

## JANUARY GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

**CLEAN-UP.** Continue cleaning up old plant debris which might shelter pests and diseases. If last summer's dead Morning Glories still adorn the fence, tear them off to make room for new ones; next spring consider planting perennial twining vines such as Trumpet Vine Clematis, Silver Lace, Wisteria, Akebia, Honeysuckle or a Climbing Rose that will eliminate the annual chore of clearing the fence.

**FROST.** During a mild spell thoroughly inspect all the perennials and newly planted shrubs to detect any that have been heaved out of the ground by the frost; if so, carefully replant them. Continue planting shrubs and trees as long as the ground is not frozen.

**WINTER MULCH.** Now is the time to recycle Christmas trees, the branches of which make an excellent winter mulch for perennials, vines and newly planted material. It is important to distinguish between the Spruces which are worthless as mulch, because of the needles drop off, and the more expensive fir and Pine trees which stay green. Pines have long needles, Spruce and Fir needles are short and rather similar, but Spruce needles pulled from a twig leave no mark while Fir needles leave a distinct depressed scar. Always lay down mulch during a frost period as it is then less likely to shelter rodents. If available, a shredder will grind Christmas trees into acid woodchip mulch for broadleaf evergreens. Collecting leaf litter in the neighborhood and laying it on the soil makes good mulch too.

**SNOW.** Snow, of course, makes an excellent mulch, but be careful to remove any snow originating in an adjoining street that may be contaminated with salt. With a broom carefully knock heavy snow off evergreens, especially if it is added to a previous load of frozen rain. In times of heavy snow, children are likely to forget the existence of a garden. Discourage their walking and playing in it. Helpful to put up posts with string between to mark garden boundaries; height of string should be such that children cannot go under it.

**BIRDS.** If you cannot feed the birds daily, at least fill the bird-bath with fresh water. Discourage pigeons by using feeders with small openings and avoid scattering seed on the ground. Birds' tastes in food vary: doughnuts, suet and bacon drippings will tempt chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers; an occasional winter resident robin or mockingbird savors dried currants and raisins; cardinals, nuthatches, titmice and pine skins will revel in a meal of ground raw peanuts; and an ear of corn is gourmet heaven for cardinals. Sunflower, Millet, Bachelor Button, Coreopsis, Marigold and Butterfly Weed seeds will attract chickadees, song sparrows and juncos. Build a winter bird-shelter of brush, evergreen, and tree limbs in a protected corner of your garden to protect birds during inclement weather.

**SEEDS.** If you have not ordered your spring catalogues by now, do so! Good sources of seed are: Herbst Bros, 1000 No. Main St., Brewster, NY 10509; W. Atlee Burpee Co., Warminster, Pa. 18971; Geo. W. Park Seed Co., Greenwood, S.C. 29647. Recycle packets of old seeds by mixing them with more recent packages of the same variety. The old seeds that do not germinate will reduce your need for sowing thinly and/or thinning the seedlings. Some seeds lose viability quickly even when stored in the proper manner. Members of the Allium family (onion) must be ordered each year (some will be all right for two years). Lettuce, Parsley, Salsify, Sweet Corn and Parsnip seeds should be planted within two years of purchase. Watermelon, Spinach, Radish, Pepper, Pea, Okra, Endive, Chicory, Celery, Carrot, Cabbage and bean may germinate, if kept in good condition, for up to five years. Tomato, Cucumber, Mustard and Beet seeds may remain viable indefinitely if stored in a dry spot at room temperature about 68 degrees. To test old seeds for viability, Place them between pieces of damp blotter and wait a reasonable period of time to see if they sprout, or immerse them in a glass of water -- dead seeds are more likely to rise to the surface. Continue collecting the fruits of Hawthorne and Barberries not yet



eaten by birds. Sow these seeds in places where such trees and shrubs will be an asset and no impediment. Seedling flats and ingredients for sterilized soil mix should be purchased now.

**PLANNING.** The winter solstice has come and lengthened the dark Christmas days. A prolonged mild spell will fatten the glistening pussy-willow buds. Snowdrops and Winter Aconite may flower only to brave a heavy snowfall. The Christmas rose or Hellebores (poisonous) will Flower until spring. It is one of the perennial plants not yet grown much, if at all, in city lots.

When the seed catalogues arrive, consider upgrading some annual beds by planting work-saving perennials and small shrubs. Also prolific self-sowing biennials, especially such “old-fashioned” plants as fragrant Dames Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), Silver Dollar (*Lunaria*), Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis sylvestris*). These three withstand some dappled shade from trees but not deep shade on the northwest side of the building.

In choosing plants, always remember the light conditions of your site: for shade (*Hosta*); for dappled shade (*Nicotiana*); for sun (*Portulaca*, *Marigold*, *Annual Phlox*); for the dry site (*Prickly Pear*, *Yarrow*); for the damp site (*Astilbe*, *King-cups*). Obtain seeds to plant according to your requirements, not according to mass marketers’ powers of persuasion. Be aware that horticulture, because of the demand for cheap mass-produced products, threatens to degenerate into a monotonous suburban sprawl of red *Azaleas* and *Marigolds*; it is up to pioneer city-lot gardeners to revive the growing of almost forgotten plants such as *Dame’s Rocket*.

Prepare seed trays for annuals needing February sowing -- such as *Nicotiana*, *Torenia*, *Browallia* and *Heliotrope*.

**BULBS.** Make sure that stored bulbs and tubers are not suffering due to excessive moisture or heat. Check them for rot, shriveling and sprouting. Adjust and correct storage conditions if any of the three symptoms exist.

**COMPOST PILE.** When all autumn plant debris has been piled up, continue to add kitchen vegetable material to your heap.



## FEBRUARY GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

**PLAN YOUR GARDEN SPACE.** If this is your first year, schedule your development of the garden area in phases to allow for soil preparation, planting, maintenance, finances and energy. Consider the impact on the community. Work as much as you can, you **DO NOT HAVE TO DO IT ALL AT ONCE**. Often a flowering Forsythia or Crab Apple will encourage participation and overcome vandalism.

Choose a sunny location for most annual flowers, herbs and vegetables; bulb beds and perennials do best in open sunlight. Roses do best when sheltered on the north and east and where there is sunlight for at least half of the day, and where there is good air circulation all around the plant. The vegetable garden demands very careful attention. Good southern, southeastern or southwestern exposure is preferred. Rows planted from north to south favor even distribution of the sunlight. Your tall crops like corn should be grown at the north so that your shorter plants will not be shaded. Corn also likes to be surrounded by corn and should not be planted unless you can provide enough space for at least four rows. It makes a good communal crop, as do Zucchini and Cabbage. These plants take up a lot of space. Leafy green salad crops will tolerate a somewhat shady location. Asparagus, Rhubarb and Strawberry beds are permanent areas.

Trees and shrubs should be chosen with care to their function in the garden: shade, ornamental, specimen, evergreen, windscreen, wildlife, etc. Important questions to ask might include: do you want a fast growing tree for an interim project? Do you have an adequate soil depth? How much air pollution is there? Incinerator soot? Few Evergreens can tolerate our urban environment. Be sure you have good drainage. Check varieties carefully for height and growth rates, as well as tolerance to wind, pollution and drought. For shady locations you can try planting shade-tolerant annuals, perennials and bulbs that flower in the spring and fall when the trees are not in leaf. Whatever you decide, put your plan on paper, study it and keep in mind that a garden is an evolutionary project.

