**Winter Watering - An important habit**

In Colorado’s semi-arid climate, many plants will benefit from winter watering during dry periods when there is no snow cover. Warm dry winters can damage the root systems of many types of plants leading to reduced vigor in the following year. Evergreen plants are particularly susceptible to damage as they continue to lose water from their needles throughout the winter which can lead to dehydrating and scorching. Newly planted trees, shallow rooted tree species, and evergreens are the most susceptible to damage from dry winters.

**Dos and Don’ts of Winter Watering**

**Do-** Water trees once a month if we do not have significant precipitation.

**Don’t-** Water trees if the air or soil temperature is below 40 degrees F.

**Do-** Apply 10 gallons of water per inch of trunk caliper.

**Don’t-** Water too deeply with a deep root feeder. Most tree roots are in the top 12” of soil.

Newly planted trees can be watered with a five gallon bucket or simply with a hose. For mature trees a hose end sprinkler is more effective as it will water more of a tree’s root system which can extend 2-5 times the width of its canopy once established. Be sure to disconnect your hose from the spigot after watering to prevent freeze damage.

*Tip! Consider setting a monthly reminder to winter water in your smart phone.*
Many vegetable gardeners struggle when attempting to start plants from seed. There are two major environmental factors that contribute to this, cool potting media temperature and insufficient lighting.

Seedlings of warm season vegetable crops prefer minimum daytime temperatures to be around 70 degrees F and that nighttime temperatures are no lower than approximately 65 degrees F. At first glance, this seems reasonable for most homes. However, the temperatures in potting media can be as much as 5 degrees colder then air temperatures and seed starts are commonly placed in windowsills which are often one of the coldest spaces in a house.

Cold soil temperatures can result in slow germination, nutrient deficiencies, increased incidence of disease and general reduced seedling vigor. Using an electric heat mat is one way to raise the temperature of your potting media. Moving plants to a warmer location (i.e. out of the windowsill) and providing supplemental lighting can also increase success.

Supplemental lighting is often recommended and almost always beneficial for vegetable seedlings. Insufficient lighting is main cause of “leggy” or “spindly” plants. Standard florescent tube lights provide adequate light for vegetables. A combination of an equal number of “cool white” tubes and “natural daylight” tubes is ideal. Lights should be hung no more than 2 to 4 inches from your seedlings.

In winter, gardeners have to switch gears; the garden outside is dormant but that doesn’t mean that there’s nothing to care for. Houseplants require specific care through the winter months. Some adjustments should be made to ensure the best survival and enjoyment from houseplants through the cold and dark winter months. Even in the depths of winter, plants benefit from good light; keep them close to south or west facing windows and rotate every week to ensure they get even light coverage. Don’t place the plant so close to the window that the leaves touch it, as this will likely freeze them on cold nights. If you supplement with artificial lighting, turn the lights off for at least 6 hours of the day. It’s easy to over water in the winter; plants use less water when temperatures are cooler. Use a turkey baster or similar device to remove standing water several hours after watering. If your plant is over watered, the lower leaves may yellow or brownish spots will appear on the leaves. Check subsurface moisture levels when deciding whether to water.

There are several pests common to houseplants in the wintertime. These include spidermites, fungus gnats, scale, and mealybugs. Many of these can be easily controlled with cultural practices. For example, spidermites can be deterred by simply washing off leaves, or using an insecticidal soap. Fungus gnats feed on fungus and organic matter in soil, but require moist soil to reproduce. By allowing the soil surface to dry between watering, you can substantially reduce fungus gnat populations. Bt or Bacillus thuringiensis is a naturally occurring bacteria which is toxic to fly larvae and can be used to help combat the pest. If purchasing Bt for fly control, ensure that you purchase the correct variety intended for flies, not for caterpillars. Apply as per label instructions. See the CSU Fact Sheet for more information on pests and controls of household plants: http://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/insect/05595.pdf
Shrubs for Winter Interest

Is your landscape looking a little drab now that the leaves have fallen? Just because it’s winter does not mean your landscape has to be boring. There are lots of plants that add winter interest to an outdoor space from ornamental grasses to evergreen trees. Even the seed heads of some herbaceous perennials can look attractive in the winter. Due to the variety of features and types of interest, shrubs shine during the winter.

