



HOME & GARDEN

HOME AND GARDEN INFORMATION CENTER • 12005 HOMEWOOD ROAD • ELLICOTT CITY, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

Ornamental Plant Tips - January 2009

Culture

- Clean up and compost dead perennial leaves and stems, but leave the flower heads of perennials, like tickseed, purple coneflower and black-eyed Susans to provide nutritious seeds for birds this winter. Large ornamental grasses can also provide needed cover for over-wintering birds and can remain throughout the winter.
- Plant any leftover bulbs in the garden as long as the soil can be worked. Follow package instructions for planting depth and spacing. Ideally, the site should be sunny and the soil should be well-amended with organic matter. In spring when the bulbs emerge fertilize the planting area with a balanced fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. Daffodil bulbs are less likely to be eaten or disturbed by rodents and squirrels than most other bulbs. Tulip bulbs are often eaten and can be protected from animal pests by covering them with a wire mesh like chicken wire or sprinkling a labeled animal repellent on the soil.
- This is a good time to prune out damaged leaves and inspect winter creeper and Japanese euonymus foliage for scale problems. Scale insects can be controlled with a dormant oil spray. Be sure that temperatures are expected to remain above freezing for a 24 hour period after spraying.

Water Gardens –

- Aquatic Gardening - If you haven't yet placed a chicken wire screen over your pond you'll need to remove leaves that are now sunken to the bottom of the pond. These leaves will contaminate the water with nutrients and gases that will harm or even kill your fish. If you have not already stopped feeding your pond fish, do not feed them anymore. They cannot metabolize food easily during cold weather and can become very sick. Clean up pond statuary, fountains and other concrete or plastic pond features. Cover these items with plastic to prevent snow and ice damage. To prevent ice damage to pumps and filters remove them from the pond and store them indoors.
- Stock tank heaters can be purchased at farm supply stores and installed to keep your pond from freezing over. Be sure it is one that is safe to use in plastic livestock tanks; otherwise the heater element could burn a hole in the pond liner. Preventing solid ice formation on the pond allows for good gas exchange between air and water and helps your fish survive the winter.

**Have a pest or gardening question? Call The Home and Garden Information Center
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