Take account of your vertical growing space potential - cyclone and other fences, brick walls and raised beds or trellis plantings. You may want to just dig in and get started and see what happens. Whatever your plan, the perimeter should be cleared of rubble first. Get your debris to the center and/or mound it and cover it with soil and plant it when you can.

**ORDER** or arrange to obtain those trees, shrubs, evergreens and roses you need and **CAN PLANT BEFORE MAY 10th**.

**INDOORS.** Start those seeds now that you will be able to plant in six weeks. Check your local seed supplier for early varieties for New York City. To start seeds indoors you will need to purchase the ingredients for a sterile soil-less mix (vermiculite, peat moss and charcoal, sand or perlite). Pre-mix and moisten the ingredients before you put it in the seedling container or seed flat. You can use regular garden soil if you prefer but the sterile growing medium is a deterrent to a fungus disease called damping of which causes early seedling rot.

You need 3 inches of soil-mix depth in whatever you start your seedlings in. Old foil bread thins, milk cartons or juice cans can be used for this purpose after a thorough washing and sterilization providing you punch holes in the bottom for drainage. **RULE:** Check the seed packet for any special planting requirements the seed might have like, soaking in water overnight before planting or scoring with a file or even exposure to an open fire (in the broiler). **ALWAYS PLANT THE SEED THREE TIMES THE DIAMETER OF ITS NARROWEST PART IN DEPTH.**



If you have a garden to plant this spring you can start these seeds by the end of February: Anise, Basil, Marjoram, Thyme, Sage as well as Cabbage and related plants in the cabbage family like Collards, Kale, etc. If you cannot maintain even temperatures, consider the purchase of a soil heating cable for your larger flats. Until your seeds germinate keep your flats covered with a plastic bag or a pane of plastic or glass to help conserve moisture. Label all the seeds you plant, including eventual height, special soil requirements and last possible germination date so you will know something is amiss if the seeds do not sprout.

If the seeds have come up you will need to fertilize your growing medium with a liquid fertilizer to provide nutrients. Plants grown in a sterile soil-less mix without fertilizer will be weak and spindly. Keep your seedlings watered. Transplant to plastic pots when the seedling has its first set of true leaves. The first leaf-like set is called the cotyledon and serves the function of supplying the seedling with nutrients. Keep the seedlings in good light indoors and continue to keep them moist.

**DIFFERENT PLANTING METHODS.** **Raised Bed** planting is sometimes the only option on no-soil, all rubble vacant lots. Advantages include better drainage, neatness, speeded-up spring planting and less soil compaction. People with bad backs or confined to wheelchairs can enjoy gardening in a 30" high raised bed. **Crop Rotation** is difficult in a small garden. Nevertheless insects and disease will have a harder time finding those favorite squash and tomato plants if they are in a different area year after year. Your soil will benefit as well because certain plants like corn require large amounts of nitrogen and other plants such as soybeans, replaces it. **Marker Cropping** consists of planting quick-sprouting seeds like radishes with slower sprouting seeds like carrots or parsnips.



## MARCH GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

**INDOORS.** Reseed those rows that have not germinated in your seedling flats. Fertilize those flats that have germinated and place them in a moist, warm sunny location. The environment you are trying to create is that of a New York City spring. If you wish to grow midget melons, now is the time to start them from seed. Other warm/hot summer crop vegetables that should get a head start now include:

Tomatoes	Midget Melons	Parsley
Eggplants	Gourds	Garlic
Peppers	Pumpkins	Fennel
Asters	Phlox	Caraway
		Nicotiana

In choosing your seed, check for varieties of the plant that are suited to our regional climate, tolerant of pollutants and resistant to diseases. You want to avoid, e.g., *Verticillium*, *Fusarium* and *Nematodes*. With popular vegetables it is a good idea to grow more than one variety that are not susceptible to the same diseases. Tomatoes you might want to try a small fry variety as well as Rutgers and hybrid growers usually needing stakes or trellises, and determinate, averaging 3 ft. in height or less, and top-heavy fruit producers.

Flowers you may want to start now include *Ageratum*, Chinese Asters, *Calendulas*, Dahlias, Balloon Vines and *Cleome* (Spider flower). You want to be sure to give your seedlings enough light once they have germinated; otherwise you get tall, weak, leggy stems that will have a hard time in the wind once transplanted outdoors.

In preparation for transplanting you will want to harden off the seedlings. This is accomplished by watering less for a week prior to the time you have planned to start exposing them to outside conditions. The seedlings need to adjust slowly to wind, cooler temperatures and air pollution. It is a good idea to set the seedling flat in a wind-protected place outside when the temperatures are above 50 degrees. Cool-weather plants/crops can tolerate exposure to lower temperatures. Watch the weather carefully while your plants are adjusting outside. A sudden downpour could flatten your seedlings, gusty winds and flying litter could break the stems, and a sudden hot spell could dry out your rooting medium. Worst of all you could lose all your seedlings to a sudden frost. Be prepared to either whisk your seedlings indoors, cover them with hot caps or prepare and have handy a frost cover like a cardboard box with a breathing hole or two. Depending on the weather, you may harden off by gradually exposing the seedling to more and more hours outside. If you do use peat pots or Jiffy-7's remove the plastic mesh or peat before planting in the ground. You will find that seedlings in these containers may dry out faster and thus need more frequent watering. Experiment with transplant containers for your seedlings. Again, keep records for next year so that you will know what worked well.

**OUTDOORS.** When the ground can be worked prepare pits for any woody plant material that want to plant. This is usually best done when the plants are dormant (not growing leaves or flowers). Examples of woody plant material include trees, shrubs, evergreens and roses. You should have a plan of the site and a good idea of what you want to do with the perimeter or border. If you expect to have your project for a couple of years then the expense of ornamental, flowering trees and some carefully chosen evergreen material may be justified. What is really important is getting all the things together and having you needed to plant. The soil should ideally be conditioned in advance. Appropriate tools such as a pickaxe, spade, pruning shears, and a watering can and wrench for the hydrant or water source should be assembled. Other materials you may need include fertilizers like bone meal, rotted manure, compost or peat moss, and possible sprays or powders for the prevention or control of insects or disease. This is the



time of year to use a miscible spray on “woolly aphids” and scale, which seem to like Crab Apple and Cherry trees so much. This should be done before the trees leaf out and on a day when the temperature is, and is expected to stay, at above 45 degrees for three days in a row.

Once planted, your new plant material should be protected as much as possible from wind, sun and heavy rains. It is a good idea to wrap your tree trunks with burlap or tree wrap paper to prevent sunscald. You may need to stake and guy wire the larger material. There are three basic ways the plant can arrive: B&B (balled and bur lapped), packed or planted in a container, and barefoot. Barefoot transplants should be cut back, both roots and top growth, with pruning shears that have been dipped in alcohol to insure sterility.

You can try sowing directly into the prepared soil the following cool weather crops: Snow Peas, Early Peas, Onion sets, Salsify, Bachelor Buttons, and Dianthus. Early Lettuce and Spinach can also be planted outdoors. Again, if there is a sudden or severe frost and you are unable to provide protection (hot caps, etc.) you may have to re-seed. Always mark your rows with the date planted and the last possible germination date. Careful seeding in straight lines will help you determine which are the planted seedlings and which are the weeds.

