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## JANUARY GARDEN CHECKLIST

In this weeks article I want to mention things gardeners need to be considering for January. The following is a garden checklist:

- An herbicide containing glyphosate can be used on dormant bermudagrass lawns in January or February when temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit for winter weed control. Make sure your bermuda lawn is completely dormant or you will damage it.
- January through February is a good time of year to move plants from one location in the landscape to another. Water and mulch transplanted plants well.
- More on trees. Remove grass and maintain 3' to 4' diameter of grass free area around young trees. Many research studies have all come to the same conclusion, that eliminating competition from around the immediate area of the tree contributes to a dramatic increase in growth of the tree. Keep 2 to 3 inch layer mulch in this grass free area.
- Staking newly planted trees is recommended for large trees however, stakes should be removed after the first growing season. Stakes should be loose to allow the tree to sway in the wind. Trees allowed to sway develop a stronger root system and a sturdier trunk.
- A word on watering trees. Water as needed but let the soil dry down somewhat between irrigation. Waterlogged soils kill many tree species. Remember, plant roots need to have fresh air to breathe; they will drown as you would in a bucket of water.
- Winter is pruning time for most landscape trees. You may need to remove lower limbs of young trees each winter as it matures. Ideally you would want your lowest limb six feet from the ground. Do any corrective pruning while trees are young, removing narrow crotch angles, double forks, etc. Remember to cut limbs back to the trunk leaving only the small ridge. No sealants are necessary. You can expect a wound from a 1 inch limb to heal over by the second year after cutting if not by the end of the first year. Larger wounds will take longer to seal.
- Vegetable gardens need to be cleaned up if you haven't done so. Winter cleanup reduces insect and disease pressure for the coming growing season. This refuse probably needs to stay out of the compost pile. Our compost piles may not get hot enough to kill harmful pathogens.

- Asparagus stalks can be cut back and beds need a new layer of compost (2 to 3 inches).
- Avoid the temptation to fertilize houseplants during the winter months unless they are under grow lights or very high light conditions.
  - Mulch is important in protecting young plants from frost heaving. 2 to 4 inch mulch will reduce heaving problems which occurs with alternate freezing and thawing. Newly planted plants (2 inch potted plants) can be pushed completely out of the ground.
  - When the temperatures are below freezing, avoid much contact with plant material outside. Frozen plants are brittle, and limbs can be broken easily. If ice or snow is on your plants, use caution around them. Heavy loads of snow can be lightly brushed off, but stay away from ice-laden plants. You can't remove the ice without breaking off branches.
  - Mulch strawberry beds now with straw. Keep the straw off the crowns. The straw will keep fruit from touching the soil and rotting.
  - Erect new birdhouse and clean out existing birdhouses before spring tenants arrive as early as mid February.
  - This is a good time of year to cut poison ivy vines from trees at the ground level and paint the cut end with full strength Brush-B-Gon or glyphosate. Handle vines with plastic gloves and wash up thoroughly to avoid itching results.
  - A gardeners remedy for winter time blues include: reviewing garden catalogs, magazines and books. Speaking of books, the Baxter County Master Gardeners have invested in several hundred dollars worth of gardening books which can be found in the Baxter County Library. Visit our library and check out these wonderful books.

For more information on any of the above points, contact the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension office at 425-2335.