



Horticulture

Lilac renewal

The common purple lilac is a tough, reliable shrub that may reach a height of 10 to 15 feet. Unfortunately, as lilacs mature, the shaded lower portions of the shrubs usually lose their leaves. As a result, large, overgrown specimens are often leggy and unattractive. Old, neglected lilacs can be renewed or rejuvenated by pruning. Home gardeners can choose between two different pruning methods.

One way to renew a large, overgrown lilac is to cut the entire plant back to within 6 to 8 inches of the ground in late winter (March or early April). This severe pruning will induce a large number of shoots to develop during the growing season. In late winter of the following year, select and retain several strong, healthy shoots to form the shrub framework and remove all the others at ground level. Head (cut) back the retained shoots to just above a bud to encourage branching.

A second way to prune old lilacs is to cut back the overgrown shrubs over a three-year period. Begin the procedure by removing one-third of the large, old stems at ground level in late winter. The following year (again in late winter), prune out one-half of the remaining old stems. Also, thin out some of the new growth. Retain several well-spaced, vigorous stems and remove all the others. Finally, remove all of the remaining old wood in late winter of the third year. Additional thinning of the new shoots should also be done. Since lilac wood needs to be 3 or more years of age before it blooms, this pruning method should allow you to enjoy flowers every spring.

When properly pruned, an old, overgrown lilac can be transformed into a vigorous attractive shrub within a few years. Once rejuvenated, pruning should be a regular part of the maintenance program for lilacs. The shrub can be kept healthy and vigorous by removing a few of the oldest branches every 3 to 5 years. (DJ)

Protect trees from animal damage

Domestic and wild animals can cause severe damage in tree plantings, but trees can be protected and damage kept to a minimum if a few precautions are taken.

For young plantings, remove vegetation or piled debris to reduce the chance of rodent damage. Thick grass will attract mice; weed and brush piles attract cottontails. Organize a hunt if an area is overpopulated with rabbits.

Heavy concentrations of deer can cause considerable damage to the larger tree plantings. They will browse young, succulent growth and damage trees by "rubbing" their velveted antlers on the trees. Rubbing is most noticeable on evergreen trees, which will have broken branches and stripped bark. Repellents will minimize the browsing damage. Allow hunters in the area to help control deer numbers.

Livestock must be fenced away from all young tree plantings. Cattle and sheep eat off bottom branch tips and rub off the lower branches. Pigs dig up and eat the trees' roots, and horses will eat the bark off the trees when their diets are not complete. But worst of all, the livestock will compact the soil in the root area, cutting off good infiltration of moisture and blocking root respiration. (DJ)

Ten steps to good gardening

A good garden just does not happen, it has to be planned. The following suggestions should help you establish an attractive and productive garden. An understanding of crop needs and cultural practices will also help assure gardening success this coming season.

1. Garden site. Choose a sunny location with good air and water drainage. At least 8 hours of sunlight will produce the best vegetables. Leaf and cole crops may get by with slightly less sun in partial shaded areas. Good air circulation will keep the foliage dry and help reduce chances of disease. Water drainage is essential for strong root growth. Avoid windy locations that can damage and dry plants. Never plant a garden near a black walnut tree, it produces naturally occurring chemicals to inhibit growth of nearby plants.

2. Crop rotation. Try to rotate crops around the garden plot. Some soil borne diseases and insects are most serious when the same or related crops

are grown in the same area or row each year.

3. Soil fertility and pH. Fertilize the soil according to soil test results. A soil pH between 6.2 and 6.8 will support most vegetable crops. Over fertilization can be as harmful as under treatment. Too much nitrogen will produce leaf and stem growth at the expense of flowers and fruit production. Weak or stressed plants are more susceptible to insect and disease attack.

4. Resistant varieties. Use resistant varieties when available and when they suit specific gardening needs. Information on resistance is often printed on the seed packet.

5. Good quality seed and transplants. Buy seed from a reputable seed company. When transplants are used make certain they are in good health and



grown from disease free seed. Also check transplants for evidence of insects or disease.

6. Water. Drip or trickle irrigation is highly recommended. It reduces the amount of water that could be wasted using sprinklers or overhead watering. Drip irrigation also keeps the water off of the plant's foliage, which reduces disease problems. Try to water in the morning instead of in the evening.

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January/February Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Avoid walking on frozen lawn	8	9
10	11 Review last years garden journal	12 Make garden plan	13 Check stored vegetables for signs of rot	14 Make list of new plants to try	15 Make list of seeds needed	16
17	18 Check landscape plants for snow damage	19	20 Check bird feeders	21	22 Check amaryllis bulbs	23
24	25	26	27 Check plants for rodent, rabbit or deer damage	28	29 Order seeds	30
31	1	2 Check houseplants for insects	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Do a germination test on saved seeds	11	12	13
14	15 Air layer leggy houseplants, like rubber plant	16	17 Cut flowering shrub branches for forcing	18 Check bird feeders	19	20
21	22	23	24 Start perennial flower seeds indoors	25	26 Prune fruit trees	27
28						

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 of houseplants

Winter weather adversely affects growing conditions for houseplants. Proper care during the winter months can help insure the health of houseplants. Most houseplants grow well with daytime temperatures of 65 to 75°F and night temperatures of 60 to 65°F. Temperatures below 50°F or rapid temperature fluctuations may damage some plants. Keep houseplants away from cold drafts and hot air vents. Also make sure houseplant foliage doesn't touch cold windows.

Many houseplants prefer a humidity level of 40 to 50%. Unfortunately, the relative humidity found in many homes during the winter months may be only 10

to 20%, a level too low for many houseplants. Humidifiers are an excellent way to increase the relative humidity in a single room or throughout the entire home. Simple cultural procedures can also increase the relative humidity around houseplants. Group plants together. The water evaporating from the potting soil, plus water lost through the plant foliage or transpiration, will increase the relative humidity in the immediate vicinity of the houseplants. Another method is to place the houseplants on



trays or saucers filled with pebbles or gravel and water. The bottoms of the pots should be above the water level. Misting houseplants is not an effective method to raise relative humidity. Misting would have to be done several times daily to appreciably raise the humidity level and is simply not practical. Houseplants require less watering during the winter months than in spring and summer. Actively growing plants need more water than those at rest during the winter months. Plant species also affects water-

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New look. New information.
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New feature: Youth Garden Page

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210 Amaryllis
215 Cyclamens
222 Winter Houseplant Care
124 Wood for Fireplace
137 Deicing Salt Injury