

Horticulture

Forcing bulbs

There is still time through early December to plant spring flowering bulbs for forcing. Choose cultivars of bulbs that are adapted to forcing. Bulb quality and the proper size are very important when purchasing bulbs for flowering.

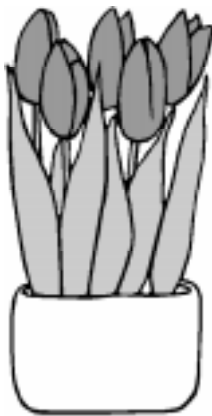
Use a porous, well-drained potting mixture. Shallow pots called bulb pans are available for forcing enthusiasts. Bulbs need only a limited nutrient supply during forcing. Do not add manures and additional nutrients to the soil at planting time.

Plant 5 to 6 hyacinth or narcissus bulbs per 5-inch bulb pan, or 6 to 9 bulbs per 6-inch pan. Place the flat side of tulip bulbs against the side of the pan so the first leaf will curl over the outside of the pan. A general rule of thumb for other types of bulbs would be to plant half of the total surface area to bulbs.

Use clean containers with adequate drain openings. Don't pack the soil or push the bulbs into the soil. Plant the bulbs as the pots are filled with soil. Water the soil thoroughly after planting. Place the potted bulbs in a room 35-50 degrees Fahrenheit for 12 weeks. Hyacinths prefer a 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit until the new shoots are 1-inch long.

The soil must be kept evenly moist during the rooting process. If you do not have a cool room, place the pots in a deep window well covering them with 12 to 24 inches of coarse mulch. Begin in 8 to 12 weeks or sooner if shoots begin to develop, bringing the pots up to a 60 degrees Fahrenheit room. Early in the forcing process it is not necessary to have light for leaf initiation. It would be wise to keep hyacinths in the dark for a few days to draw the flower stalk above the leaves.

Check with your local nursery or garden center for help in selecting cultivars for forcing. (DJ)



Attracting birds with the right plants

Birds are always welcome in the winter landscape. The right type of food and feeder can assure a steady stream of visitors all season. The right plants can also welcome a wide variety of birds by providing both food and cover.

For years, gardeners have planted crabapples for spring flowers and fall fruit crops. Most of the newer selections have smaller fruit that can feed the birds while adding to the color display.

The 'Donald Wyman' crabapple is a favorite, with its white spring blossoms and bright red fruit that persists well into winter.



Other varieties like 'Centurion' and 'Adams' also have persistent red fruit.

Many viburnums are noted for their fruit crops in summer and early fall. A few,

however, produce fruit that persists into winter. The European cranberry bush and the American cranberry bush viburnum produce juicy red fruit that holds well into winter to feed a variety of birds.

Winterberry develops a dense crop of bright red berries along their stems. Since the fruit is so bright and easily seen, it often

continued on page 11

Rodent damage

Girdling—gnawing a strip of bark completely around a tree trunk—kills the tree by starving it to death. Mice may often be discouraged from feeding on tree bark by removing the mulch or grass growing around the plant. This destroys the natural cover under which the mice normally feed.

Severe mouse infestations can be controlled by creating a barrier with 1/4" hardware cloth set 3 to 4" deep in the ground and 10" above ground level. If the barrier is extended to reach about 2' above normal snow level, it will also prevent rabbit nibbling.

Rodent repellents and trapping may also be used for rodent control. Repellents have an unpleasant taste that discourages feeding on the bark. A new coat must be applied each fall and after heavy rains or wet snows. (DJ)

Gifts for the gardener

Need an original or unique gift idea? Here are some gift suggestions for the gardener in the family or someone who just appreciates the outdoors.

Holiday plants are always a welcome gift to any home. They add color and holiday accents to interior surroundings. The traditional red poinsettias are popular, as are the newer flower colors of pink, white and yellow. Other possibilities are Christmas cactus, red gloxinia and kalanchoe.

The outdoor gardener might like to receive a certain tool to make the job of spring gardening easier. Soil working tools like rakes, hoes and spades may be difficult to wrap and still be a surprise, but they are always welcome. Pruning tools, like hand shears and small saws, are easier to wrap and may be needed later this winter.

Don't overlook the possibility of a gardening magazine or plant book as a gift. Many larger book stores have well stocked sections on these and related topics. Garden centers and nurseries also offer a variety of titles on individual plants as well as cultural practices. Someone with a new home might like a book on plant materials and landscaping, while people with a well-established garden and landscape might better use information on maintenance and pruning practices.



If you have a non-gardening friend or relative you want to introduce to gardening, consider a total package with plant, container and growing media, along with a book on plant care.

There are many gift ideas for people who like to spend their time at the many state parks in the area. To make their adventure more enjoyable consider giving them a 1999 state park car pass to get into the parks, a compass and identification books on wildflowers, birds, insects, butterflies, trees, tracks or mammals. Other useful items would include binoculars to look for things far away, pocket magnifier to see small things close up, sports or

explorer's watch, canteen for water, camera with film, hiking boots, sun screen and insect repellent.

Gifts for people who appreciate the outdoors in their own back yard might like bird feeders with birdseed or a compost bin. Other gifts might be a bird bath, bird or bat house, butterfly raise/release kit, outdoor thermometer, rain gauge, wild flower or native grass seed.

Some people may just wish to sit back, relax and enjoy the outdoors. Gifts for them may include a porch swing, garden bench, hammock and a subscription to NEBRASKALAND magazine. (MJM)

November/December Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Clean up fallen fruit	3 Mulch perennial plants	4 Clean, repair and organize garden tools	5 Rake leaves	6 Organize garden supplies	7
8	9 Mulch around trees and shrubs	10	11	12 Make wish list for next year	13	14
15	16	17	18 Pick bag worms from evergreens	19	20	21
22	23	24 Check house plants for insects	25	26	27	28
29	30 Check all stored bulbs and tubers for rot	1	2	3	4 Check bird feeders	5
6	7	8	9 Check stored fruits and vegetables for signs of rot	10 Update garden journal	11	12
13	14 Order seed catalogs	15	16 Check landscape plants for snow or wildlife damage	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 Make list of garden supplies needed for next year	24	25	26
27	28	29 Have Christmas tree recycled for mulch	30	31		

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJM)

Winter care for strawberry plants

Strawberry plants have already formed their flower buds for next spring. These flower buds can not tolerate temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Exposure to temperatures lower than this will result in the loss of some of the earlier and bigger strawberries next spring. Snow

cover can act as a mulch and protect your strawberry crop.

While the strawberry plants are lush and green, hold off mulching them for the winter. Only when night temperatures are forecast to go below 20 degrees Fahrenheit should you consider mulching. Apply any

coarse mulch, such as straw, to a depth of three inches. The mulching blanket will help protect the berries through the winter. You may want to go out and uncover the plants if there is a warming trend forecasted after you have applied the mulch. (MJM)