**Gardening Calendar**

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**“January”**

Watch for the designated day for curbside holiday tree pickup in your neighborhood or town. Some retail nurseries will also accept the trees for disposal. In rural areas, they make good erosion control tools when placed in ravines.

Your poinsettias will last for four or five months if you keep them out of the drafts, both hot and cold, and keep them moist. Placing six to eight ice cubes on the soil each day will work if the container receives a deep soaking in the sink on the weekend.

If you received a bunch of paper white or daffodils forced to bloom in water or a container, plant them in a corner of the yard where there is full sun or partial sun. They will usually naturalize and come back every year. Deer do not eat paper whites or daffodils, so they can be planted in unprotected locations.

In addition to paper whites, cemetery iris may bloom in January. They don’t need any special care, but a handful of lawn fertilizer will help them produce strong foliage. Let the foliage stay over after the blooms are spent. The foliage is reloading the plant with starches and nutrients for next year’s bloom period.

January is a good time to aerate and top dress the lawn. Rent an aerator that cuts plugs as it rolls over the lawn and places them on the turf. They look like cigar butts. The channels allow air and water to penetrate to the plant roots and correct the compacted soil problem. For more impact, obtain some compost and apply it one-half inch deep over the aerated lawn. The compost filters into the aeration channels without closing them and provides organic enrichment along with the air and water.

Aeration and top dressing can be a do-it-yourself job or it can be a hired-out job. Whichever way it is done, the lawn really benefits.

Plants such as esperanza and poinciana that have been top-killed by freezing temperatures can be cut back to the ground now or they can be left in place for another month or two to provide cover for birds. February is the best pruning month, but if time is available in January, it can be done now. Visit [plantanswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com/) for diagrams and detailed descriptions on how to prune fruit trees, roses and other plants.

If there have been freezes in December, the winter annuals (snapdragons, stocks, petunias and calendulas) have probably quit blooming for a while. They will start a second bloom period in late February.

Pansies, cyclamen and primula generally bloom all winter. Keep them well watered and protected with slug and snail bait. Protect cyclamen and primula when temperatures are predicted below 30 degrees. Citrus has hardened off after the cold days in November and December, but you still need to be ready to cover them if freezing temperatures threaten. For the full “skinny” on freeze protection, visit [plantansswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com/).

Some gardeners still have rufous hummingbirds visiting their sugar water feeders. Don’t worry, the feeder is not encouraging the birds to stay and risk cold weather. They are very independent.

Feed thistle seed to attract goldfinches. Cardinals and most species like sunflower seeds best but will also come to a feeder for safflower seed as well. The advantages of safflower seed is that squirrels don’t like it. Keep both squirrels and white winged doves out of your seed with a steel feeder with weight sensitive perches.