Perennial beds for Asparagus, Rhubarb and Strawberries should be prepared and tested for manure before investing space and time in such long-term produce.

Start lining up the materials you will need to get a compost heap going. Arrange for manure transportation. Request waste from local fruit stores. Ask your neighbors to contribute their organic kitchen wastes.

Flowering perennials such as Chrysanthemums should be divided now into new plants from each sturdy shoot. They benefit from a planting distance of 2 to 3 feet apart. Usually, only the fall-flowering perennials should be divided now.

You may have the energy to build a cold frame for protecting your seedlings. Or you may wish to attract birds to your garden by building a birdhouse and providing seeds and suet.

If you have just acquired your site - schedule your clean up as soon as possible. Line up all the sources and costs of the soil conditioning ingredients you will need, as well as the neighborhood support, energy and organization that will help your garden area work. Try planning a sharing or “pick-me” garden for neighbors and those who may want to join later on in the season.



## APRIL GARDENING SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

A fickle month that can lure you into full spring activity and then bring a few weeks of white stuff to dampen upper enthusiasm. Preparation, planning, and extreme attention to the weather - temperature and winds - will make your garden flourish. If you have not tested your soil for pH and nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, do it now! Cornell soil test boxes available at \$5.00 each from GrowNYC.

### **THINGS TO ORDER:**

- Sprayers for organic or botanic pest control.
- Dusters for disease control.
- Miscible oil for woolly aphids or scale on days when temperature is above 45 degrees F., and will be, for three consecutive days.
- New gloves.
- Soil conditioners should be worked in as soon as possible when ground is not wet. Bone meal at this time of year is especially safe. Stronger fertilizers or unrotted manure can burn tender plant/seedling roots. Wood ash from a fireplace contains potash that is most beneficial to your lawn, roses, bulb and root plants.

**PLANNING.** If you have not already done so, take several pictures or slides of your garden areas. Label new plantings as well as any you may have missed last season.

**DIGGING THE SOIL.** Spade deeply at least one foot down. Do not work in the garden when the soil is wet as you can destroy soil structure. Start at the top of a grade and toss soil upward. Clods of soil should be pulverized as spading is done. Rocks, bricks, broken glass, and other invaders should be removed by riddling (sifting), or manually. After conditioning - adding fresh organic material and bone meal and mixing well - level carefully with a rake. "Top dress" - add a thin, top layer of compost pressed through a sieve. Borders around trees and shrubs should be loosened gently to admit air.

**SEEDING.** Outdoor Annuals. Be sure to be prepared to protect germinated and seeded plants from frost with upside-down bushel baskets, Clorox jugs, quilted burlap, or a glass-covered box.

Flowers that can be sown outdoors this month if the ground is not frozen or wet are: Violas, Pansies, Banderol Buttons, Calendula, Snapdragons, Gypsophila, and Nasturtiums. Be prepared to reseed if an untimely hard frost should occur.

**Vegetables** - Mid-month - Lettuce, Carrots, Radishes, Spinach, Beets, Chard, Jerusalem Artichokes, Salsify, Parsnips. Late in the month start Melons, Cucumbers, Squash, and Pumpkins for transplanting in late May or early June.

**Herbs** - Thyme, dill, sage, marjoram, chamomile, rue lemon balm, anise oregano.

**Cover Crop** - Can be sown now and turned over into the soil in mid-June if your project is not going to get started until later. Mustard, clover, soybeans, rye grass might be good choices.

**Perennials** - perennial beds should receive a treatment of well-rooted manure and bone meal. Divide those shasta daisy, delphinium, fall aster, and chrysanthemum plants that have good root clumps. Replant in prepared location immediately.

**Roses** - If the weather is cooperative, dormant plants can be planted. Established rose bushes may need pruning to improve ventilation and sunlight! Prune down to a strong bud which points outward. In



transplanting, add a light, 2-inch much of peat moss on soil, fertilize, and scratch in bone meal. Some sources recommend planting garlic near your roses to discourage insects and pests.

**Grapevines** - do not be afraid to grow these valuable plants. Ask your supplier for strains that are hardy for New York City. The fruit borne on green shoots that grow in spring - never old, woody canes. Prune the canes; be careful cultivating soil around these vines as they are very close to the surface. The herb Hyssop is thought to be a good companion to Grapes.

**Fruit Trees** - This is the time to prune Apple, Cherry and Fig trees.

**Berries** - Consider planting a Black Raspberry hedge which untrimmed can grow to four or five feet in height; it will provide snowy white flowers in May and delicious berries in July. Blueberries also come out in July; why not prepare an especially acid soil for a hedge of New Jersey Blues? The foliage is noted for its attractive autumn color, and the red branches are lovely in winter. Now is the time to check garden centers and catalogues for the best varieties of bearing Strawberries; you can add them to your garden as borders, or in rows on hills. Do not cover the crown of the plant or leave it exposed to frost. Keep the flowers pinched off. A mulch of compost between the rows - which should be least one foot apart - will help conserve necessary soil moisture.

**Trees and Shrubs** - Almost all wood stock is best planted before buds break out into leaves - especially the large Flowering Dogwoods, Evergreens, Flowering Cherries, Rhododendrons, Weigelas, Japanese Maples, Rose of Sharon, and Sweet Gums. Stake and guy wire and keep watered. Boxwood and Privet hedges should be trimmed before new growth starts. Shaping of Evergreens can be accomplished by snipping back their "candles." Fertilize Evergreens with an acidic fertilizer, such as Miracle Acid or Holly-Tone. Spiraea should be cut to the ground to stimulate new growth. Fertilize your trees and shrubs as they come into leaf. Pruning is necessary for early flowering shrubs; plan to do this directly after blooms have gone by. Remove "water spout" suckers. Add a generous amount of organic matter, like compost and leaf mold, to the soil.





## MAY GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

In May planting begins in earnest. Your tools should be well cleaned and oiled, ready for use. Remove any heavy winter mulch you have laid down to allow the soil to warm up (but keep some stored in case you need it). You should allow your seedlings to harden off now. Set them outdoors for graduated lengths of time so that they may slowly adjust to the more irregular outdoor climate without shock. In the initial stages of transplanting or sowing seeds, keep an ear sharply attuned to the weather report. May is still subject to rapid drops in temperature. A supply of hot caps on hand may save your seedlings from a sudden frost. Frost-free dates range from late April to an almost sure mid-May.

**TRANSPLANTING.** It is vital to prevent the delicate roots of seedlings from drying out while transplanting. If your schedule permits, transplant on cloudy or even rainy days. Have a supply of manure tea on hand to give weak plants an additional boost and to increase the size of foliage in general. It is essential from the very first to remove the dead flower heads from annuals in order to insure continued, more prosperous blooming.

**SOWING SEEDS.** It is a good idea to stagger the planting of many vegetable crops. This technique enables one to enjoy one's crop at its prime over a series of weeks without being overwhelmed by an immense harvest all at once. This is particularly true with a crop such as radishes which is rather limited in usage and appeal.

**VEGETABLES.** Asparagus should be in season this month. After six weeks of cutting, allow the plants to grow into feathery bushes to provide nourishment for next year's crop. Identify your bed by stringing off dormant plants at this time. All your cool-weather crops can be planted in the beginning of May, but it is a good idea to wait until mid-May for the planting of your less hardy crops such as tomatoes and summer squash. Remember to keep all plantings thoroughly watered during this crucial transplanting period.

