

Fun Winter Gardening Projects

By Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate in Lancaster County

Bee House. Make a solitary bee house bundle. Collect hollow stems from the yard or purchase paper straws and bamboo poles to cut 6 inches in length. Bundle them together and tie with twine. In the spring, place the bundles out in the yard in a protected area for solitary bees.

Fairy Garden. Start with a container. Any size or type, be creative. Select several small-scale plants like ferns, wooly thyme, Irish moss, baby's tears, sedum or fairy vine. Use small tile pieces or small, flat river stones to make a walk way. Add a tiny fence, miniature bench, trellis or bridge.

Nature journaling. All you need is paper and a pencil. Look out your window or if it is nice, go outside to your backyard, neighborhood park or favorite outdoor space. Sit down and look around. What do you see? Make a list or draw a picture of what you see. Write down what you are feeling

and your thoughts. Write a poem. Use colored pencils or watercolor paint to bring your sketches to life. There is no one way or right way to make a nature journal. When winter is over, take it with you on all your outdoor adventures.

Feed the Birds. Roll pine cones in peanut butter, then birdseed, to make simple bird feeders. Keep a record of all the species of birds that come to the feeders.

Pot People. Draw, paint faces or cut out a picture of yourself to place on clay pots or suitable growing containers. Then fill the containers with soil. Plant grass seed, water and watch the "hair" grow. Use safety



Photo by Mary Jane Frogge, NE Extension in Lancaster Co.

scissors to trim the grass hair.

Windowsill gardens. When frigid weather keep your kids inside, try growing a windowsill garden. All you need is a sunny location and a few containers of soil. Herbs, like basil, are an excellent choice for windowsills.

Watch seeds sprout. Line a glass jar with a damp paper towel and insert several bean or squash seeds between the glass and the towel. Place a lid on the jar, leave it on the kitchen counter and check the paper every day to make sure it is still moist. Seeds should sprout in a few days.

Terrariums. Place soil and a few mosses and ferns inside a large jar or small fish bowl. Keep your indoor garden moist with a plant mister, and cover the opening with clear plastic wrap.

Grow a Tree. Start an avocado seed in water by inserting three toothpicks around the seed, half way down the side. Fill a small glass or canning jar with water and place the seed in the glass so the toothpicks rest on the brim and the base of the avocado rests in the water.

GARDEN GUIDE

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

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After the ground freezes, mulch small fruit plants such as strawberries. One inch of straw or leaves is ideal for strawberries.

Order seed catalogs now for garden planning in January. For variety, consider companies that specialize in old and rare varieties or wild flowers.

Bring out the bird feeders and stock them with bird seed for the birds. Remember to provide fresh water for them too.

November and December is a good time to start reviewing your garden notes to help with next year's plans.

Clean power tools of all plant material and dirt. Replace worn spark plugs, oil all necessary parts and sharpen blades. Store all tools in their proper place indoors, never outdoors where they will rust over the winter.

Check fruits, vegetables, corms and tubers you have in storage. Sort out any that show signs of rot and dispose of them.

Minimize traffic on a frozen lawn to reduce winter damage.

Winter is a good time to inspect trees and shrubs for bagworm capsules. Remove and destroy them to reduce next year's pest population.

A home weather station that includes a minimum-maximum thermometer, a rain gauge and a weather log is a good gift for a gardener.

Remove all mummified fruit from fruit trees and rake up and destroy those on the ground. Also, rake and dispose of apple and cherry leaves. Good sanitation practices reduce insects and diseases the following season.

Be sure not to store apples or pears with vegetables. The fruits give off ethylene gas which speeds up the breakdown of vegetables and will cause them to develop off-flavors.

African violets do well when potted in small pots. A good general rule is to use a pot one-third the diameter of the plant. Encourage African violets to bloom by giving them plenty of light. They can be in a south window during dark winter months. They bloom beautifully under fluorescent lights.

Be a Master Gardener!

Training for New Master Gardeners Begins in February

Application deadline is Jan. 15!



- Do you want to learn more about vegetable gardening & landscaping?
- Do you have a passion for tree planting?
- Do you enjoy volunteering and sharing your knowledge with others?
- Master Gardener volunteers serve an important role to extend horticulture education and outreach from Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County.

For more information about becoming a Master Gardener, contact: Mary Jane Frogge, Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County, 402-441-7180 or visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu/mastergardener> to apply online.

Upcoming Green Industry Conferences

NEBRASKA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE

JAN. 5–7

NEBRASKA TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

Location: La Vista Conference Center,
12520 Westport Pkwy, La Vista, NE 68128
402-472-5351

<https://nebraskaturfgrass.com/conference>



GREAT PLAINS GROWERS CONFERENCE FEB. 12–13

Conference organizers are working hard to create an inspirational

and informative conference, which will be offered virtually in 2021. Complete conference agenda and registration information will be available soon at www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org.

2021 GREAT PLAINS Growers Conference