



This Month in the Garden...

by Peggy Koppmann

January is for readers and dreamers. It's the time to get to the pile of catalogs and magazines, and those books you've been meaning to read. Time to take notes and make lists. Time to draw up some plans for 2017 garden dreams. Happy New Year and sweet horticultural dreams to all our January gardeners.

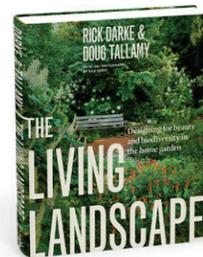
Color Conversations – When reading and planning for next season, keep in mind the need for a cohesive color scheme in the garden. Planning helps avoid that “just plant it there” approach that is distracting and scattered. Think about combining bright and dark colors to create contrast or planting a monochromatic area of one color to create a soothing effect. (Think shades of blue.) Maybe you want a garden of vivid colors to attract pollinators or color combinations that enhance the color and curb appeal of your home. January is the perfect time to research color theory and color combinations to create the look you want. Websites such as gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening, GardenDesign.com or FineGardening.com are great places to begin your research.

Abbr. Mngs. – While you are perusing catalogs, take a close look at their abbreviation key to be sure you are getting all the info they offer. Height and spread should be read VERY carefully to determine if you have room for a particular plant. Shapes, scale drawings, cultivation, sun/shade requirements, moisture needs, cold-hardiness and heat tolerance are critical to choosing the right plant. A cultivar is noted with ‘cv’ to note

a type of plant developed by humans that does not grow in nature, while ‘var’ notes a variety of a specific type of plant that does grow in nature. Look for PM which might stand for a plant that resists powdery mildew and V or VFN which denotes resistance to Verticillium and Fusarium wilts. TMV refers to resistance to tobacco mosaic virus and N generally means resistance to nematodes.

Trendy Gardeners – One of the gardening trends for 2017 involves the replacing of the ‘green desert’ of lawns and non-native plantings to a layered effect similar to what you might see in a forest. At the top of your January reading list should be *The Living Landscape* by Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy. The goal of sustainable landscapes and the creation of more natural ecosystems are high on the list of many gardeners these days. Not only will you be trendy, but you'll also be well prepared for the appearance of Doug Tallamy at the **2018** Master Gardeners Education Day. Nothing like planning waaaaayyy ahead!

Houseplant Hygiene – Give your houseplants as much light as possible and try to increase humidity by misting or placing them on a tray of moist pebbles. Increase the time between waterings but don't cut back on the amount of water. Give them a mid-winter bath to clean leaves and refresh the plant. Inspect for spider mites, aphids and mealy bugs on your houseplants. And while we're at it, let's talk about those houseplants that are beyond redemption. Plants do have a life



span, and those leggy, thin-leaved, scraggly plants that you've been nursing along need to go. Besides, that gives you permission to visit nurseries in the winter and find some new healthy plants to enjoy. That's reason enough to do some houseplant triage.

And then – Wash bird feeders and replenish food; let tap water warm to room temperature before watering houseplants; stay off the lawn; check for heaving on perennials and mulch as necessary; use evergreen boughs to mulch tender perennials and shrubs; examine any root crops, bulbs and tubers for rot and remove diseased ones immediately; quarantine new gift plants to be sure they don't harbor pests; use sand, sawdust, bird seed, or vermiculite as an alternative to rock salt.



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