JOHNSON'S • GARDEN • CENTERS
FOR EVERY SEASON / LAWN & GARDEN CALENDAR / VOLUME 36 / ISSUE 13 / DECEMBER 2026
askus@johnsonsgarden.com www.johnsonsgarden.com

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FRESH CHRISTMAS TREES

After selecting the perfect cut Christmas tree from Johnson's, there are several considerations to prolong its season. Remember, heater vents, fireplaces and electronics all work to dry out trees. Here are some hints to keep your tree fresh.

- Cut 2" off the trunk if not already done at time of purchase. (Johnson's will do this for you.)
- Put tree in water using tree preservative. (Be sure it is taking up water. A tree can drink a gallon of water the first day and up to a quart a day after that.)
- Keep the tree in a shady place until it goes inside.
- Put the tree up a little later or take it down right after Christmas, and place a Tree Bag under the tree to make clean up after Christmas a breeze.

TREES and SHRUBS

Now is the time to prepare landscape plants for winter. Fertilize with **ferti•lome Tree & Shrub Food**, if you haven't already. The best defense your plants have against insects and disease next spring is to feed them now. A healthy plant withstands stress better and recovers faster than a weak plant.

Prune only what is necessary right now, such as long branches that will whip in the wind and dead wood. Leave major pruning until early spring. (Note: wait until after blooming to prune early spring flowering shrubs like forsythia, white spirea and lilacs.)

All plants benefit from mulch at this time. It helps moderate soil temperature and retain moisture. Tender plants like rose bushes, crapemyrtle, butterfly bush and perennials need a little extra TLC, so mulch heavier around them. If the winter is dry, water once a month during warm spells. Evergreens, broadleaf evergreens, perennials, bulbs and pansies are some of the plants most in need of winter moisture.

It's a good idea to protect the trunks of newly planted trees, as well as young maples and fruit trees, with tree wrap. This prevents sun scald, which can cause bark cracks.

CHRISTMAS for the BIRDS

As you decorate your tree and house inside remember the birds' trees outside. The obvious first choice for bird ornaments would be a feeder. Several smaller feeders are preferable to one large feeder. The seed will stay fresher and there won't be such a fight for perching space.

Also, you can tailor different types of feeders and seed to whatever specific birds you want to attract. Give the squirrels their own feeder, and they won't bother the birds as much. And don't forget water—an unfrozen water source is as attractive as seed to birds in winter. Once these are in place your outdoor tree will be adorned with colorful and lively "ornaments."

COOL-SEASON LAWNS

Visions of sugar plums may drive out all thoughts of lawn care during the holiday season. But the soil isn't frozen and that means grass roots can still take up fertilizer. If you seeded in late October, that new grass, as small as it may be, needs to be fed. Also, if you didn't get your second or third application of **ferti•lome Winterizer** on—do it now. This late feeding of Winterizer promotes winter hardiness and keeps grass green longer. Most of the fertilizer will be stored by the roots and used to help new grass thicken up in spring and help established lawns green up earlier. Don't be concerned if you can't water in the Winterizer. Cool temperatures mean there is really no chance of the fertilizer burning the lawn. However, if we have another dry winter, lawns will need a couple waterings during these months ahead if the ground is not frozen.

HOUSE PLANTS

December is the month to bring color into your home with poinsettias and Christmas cactus. Both plants have similar needs, with poinsettias requiring more moisture.

- Keep in a sunny window.
- Cool temperatures, 65°-70°, are best to prolong blooms.
- Keep out of cold or hot drafts.
- Christmas cactus - let the top one inch of soil dry, then water.
- Poinsettias - let soil surface dry slightly, then water thoroughly.
- After watering, discard excess from saucer.

Cyclamen are another good flowering plant for indoors. They come in white, red and shades of pink and will tolerate a little less light than poinsettias or Christmas cactus. Let the soil surface dry slightly between waterings.