Some shrubs have twigs which are an attractive color or provide an interesting texture to a landscape. For example, red twig dogwood (also known as red osier dogwood - *Cornus sericea*) has showy twigs that bring color to a winter landscape.

Other shrubs retain their fruit into the winter which can add interest and color to a winter landscape as well as attracting birds. Many species of hawthorn retain their fruit into the winter along with shrubs like firethorn and some crabapples.

Due to their spreading suckering growth habits, sumacs should be used with care in smaller landscapes. However, many species of sumac keep their interesting red fruits through winter.

Most people are familiar with the more common evergreens like pines, spruces and junipers. However, many are less familiar with broadleafed evergreens. These plants retain their leaves all winter and add both color and texture to a winter landscape. There are actually quite a few broadleaf evergreens which can be grown in our area including: curl leaf mountain mahogany, mountain mahogany, winter creeper euonymus, Manhattan euonymus, English ivy, Oregon grape holly, creeping grape holly, manzanita, joint fir, Spanish broom and firethorn. All of these plants will benefit from winter watering and many will do better in sites which are protected from drying winter winds.

Tip! Each year remove the oldest stems of a red twig dogwood to encourage new growth and help maintain an attractive red winter appearance.

Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick (*Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’) as well as several species of willows have contorted habits which add texture to a landscape.

Tip! Plant trees and shrubs with different seasons of interest to keep you yard looking good the whole year round.
Spring Gardening Classes with CSU Extension

Come join us at Adams County Extension for our series of Spring Gardening classes. You can choose to attend one, two or all four classes. Each class will cost $10 to attend, if you register for all four you pay only $30. Classes will run from 10:00 A.M. to 12:15 P.M. The first class will be held at the Anythink Library Wright Farms Location at:

5877 E. 120th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80602
See map: [Google Maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

The final three classes will be at the Adams County Fairgrounds in the Parks Meeting Rooms:

9755 Henderson Rd
Brighton, CO 90601
See Map: [Google Maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

You can register for the classes through Eventbright at the below link or by contacting the Extension office at 303-637-8100. Registration online here: [http://tinyurl.com/hdos964](http://tinyurl.com/hdos964)

**Intro to Vegetable Gardening and Garden Planning - January 16th**
This class will go over the fundamental steps to starting and maintaining a vegetable garden. Topics will include: starting a garden, when to plant, when to water and fertilize, and care of the garden. This class will be held at the Anythink Library Wright Farms location. The final three classes will be at the Adams County Fairgrounds in the Parks Meeting Rooms.

**Greenhouses for the Homeowner and Other Season Extending Tactics - February 27th**
Cold weather got you down? Missing the fresh greens from your summer garden? There are many methods available to homeowners to extend the growing season from greenhouses or cold frames. This class will cover of the basics of different methods of season extension including the pros and cons of each method. This class will be held at the Adams County Fairgrounds in the Parks Meeting Rooms.

**Small Fruits - March 12th**
Growing small fruits can be one of the most rewarding and productive types of home food production. This class will cover the basics of backyard production of several different types of small fruits. This class will cover the basics of production for raspberries, blackberries, grapes, strawberries and currants. This class will be held at the Adams County Fairgrounds in the Parks Meeting Rooms.

**Container Vegetable Gardening- April 9th**
Container gardening is a great way to grow fresh vegetables in a limited space or add an interest to an outdoor space. Many types of vegetables can be grown in containers. Topics will include, selecting a potting mix, types of containers, types of irrigation and fertilization, and tips for growing specific vegetables in containers. This class will be held at the Adams County Fairgrounds in the Parks Meeting Rooms.

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