
- 1/2 t cayenne pepper
- 2t dried, crumbled rosemary

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix together ingredients and pour in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast in oven about 10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally until lightly browned. Store in an airtight container until ready to serve. Yum

From: Top 10 Herbs by Jim Long We carry many fun herb books by Jim Long with lots of yummy recipes.