

# Garden Club Horticultural Hints

January 2019

*Resolve to be a more informed gardener!*



**Pray for snow!** Of course, you have added leaves around new plantings to protect them from sub-freezing temperatures and frost heaves, but now it's time to look for more help from Mother Nature. Snow is a natural insulator and a very efficient one—ten inches of snow provide the same insulation as six inches of fiberglass. Snow keeps roots happily buried, not subject to freeze and thaw cycles

*Anyone remember January 2018? It was just a year ago New England was hammered by a succession of snow storms. Oh – and until January, there had been relatively little snow...*



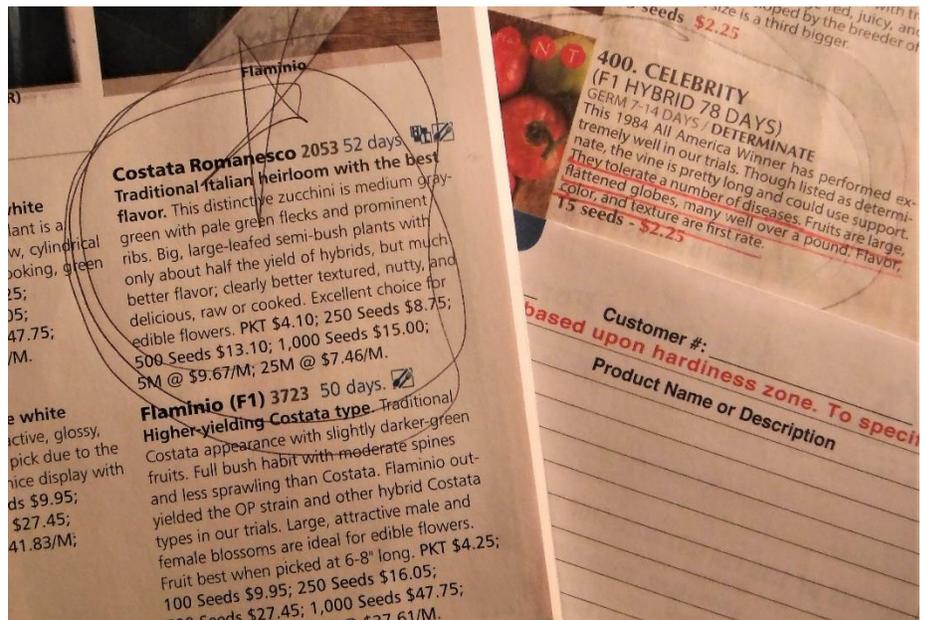
**Skip the salt.** Once the snow arrives, avoid using salt on sidewalks and driveways. Sand or kitty litter will provide traction and even assist in melting as it warms on sunny days. Best of all, there will be no damage to your plants now, or when the ground thaws in the spring. The sand or litter will disappear into the garden soil without damaging to roots or poisoning the soil.

**Be kind to the birds.** Not only do birds enliven your garden, they are your friends. Birds eat caterpillars all spring and summer. So, during the coldest months when much of their food has disappeared or is buried under snow, put out seed and suet feeders. They'll love you and pay back your kindness come spring.



*No one wants to slip on a sidewalk or steps... but salt washed into your garden damages leaves and needles now and, next spring, poisons roots.*

**Time to get serious** with the seed catalogs. Make a list of the species you want to grow from seed and then look over the available varieties. Careful reading will tell you which offer the greatest yield, the best flavor, the most disease resistance, and then you decide which ones best fit your needs.



Poinsettias usually drop their leaves after they finish blooming. Replace them with new houseplants. Succulents are hardy and beautiful plants that don't mind dry air or a little neglect if you head off for a winter vacation



*Where will you travel this year? Make certain you search for open gardens to provide inspiration. Look for botanical and public gardens, local garden club tours, and Garden Conservancy Open Days for special private gardens.*



**Be kind to your houseplants.** Winter may be cold and dry for outdoor plants, but our indoor plants suffer from hot and dry. With the thermostat set at 68 or 72 degrees, you are drying out the air as you warm it. Place plants on a tray covered with pebbles where you regularly add water. As the water evaporates, your plant breathe easier. Plants too big to be gathered together? Add pebbles and water into large saucers under each individual. Additional humidity in the house is also a benefit to you. Plants also need regular watering, but less than in other seasons. Unless you are using grow lights, your plants will respond to the reduced light by slowing down their growth which also eliminates the need for fertilizing.