**ANNUALS.** After your annuals - alyssum, ageratums, calendulas, marigolds, petunias, and sunflowers have reached a substantial height pinch back the growing tip of each plant, unless it sends up a central flower spike such as snapdragon or salvia. This will help prevent legginess and promote a more lush growth. Half-hardy annuals may be sown now, but hold back on your impatiens, zinnias and nasturtiums. While sowing seeds (or planting seeds), be careful not to disturb late maturing perennials. Proper labeling of plant sites and a yearly garden plan are two good ways of avoiding this hazard. For large flower heads, you must have a well-fertilized, drained and balanced soil. On the other hand, experiment to see how prolifically some annuals bloom in unimproved soil. Certainly, nasturtiums and morning glories like sandy soil and marigolds have been found to flower well in unimproved brick dust. Portulaca, alyssum and the perennial sedums are some of the other numerous arid soil plants.

**PERENNIALS.** May is the month to sow perennial seeds for next year; also biennials such as foxglove, canterbury bells, hollyhocks, gloriosa daisies. The plants will be ready to bloom in fall or early the following spring. Many perennials will bloom a second time after the stems of the first flowering are cut down. Plants benefiting from this treatment are anemones, asters, yarrow, delphinium, lilies, phlox, and chrysanthemums. Fertilize your rock garden and see that it is kept well weeded. Make sure that peonies are well fed with phosphate and potassium and remove the small buds toward the end of this month leaving the largest to flower.

**BULBS.** Spread bone meal and wood ashes around spring-flowering bulbs, but do not cut back foliage until it has completely withered. The leaves are essential for the flowers of next spring.



**SUMMER BULBS.** Late blooming summer lilies may be divided at this time but be sure that the pH of their new site matches the old and that the soil is well drained.

**SHRUBS.** Remove the seed pods from rhododendrons, azaleas, andromeda, leucothoe and lilacs but be careful not to cut the leaves which are essential to all the functions of growth. Feed flowering shrubs before and during their bloom. Remove faded flowers immediately. Toward the end of the month you may prune and shape the shrubs that have finished flowering. In general, preserve young growth and cut back the old, woody, unmanageable branches of spiraea, weigela, honeysuckle and forsythia. A good way to start pruning these shrubs is to judiciously harvest some flowering branches. All your shrubs should be fertilized at this time. The rose-of-sharon should be pruned this month - before it leafs out - in late spring. The beginning of May is perhaps not too late to trim evergreen hedge shrubs, such as Yew and Hemlock, before the new growth appears. Otherwise it is best to delay trimming until the end of July when the new growth has matured.



GrowNYC | 51 Chambers St, Room 228 | New York, NY 10007  
(212) 788-7900 | [info@grownyc.org](mailto:info@grownyc.org) | [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org)

## JUNE GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

**SUNDIALS.** June 15th is the day to set your sundial clock. The shadow should fall on 12 noon exactly.

**BIRDBATH.** Birds will appreciate fresh water.

**CULTIVATION.** Consistent cultivation of the soil can prevent pest and disease trouble. Extreme care, however, should be exercised so as not to injure plant roots.

**SEEDS.** This month is the proper deadline for sowing summer-flowering plants: Sunflower, Marigold, Cosmos, Zinnia, Aster, Calendula, Snapdragon, Salvia, Verbena, Ageratum, etc.

**SEEDLINGS.** Should be thinned and staked when very small and before the roots interlock. Remember that good air circulation helps prevent fungus and disease. Stake Dahlias to one stalk: stake Peonies. Fertilize when first buds appear. Cloches may be necessary as protection against strong winds.

**DISBUDDING & DEADHEADING.** Removal of annual flower blossoms as they fade, or on a weekly to bi-weekly basis, can help continue blooms and spur flower production. All plants grow to produce seed. Full-form, bigger branching plants, such as Cosmos, Nicotiana, Marigolds will shoot to greater width and height if pinched back now, resulting in more blooms throughout the season.

**ROSES.** Watch roses for aphids and fungus, as well as blackspot and suckers from root stock. Cultivate Rose bed area.

**IRIS/GLADIOLA.** Dutch Iris beds should be examined closely for soft, slimy leaves, an indication of Iris borer. Extending the growing season on the Iris bed can be accomplished if you are ordering fibrous-rooted, bearded Siberian (2-5') Iris to plant in July. An extra feeding at budding time can reward you with better blooms.

Gladiolas like sun and a well-drained soil cultivated to a depth of at least 18 inches. Try planting them in rows in your vegetable garden or between Peonies. Successive plantings every 10 days, 12 inches apart, to be filled in to a distance of 6 inches, will insure a longer blooming season. Staking should be done when necessary.

**PERENNIALS.** To encourage a second bloom of Delphiniums and Achillea, they should be cut back after bloom, watered and well fertilized. If you have Liatris (Blazing Star), Coreopsis, Phlox, Primrose or other acid loving perennials, now is a good time to apply an acid mulch, such as 1/2 peat moss and 1/2 cow manure.

**TREES AND SHRUBS.** Spring-flowering shrubs should have old, dead or leggy wood cut to the ground and/or trunk. These shrubs bloom next year on this year's growth. Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Lilacs and Andromedas should have dead flowers and seedpods carefully removed to make room for next years blooms. All newly planted materials should be faithfully soaked with water as necessary.

**SOIL CONDITIONING.** Clay soils, familiar to vacant-lot gardeners, should be prepared with plenty of organic matter and not limed. Test the soil to determine its pH - if necessary, add some bonemeal to stimulate root development. Plant some deep-rooted plants such as Sunflower. Allow some weed growth as their roots are often deep divers and can penetrate some compacted rubble soils. If you still



are not ready to proceed with your garden, a cover crop like Clover, Soybeans, Barley or Rye might be considered.

**MULCHING.** Practice good mulching techniques: mulching with leaves and/or grass clippings. Wood-chips may also be used to keep tree and shrub pits free of weeds as well as keeping these areas attractive.

**WEEDING.** This is the time of the year when attention must go to keeping the weeds at bay. Ignoring weeds when they are small means a much bigger job later on. Try to get an expert to visit your garden to identify the most obnoxious weeds. Tagging them or digging samples up and potting certain weeds will give you a living reference library for the rest of the summer.

**LAWNS.** Thatching and reseeding should already be done. This is the time to mow and water. After mowing, clippings should be raked and either used as mulch or put into the compost heap.

**BULBS.** You may remove the stalk and blooms of your spent bulbs. However, do not cut off the leaves as they are producing food for next year's blooms. If unsightly, they can be tied. The correct time to remove bulb leaves is in mid-summer.



## JULY GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

This is the month you spend a good deal of time just coping with nature, precipitation and natural growth in our artificial urban environment. The weeds will thrive and can quickly outgrow and overcome your plantings in surprisingly little time if you are not on top of maintenance. Cultivation and mulch may help to save much muscle-aching work.

**WATERING GUIDELINES.** When the City temperatures are peaking out and you feel uncomfortable, remember your garden. The garden should only be watered when it needs it. The experienced gardener will prevent wilted stems, stalks and leaves by watering before the plants get to the droopy stage. This requires constant attention, even on weekends. When you are away, ask someone to be on standby.

