

# Garden Club Horticultural Hints

## December 2022

*And So Begins the Winter Gardening Season*



When putting up (and taking down) Christmas lights on trees and shrubs, be careful not to break off buds for next spring's flowers. A casual drape of lights is always better for plants than tightly wrapping them around branches.

Complete the protection of young trees from gnawing damage by mice, moles and others by wrapping the stems with small mesh wire or plastic trunk guards from the ground up to 2 or 3 feet.



Burlap wind breaks can provide important protection for boxwood and broad-leaved evergreens such as rhododendrons and azaleas. *Never* wrap a plant tightly – doing so prevents air circulation while providing a cozy winter nest for rodents and other garden vermin.

**Time to scatter seeds** for cold-hardy annuals that need to be exposed to sub-freezing temperatures in order to germinate in the spring. These include cleome, bachelor buttons, snapdragons, snow on the mountain and, for next year's monarchs, milkweed.



You can also fashion snow and ice shelters for vulnerable plants and small trees (like the dwarf maple at left) from leftover or unused gardening materials. This shelter is made from a discarded plastic lattice and scrap 1"x2" construction material.





**Caring for plants indoors.** With central heating, our homes dry out in winter so be certain your house plants aren't suffering. Misting sometimes results in water spots on furniture. Instead of misting, use two sets of saucers for plants. Place one directly underneath the plant pot to capture any overflow from watering. That saucer, in turn, should be placed atop a larger one holding water (replenished weekly) to assure the air around the plant does not dry out. By adding water as needed you are creating an environment in which houseplants can survive our indoor heating – and so can your furniture.

*Like most houseplants, this anthurium needs only light watering in winter. Beneath the pot and standard saucer, a larger saucer holds just enough water to provide necessary humidity for the plant's benefit.*



**Cutting your own Christmas tree** is better for the environment than buying one pre-cut. Precut trees are often transported long distances and many of them remain unsold on Christmas Eve, adding to the waste. A tree cut locally is fresher and cutting it yourself is great family fun. To find a “choose and cut” Christmas tree farms in Massachusetts go to <http://www.christmas-trees.org/retailers-county.htm>. After Christmas, cut the branches off the trunk and use them to cover gardens, keeping sleeping perennials can from suffering freeze and thaw cycles as the winter goes on.



**Keep Bambi at bay.** Start regular sprayings of shrubs and small trees with vile smelling solutions such as Bobbex and Deer Off to prevent browsing of tender tips by hungry deer.



**For more winter gardening tips and December activities, please visit [www. BettyOnGardening.com](http://www.BettyOnGardening.com)**