The best time to water is before 11 am or after 5 pm in the afternoon. If your closest source of water is the fire hydrant, be sure that you notify your local fire station of your usage and any damaged pentagonal hydrant nuts. In case of water shortages or low pump pressure, you will be expected to lessen your usage of water. Other ways to keep pump pressure high is to ask the cooperation of your fellow residents in not opening up the pump without a sprinkler or reducer cap. Not to do so is a waste of a valuable resource - water - and can be dangerous in case of fire.

It is much better to soak your plants than it is to sprinkle them. Sprinklers are generally good only for lawns. Trees and shrubs in your garden should receive 5 to 10 minutes per pit from a gently gurgling (not gushing) hose. Do not walk in the soaked area.

Watering devices that may help the new urban gardener adhere to the soak principle are the canvas soil soaker and a Damm head sprinkler or similar trickling nozzle such as Nozz-All.

The rush and force of the standard spray hose fixture can beat your plants to the ground, and expose the root system by washing away the soil covering; in addition, it will cause the ground to look wet very quickly, when it is not; this is called shallow watering. The perils of shallow watering are several: a thirsty, wilted plant is an easier target for insects and disease; further, the roots will not penetrate deep down into the soil for new nutrients and anchorage, and lastly, delicate root tips and hairs will dry out and hamper intake of water when it is available.

The most neglected plants are those growing under shade trees. Leaves are umbrellas and while the rest of the garden may have been soaked by summer's earlier showers, the plants under shade trees may still be dry. These areas should be checked and soaked, especially if ground covers and evergreens such as hollies, azaleas and rhododendrons are planted.

**BULBS.** Bearded Iris, usually dormant during July and August, can be planted now. Unlike tulip and daffodil bulbs, the Iris rhizomes require shallow planting and should only be lightly covered with soil to help insure fall growth. Add bone meal to your bed before planting. Beds that are three years old may be crowded: the rhizomes (Iris bulbs) can be dug up, divided and replanted now.

**PROPAGATION.** Perennials such as Campanula, Coreopsis, Dianthus, Delphinium, and herbs should be seeded now. Some annuals can still be sown: Portulaca, Tourney, Balsam, Zinnias and Shrilly Poppies. Now is also the time to take cutting of your large Impatiens, Coleus, and Artemesia. Verbenas, Pinks and Euonymus, Pachysandra; shrubs with runners e.g., Hydrangeas and Forsythias, may be propagated by layering: even climbing Roses may take root if fastened down in soft, friable



soil with an anchor, such as a bent coat-hanger or clothes pin and kept moist. Chrysanthemum plants can still be set out in the garden.

**VEGETABLES.** You can still try for Tomato, Eggplant, Pepper and some Summer Squashes by setting plants out now. Weeding is a must if you want to keep your food plants thriving. Winter Potatoes, Winter Squashes, Lima Beans, Sunflowers and Midget Corn are some plants you might start from seed in the garden now. Vacant areas such as your garden path or spring bulb beds can be sown with green manure crops such as Soybean, Vetch or Clover.

**COMPOST HEAP.** Enrich your pile and recycle grass clippings, weeds and organic garbage from your kitchen.

**HEDGES.** Privet, Hemlock and Yews will respond to shaping and shearing now.

**INSECTS.** Keep an open mind -- try different methods of coping with insects and keep trying until you find what works for you.

**MAINTENANCE.** Dead flowers should be removed as quickly as possible, taking care not to remove extra foliage. Pinch back premature flower buds from existing plants -- this will insure fuller, stronger growth.

**SUN.** During the summer months be sure to protect yourself as well as your plants from the burning rays of the sun. Try to stay out of the mid-day heat and wear a brimmed hat on particularly brutal days.

**FIRST AID.** It is a good idea to keep a well-stocked first-aid kit on hand at all times. An old coffee can with a plastic top containing Band-Aids, disinfectant, gauze pads, surgical tape, smelling salts, scissors, string, a triangular bandage and safety pins will suffice.

**BULLETIN BOARD.** Keep your bulletin board in good shape and up-to-date. Post community news and volunteer sign-up sheets for border maintenance, watering, weeding, cultivation, compost duty, etc.



## AUGUST GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

August is the month for vigilance. With many people taking vacation falling into the summer doldrums, be sure that there are a few hardy individuals left to maintain your garden. Watering, weeding and mulching are the key to an abundant harvest. A seedy, weedy, wilted garden attracts insects, disease and vandalism. If the garden looks uncared for you may possibly lose some of your crops to the passerby that assumes those ripe juicy red tomatoes will rot before they are eaten. Take time to stand back and relish the visual and edible fruits of your labors. Store-bought produce will never taste the same after your first feast from the garden. Take care to rinse all your vegetables, whether store-bought or homegrown before consuming them. You and your neighbors should share in your cutting garden; give excess flowers to local churches or shut-ins.

**ANNUALS.** It may not be too late to sow some annuals for a fall bloom of color. Keep picking the dead flowers heads from those already in the garden and collect seeds for next year from those past their prime. For growth through the summer, pinch back herbs in flower before they go to seed. Stake your tall flowering annuals.

**WEEDS.** Weed is going to seed this month. Try to remove them completely or at least clip off their heads before the seeds scatter. If you are too late for either of the above cultivate your soil two to three days after a heavy rain to prevent new growth of sturdy, young weedlings.

**VEGETABLES.** Plant your fall crops as soon as possible in the bare spots of your garden. Cool weather crops suitable for planting now with approximate days until harvest include:

Sweet Corn	80	Endive	98
Carrots	75	Bunching Onion	45
Spinach	45	Radish	25
Kohlrabi	58	Turnip	50
Parsnip	15	Chinese Cabbage	80
Broccoli	74	Cabbage	100
Parsley	76	Cauliflower	50
Kale	58	Brussels Sprouts	100

There are seasonal varieties of vegetables bred specifically for a fall harvest. These varieties adapt themselves particularly well to cooler temperatures and shortening daylight hours. Be sure that the areas of your garden that are planted with these crops will still be in full sunlight in the fall. Areas that are sunny in August may be in shadow in October due to the shifts in the earth's axis.

If you do not wish to sow fall vegetable crops, plant a "green manure crop" to improve the quality of your soil for the coming year. Now is the time to plant Winter Rye, Ryegrass, Vetch or Soybeans. Winter Rye will remain green throughout the winter as well as enriching the soil.

**BULBS.** Start planning your bulb beds for next spring. Order your spring flowering bulbs and bone meal for fall planting. Divide Iris bulbs now. Lilies like cool roots, so much them well. Water Gladiolus



with Manure tea (a manure and water solution) and stake them. Autumn Crocus and Madonna Lilies may be planted now.

**SEED.** Pansies, Forget-Me-Not, English Daises and Parsley can be sown now for over wintering in a cold frame or with heavy, heavy mulching. This will produce sturdier, earlier plants next spring. A careful studies of your garden my reveal volunteer seedlings for Sweet William, Larkspur and Hollyhocks. You can sow Iceland Poppies and Columbines now to flower early next summer.

**ROSES.** Do not fertilize Roses any longer this year in order to prevent extensive frost damage.

**CUTTINGS.** Semi-hardwood cuttings of flowering shrubs can still be taken through the end of the month. You can try rooting: Mock Orange, Spiraea, Snowberry, Hibush Blueberry, Ciborium, Weigela, Privet, Honeysuckle, Winterberry, Winged and other Euonymus, Forsythia, Flowering Quince and Japanese Barberry. Plan ahead and assemble everything you will need:

- Rooting medium and container - 50/50 mix peat moss and sand in containers at least 4: deep with drainage.
- Rooting hormone - Naphaleneacetic Acid (Root one) for shrubs.
- Covering and framing materials - Stock, wire and clear plastic.

Cut 7” pieces of this year’s growth in the morning after the plant has been watered. Be sure to remove any buds and one-third of the foliage and dip 1” of the base of the stem in the rooting hormone. Place cutting in rooting medium and cover with plastic and frame. Keep moist and remove plastic once cutting has rooted.





## SEPTEMBER GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

This is the best month for evaluating the success of your garden. Try to assess the productivity of your crops in relation to your personal needs. Next year you may want to plant more Lettuce and fewer Tomatoes or try new varieties for a more abundant crop. Take photographs of your garden now so you have a record of your garden's plants.

**WATERING.** There still may be quite a few hot dry days left in September, so be sure not to neglect your watering. Be particularly attentive of newly planted greenery and seeded lawns.

**WEEDS.** Eradicate all weeds from your garden now before they go to seed. If you are using the manual method, take care to remove the taproot along with the top of the plant.

**COVER CROPS.** These will be very helpful during the winter as they will protect the soil, acting as a living mulch, in addition to being a great fertilizer when being turned under in the spring. You can plant your cover crop seeds in the vegetable garden even before you pull out your produce. Clear the summer debris from your garden. In the remaining bare spots plant your cover (green manure) crops such as Winter Rye, Lambs Quarters, Vetch, Soy Beans, etc., as early as possible.

**COMPOST.** Keep your pile watered. Start collecting organic material for winter sheet composting. Leaves may start to fall now, so gather them to add to your present pile or start a separate pile for leaf mold.

**LAWN.** Continue cutting the Grass as long as it continues to grow vigorously. You may start a new lawn until the end of September, but remember to keep the seeded areas moist and untrampled. When planting a new lawn, consider seeding a mixture of Grass and Clover. The Clover will fertilize the grass, due to its nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Add bone meal and wood ash to established lawns. Also, when planting a new lawn, add a lot of organic matter to the soil, the Grass will appreciate it. Grass prefers good soil to a depth of 24".

**BULBS.** Order your bulbs and necessary supplies now (soil additives, bulb planters, etc.) Plan and prepare your beds and layout. Lilies-of-the-Valley, Scilla, Daffodils, Snowdrops, and members of the Narcissi family may be planted at the end of September.

**TENDER BULBS.** Harvest gladioli as soon as the foliage turns brown. Before the first light frost, take up Tuberous Begonias with clump of soil and put in cool, dark place. When foliage dries cut tuber loose from the excess soil and place in dry sand at 50 degrees temperature.

**PROPAGATION.** Collect annual and perennial seeds now for planting next spring. Do not, however, rely on these alone for your next year's crops. After Delphinium and Hollyhock have withered, leave the seeds of a few good specimens on the stalk until ripe. Harvest the seed and replant immediately. Try sowing Larkspur, Poppy, Sweet Alyssum, Ageratum, Calliopsis, Cornflower, Petunia, Pansy, and Cosmos now. They may survive the winter with a heavy mulch of straw or excelsior. You may still try sowing some of the cool weather crops that have a relatively short number of days until harvest.

Keep Chrysanthemums well watered and fed with manure tea until the buds are almost open to avoid woody stalks and poor flowering. Dig up a large root of Bleeding Heart, Anchusa or Oriental Poppy and cut the roots into pieces and plant in moist sandy loam. Divide Iris, divide Wild Aster (Michaelmas Daisies), leaving 4 to 5 stalks per plant. Tag Phlox for later division. September 15th is last safe date for transplanting Peonies.



Do not feed your roses any longer, but continue to keep them well watered and mulched. Prepare rose bed for planting later in the fall.

**TREES AND SHRUBS.** They should be planted early enough to allow roots to establish themselves before heavy frost, otherwise the plant material is only “heeled in” and subject to winter kill. Stop fertilizing established trees or shrubs as this may stimulate new growth and delay the natural dormancy of the tree or shrub. Complete the pruning of all but spring flowering shrubs. As soon as the foliage turns, it is time to transplant. New stock should be firmly staked and watered. Delay planting Magnolias, Dogwoods and Birches until the spring. Azaleas may be planted any time from now until late spring. Place your order for fruit trees and prepare the planting holes before their arrival. Evergreens are entering their most dormant period, so you may transplant them now. Bagworms should be removed at once and discarded.

**INDOORS.** At the end of September, start bring your houseplants indoors from the terrace or garden gradually while the weather is still warm enough to leave the windows open. This will allow your plants to adjust gradually to the drier air indoors and lessen shock. Obtain your soil for winter potting. Take cuttings from Coleus or any other plant you may wish to root indoors before the first frost. Cut Strawflowers and seed pods for dried flower arrangements.

Collect Clorox bottles, bushel baskets as cloche or hot cap materials to ward off the first frost and extend your growing season.

**PREPARING BEDS.** A fairly effortless way to prepare new beds in a grassy, weedy area is to lay out the borders, cover the area with newspapers, old carpeting, bits of linoleum, old plywood and weight the covering down with rocks or bricks. Within six weeks all stalks and roots should be dead and can be turned under. Test the soil, add appropriate soil conditioners, and behold -- a new bed.



## **OCTOBER GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY**

**LABELS.** Now is an ideal time to label bulb beds, shrubs, perennials, as well as the trees in your garden. There are several kinds of labels available: plastic, zinc or wood. Lettering should be indelible waterproof ink to weather the seasons. The proper way to label is from the top down in legible print. Other information such as planting date, height, and color can be included on reverse side in the same way, from the top down. If your group wishes to invest in custom-engraved, permanent (3--ply plastic) labels, call GrowNYC for further information.

**SANITATION.** Fallen leaves from healthy trees in your garden are best collected and saved for mulching or composting. Do not allow weeds (plants growing where you do not want them) to go to seed now. Seeds are contained in the dying flowers. Pay particular attention to Thistle, Japanese Knotweed, Ragweed, Crabgrass, Purslane and Lamb's quarters. Remove and discard roots as well as seeds.

Throw out, do not compost, diseased stalks of Peonies, or other plants. Keep a sharp eye on your late-flowering Chrysanthemums, Snapdragons, Evergreens and other plants that attract aphids. A nicotine spray at this time will help to control this pest.

**BORDERS AND BEDS.** Beneficial changes can be made now by separating crowded plants. Generally, plants put in clumps which are broader than they are deep appear to better advantage than those planted in rectilinear strips. Consider carefully heights, colors, and flowering schedules as well as growing requirements for all species of plants involved. Perennial clumps usually require fertile soil as well as division and separation every 3 or 4 years to provide adequate root space. Save the healthiest outer (circumference) portion of the clump; cut away and discard diseased parts and share the rest. Advantages of doing this work now is that the weather is more predictable, memory of the past season is still fresh, and changes can be quickly accomplished when you know exactly what you want to do. Also, the transplants have an opportunity to develop roots before the first frost. Labeling your border plants now will avoid indecision in the spring. If several people are involved in maintaining the border, weeding will be easier if the boundaries of planting areas are set off with stout wire or cord and labeled.

**TENDER PLANTS.** They cannot tolerate frost and should be carefully watched and gradually brought indoors as you cut down on watering. Orange and other citrus trees that might have vacationed in your garden over the summer should come in, as should Geraniums, Fuchsias, Cinnerarias, Lobelias, Petunias, Marigolds. Dahlias, Cannas, Caladiums and Gladioli are tender tuberous plants whose roots should be carefully dug up after the first killing frost and stored in a cold, dark, somewhat moist area. If the winter is mild and you mulch well, they may survive out-of-doors and flower next year.

Some of the herbs in your garden can be potted up and brought indoors for wintering on a cool sunny windowsill away from radiator or cold air drafts. Particularly interesting are the Scented Geraniums, Rosemary, Chives, Sage, Thyme, Basil and Lavender. They also make nice winter gifts to cheer up neighbors and friends.

**VINES.** For those cyclone fences whose only glory is being a trellis for twining vines, you can try for a lush early start next year by digging a trench 2 ft. wide x 2 ft. deep and adding a well-rotted manure or compost to your soil and then planting Sweet Peas in the usual manner. Morning Glories flower more profusely if grown in poor soil.

**SOIL PREPARATION AND CONDITION.** Now is a good time to take soil samples and condition the soil accordingly. Lime to correct pH and slow-acting fertilizers such as bone meal and cottonseed meal



may be added if needed. Sheet composting with stable waste is an excellent program for the annual area of your garden. It is not too late to sow a “green manure” crop of Winter Rye or Clover seed which if planted now will provide a green grassy garden all winter long.

**BULBS.** Spring always seems so far away in October that few gardeners actually give their new bulb beds a chance. Daffodils need 12 weeks of weather above 40 degrees to develop adequate root systems. Smaller or minor bulbs such as Grape Hyacinth, Squill, Snowdrop, and Crocus should be planted no later than the end of this month. If the fall and winter are expected to be mild you may have some luck if planted later. Tulips and Lilies on the other hand can go in after mid-October as long as the ground is not frozen. Prepare well-drained bed to a depth of 2 ft.; add peat moss, lime and bone meal.

**TREES AND SHRUBS.** Narrow-leaf Evergreens, e.g., Yew, Juniper, Pine, Arborvitae and Spruce bear cones and have needles. Broad-leafed Evergreens are Rhododendrons and Mountain Laurel. To avoid scorch, you must now allow the soil to dry out around the tender roots of both these Evergreens in the fall. Water during those late autumn warm spells and magical Indian Summer days. An early fall mulch of manure and woodchips or oak leaves will help stabilize soil temperature and conserve moisture in the soil. A thorough soaking below the frost line (1 ft. depth) before the ground freezes is good procedure. Newly planted Evergreens must be protected through their first winter in your garden.

Balled and burlapped or containerized materials can be planted in properly prepared pits. Soft, fleshy, rooted trees such as Magnolia, Birch, Dogwood and shrubs such as Rose of Sharon are much better planted in spring.

**ANNUALS.** You may try sowing the following annuals in the fall: Sweet Alyssum, hardy Snapdragon, California Poppy, Bachelor Button, Chives, Cosmos, Pinks, Candytuft, Sweet Pea, Portulaca, Pansy, Calendula and Cleome.

**PERENNIALS.** You may sow the following perennials: Monkshood, English Daisy, Larkspur, Hosta, Evening Primrose and Blazing Star.

In order to discourage rodents, established perennial areas should not be mulched until after the ground is frozen. Perennials with rosette-like lower leaves can be mulched under the leaves with peat moss to protect roots. Bushel baskets can be up-ended as covers and weighted down; this will protect them.



## NOVEMBER GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

**WINTER PROTECTION.** Plants in your garden can suffer greatly during winter exposure from sunscald, windburn, drying-out and heaving of the soil due to freezing and thawing. Therefore, it is important to protect your plants in the fall.

**TREES.** On days when the temperature is above 40° and it is expected to stay above 40° for three consecutive days you should spray with miscible oil for scale and woolly aphids. If the weather is not cooperative then you can also try to do this in the spring before the buds are open. Burlap or tree wrap paper wrapped around the trunks of young trees (4" caliper or less) will prevent sunscald and windburn of the trunk. An anti-desiccant spray such as Wilt-Pruf will help prevent loss of moisture through the leaves and buds. A poly sprayer will make this easy; Wilt-Pruf is a thick mixture and requires a wide nozzle. This anti-desiccant dries in about twenty minutes and forms a protective film that inhibits loss of water vapor but allows gaseous exchange to take place. Be sure to thoroughly wash sprayer with soapy water after use or mixture will harden and clog your equipment. Read the manufacturer's instructions for mixing information.

In addition, your young trees may need staking and guying to withstand winter winds. An old rubber hose can be cut up and wire run through it to provide loops around the trunk and stakes. If you are growing semi-hardy trees such as figs, then you should wrap the tree in burlap after tying up the branches. Evergreens can snap and break under the strong weight of ice and heavy melting snow. To minimize the surface, tying up these branches will help prevent accidental injury. Knock heavy snow off evergreens with a broom. Some tree experts claim that certain trees benefit in the spring from root feeding. Trees and evergreens should not, however, be fertilized now. Evergreens sometime require windscreens. You can make these out of old lumber, stakes, corn stalks or chicken wire covered with burlap. Small evergreens or other seedling trees can be covered with an upside-down bushel basket.

**ROSES.** The canes (stems) of your climbing roses should be removed from their trellis, and tied together, sprayed with an anti-desiccant, wrapped in burlap and laid on the ground to prevent windburn. Hardy bedding roses should have soil mounded up around the canes and mulched, preferably with leaves from healthy hardwood trees.

**SEEDS.** Some of the seeds that can be gathered to November are: Russian Olive, Barberry, Pyracantha, Viburnum, and Cotoneaster. Indications of ripeness are: Shriveling of the pod or cord or, in the case of Cotoneaster, the color or pliancy of the pulp. Clean the pulp from seeds by soaking overnight. Check a good gardening encyclopedia or library on storage and temperature requirements.

**FLOWER BEDS.** Check your Chrysanthemum beds for aphid infestation. Cut dead flower stalks back to ground. If ground is not frozen, Iris beds can be limed; summer and fall flowering perennials can be separated and transplanted to new locations. If you have Peonies, be sure that the drainage around the plant is good. Mulch Peonies lightly as too heavy a mulch can result in no flowers. Tulips may be planted as late as December if the ground remains unfrozen; they need at least five weeks of mild winter weather in order to form the necessary roots. You can keep the subterranean temperature above freezing by mulching well over late-planted Tulip beds. Be sure to keep bulb beds watered during dry spells. Materials for mulching include: salt hay, leaves, peat moss, coffee grounds, peanut shells, compost, bark chips, fiberglass, newspaper, and Christmas tree boughs. The use of old flower stalks and decayed stems, as mulch is poor economy as they can harbor disease and insects over the winter.



**COMPOSTING.** Gather leaves of healthy trees and compost or use as mulch. Where possible, compost large quantities of stable waste (manure and bedding straw) over the winter. If you have the space try window composting. If you have a separate leaf mold pile, be sure to keep it moist and shaded. Some leaves - oak, beech and hickory -- are eminently suitable as winter mulch as they do not pack down and smother plants nor do they decay quickly.

**POISON IVY.** In November and December this plant is less toxic and harmful to handle. If you are so inclined, now is a good time to remove its roots and all. Be sure you wear old gloves and wash with Octagon brown soap after handling or use a specifically formulated poison ivy block and wash.

**VEGETABLE GARDENING.** This is an excellent time to begin to prepare for your new garden. If ground is not frozen, turn the soil, take soil samples, adjust pH and add conditioners so all will be practically ready in the spring.

**GROCERY STORE GARDENING.** In a sunny, well-drained area dig out a cubic foot of soil and refill with a mixture of 2/3 loam and 1/3 well decayed compost. Plant a plump, heavy store-bought chestnut 2” deep. Your blight-free chestnut tree will begin to grow. Plant two or more trees for cross-fertilization over the next 3 to 4 years. Transplant as young saplings to larger areas to mature.

**FORCING.** Some perennials that you might like to pot and place in sheltered locations include: Coreopsis, Candytuft, Shasta Daisy, and some small shrubs such as Lilac, Forsythia, Deutzia and Wisteria.

**PRUNING.** This month is a good time to prune back Silver Lace, Wisteria, Bittersweet and Hydrangea vines. Spring flowering shrubs should not be pruned in the fall if you want them to flower in the spring. Most of these shrubs are pruned just after spring flowering. “Pee Gee” Hydrangea should have old flowers heads removed and last year’s branches pruned; leave two to four buds per shoot. Suckers should be removed from Lilac, Snowberry and Mock Orange. Rose of Sharon and Privet hedges should have the oldest stems cut back to the ground.

**GRASS.** If you have a grassy area you can apply raw bone meal as fertilizer now. It is important to keep the grass mowed in the fall and to keep leaves and other dead materials off the lawn to minimize matting and rotting of the tender grass roots.



## DECEMBER GARDEN SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CITY

December is a busy month for most of us, but try to devote some time to your garden. There are varied tasks to be performed -- between cleaning up last season's debris, winterizing remaining plant material and planning for the spring.

**SNOW.** It can almost be considered mulch. If the snowfall is deep and lasting it can protect plant roots from subsequent frosts by forming a top crust, which takes the brunt of cold air while enabling tender roots to survive below.

**MULCH.** In general, the soil should be bare in the winter but mulched with salt hay or any other non-weed, seed-bearing cover or planted with a hardy green cover such as a Winter Rye which can be dug under in the spring. Bare soil tends to erode, leach out and encourage weeds. Frost can crack bare moist soil and tear plant roots by expanding the soil, heaving out the plants. Mulch should be applied to most plants by now, even if the top growth looks completely dead. Apply rotted manure, bone meal and peat moss to Clematis, as they prefer neutral to alkaline soil. New plantings of Bearded Iris require at least four inches of mulch to prevent soil heaving.

**BULBS.** If the grounds are still unfrozen, there is still time to plant Tulips. They can often be bought at bargain prices now, but before purchasing, check your selection to make sure no shriveled, sprouted or rotted bulbs are included. Mulch your December bulb plantings heavily to allow them time to form the necessary roots for spring growth. As you pull up shriveled lily stalks in the garden, check the bottoms for small bulbs, as these can be replanted now for flowering in two to three years when the bulbs have developed to sufficient size.

**COMPOST.** Save your wood ashes from the fireplace this winter. Store them in watertight containers or add them to your compost pile. Wood ash is high in potash, an essential plant nutrient. Keep turning your compost heap; the decomposition process continues even though winter is upon us.

**TOOLS.** Store your clean and oiled tools in a secure dry place until spring. Note the additions you may care to make to your tool collection for next season. Make sure all tools are in good working order and make any necessary repairs -- hone, sharpen, oil, paint and label. Sterilize pruning implements after each use.

**PLANNING.** Start ordering your seed catalogs now. Make note of varieties that produced well for you last season. Consider crop rotation in your garden planning for next spring. For example, do not plan to plant members of the cabbage family in the same area for a second year; next year plan to sow seeds of "heavy feeders" like Corn in the area in which peas grew this past year; plant vegetables top crops this year in the area where last year's root crops grew. Bare spots will be more apparent now, if you are considering purchasing additional perennials or hardy plant material.

**WILDLIFE.** Make a Christmas tree for birds. Tie sunflower heads, suet balls, dried fruit or commercial birdseed in containers to one of your trees. Try to leave out fresh pans of water and chip or pour hot water on it to melt ice daily. You must continue feeding birds throughout the winter though, once you start. The birds that you feed now will thank you during the growing season by devouring insects in you garden. Considering planting hardy plant material that will provide color and berries for birds year round -- varieties of Holly, Ciborium, Pyracantha, Russian olive, Red Cedar and Hemlock meet these needs. Squirrels can be kept at bay by scattering nuts on the ground. Place a wire mesh screen around the trunk of the trees to prevent rodent damage to the bark, or making a repellent of five parts resin to one part linseed oil and paint the trunk with this mixture.



**INDOORS.** Plants received as holiday's gifts and used to a greenhouse environment will last considerably longer if you provide high humidity for them. Bulbs refrigerated for six to twelve weeks can be placed in a pot for forcing now. Paper white Narcissi should be started now for indoor bloom in January/February.

**PROJECTS.** You may want to construct benches, play equipment, birdhouses, etc. while you are cooped up inside during cold weather, or try your hand at designing a mural for a bare garden wall.

**SEEDS.** Seeds suitable for gathering now are: Hawthorn, Wisteria, Cotoneaster and Inkberry. The dual action of frost and moisture spurs ready germination of fresh black walnuts, butternuts and hickory nuts if planted 1½ inch deep and covered with rich soil.

**PESTS.** Examine the bark of your trees closely for cocoons, insect's eggs and egg masses. A stiff brush or broom may be able to dislodge any unfortunate discoveries, but do not attempt to scrape away or peel off the outer bark. Prune branches if necessary; treat pests appropriately with corrective applications.

**TREES AND SHRUBS.** Deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the fall) may still be moved for planting. Frozen root balls may be trenched (heeled in) and covered with good mulch. Take care to water root balls well during winter dry spells. A coating of an anti-transparent will help prevent loss of moisture through the leaves and the buds.

**PRUNING.** Most deciduous trees (particularly fruit trees) in your community garden can be safely pruned now. Remove damaged branches or branches casting excessive shadow over vegetable or flowerbeds. Sterilize your saw and shears in alcohol to prevent the spread of possible diseases from limb to limb or tree to tree. Remove and clean any decay and cover large wounds with tar-based tree pruning paint when the weather is above freezing. In any case, make sure you have permission and jurisdiction over the tree in question and observe all safety precautions. Young trees scheduled for transplanting in the spring may be root pruned in mild winter weather. A sharp well-honed spade is essential to this procedure.

**MORE ON POISON IVY.** The toxic oils in Poison Ivy are almost minimal now. Sulfuric acid or copper sulfate in strong solution applied to the crown of the plant will kill the roots. When the weather is above 40° you will be able to cultivate the soil loosely and apply the poison. Be sure to protect yourself, your neighbors and other gardeners by notifying them of the locations treated in this way. **Caution:** the roots of other nearby plants may die also if you are careless in applying this poison.

