



# J&L Garden Center

The All Season Gift  
and Garden Center

620 North 500 West Bountiful, Utah 292-0421

The Gardening Newsletter

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## Winter Gardening

Some people talk to their plants. Other people sing to their plants. Some people think their plants will cringe if they are scolded. While there is no evidence that houseplants actually respond to these types of stimulation, houseplants will try to communicate with you and tell you if they are not feeling well. The leaves may droop, spots may appear, growth may stop. One symptom may mean the plant is not getting enough light. Another symptom may mean the plant is getting too much water. A third symptom may mean an insect or disease is bothering the plant. A quick, accurate diagnosis is half the battle in controlling the problem before it gets out of hand or spreads to surrounding plants. After the diagnosis, cure the problem, don't just try to fix the symptoms.

The biggest problem we see with houseplants is that people tend to 'kill their plants with kindness', or they 'baby their plants to death'. Plants do not grow as fast during the winter, so it is very easy to give them too much water or too much fertilizer. A general rule of thumb is to reduce the fertilizer by half and the water by a third. Each house is a little different because of light and room temperature. Too much water is the number one cause of death in houseplants. A moisture meter might be just the thing you need to help you determine just how much water is right for each plant.

## Amaryllis Bulb Care

Amaryllis are one of the popular winter blooming flowers. They are very striking and colorful. Amaryllis bulbs are extremely easy to grow, even for people that normally kill their other houseplants.

Amaryllis bulbs make the perfect gift to help keep your family gardeners busy during the winter. They also make great gifts for friends and neighbors. Amaryllis bulbs are easy to take care of and you can almost watch them grow. With the proper care, you can have your amaryllis bulb bloom year after year.

Amaryllis are available in many different colors ranging from white to pink to red. **Red Lion** and **Orange Sovereign** are two of our most popular varieties, but we also have 12 other varieties to choose from. Amaryllis bulbs are available in different bulb sizes, ranging from 26cm to 40cm size. This year we even have some 44cm size bulbs available - they are big! The number of blossom stems and blossoms will vary with each amaryllis bulb, but you can expect more blossoms with bigger bulbs. One or two blossom stems are common on the small (28cm) size bulbs, while three or four blossom stems are usual on the medium size (34cm) and four or five blossom stems are possible on the larger size (40cm) bulbs. **The blossoms will not be any larger on bigger bulbs, you will just have more of them.**



We have an Amaryllis Care sheet available. Stop by and pick one up, or download a copy from our website.

## Poinsettia Care

Poinsettias are perhaps the most popular house plants in the United States. Most everyone has at least one or two poinsettias in their home during the Christmas season. Unfortunately, most poinsettias get thrown away right after Christmas. Poinsettias will grow and stay pretty through April and May if they are properly cared for. They will also grow and bloom year after year, if you have the patience to take care of them. The first thing to remember is that the red color you see are bracts, not the flowers. Poinsettia flowers are the small yellow features in the center of the bracts. Poinsettia flowers only bloom for three to four weeks. The bracts however, can maintain their color until the beginning of spring, if the plant is properly cared for.

Most people that throw their poinsettias away right after Christmas wonder why all the leaves turned yellow and fell off a week or two after they bought them. **Several conditions may cause poinsettias to drop their leaves, most of which can be prevented.**

**1. Poinsettias need plenty of light.** They have been grown in greenhouses under optimum conditions. Reducing the amount of light makes the plant drop some of its leaves.

**2. Poinsettias need plenty of fertilizer.** They have been fertilized every few weeks in the greenhouse so you need to keep it up. Fertilize your poinsettias every two weeks with **Bloom-ing and Rooting Fertilizer** while they are under your care.

**3. Poinsettias need plenty of water,** but they do not like to stay wet all the time. Give your poinsettia plenty of water; enough to fill the saucer. Let your plant sit in water for 30 minutes then drain any excess water still in the saucer. Do not water your poinsettia again until the soil feels dry. The pretty foil pot cover acts like a saucer, be sure to drain excess water left in the pot cover after 30 minutes. Too much water will kill your plant as quickly as not enough water will.

**4. Poinsettias do not like drafts;** neither hot nor cold. Keep poinsettias away from doors and away from furnace vents.

We have a **Poinsettia Care Sheet** available that gives you more information about growing and keeping your poinsettias looking good. Stop by and pick one up, or download a copy from our website.

## Christmas Tree Care

Fresh cut Christmas Trees are a common holiday tradition. With the proper care they can stay fresh and be safe through Christmas. However, you need to remember that **a Christmas tree can always be a fire hazard.**



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**Always put your tree in a water stand.** Be sure to cut off at least one inch of the trunk and put it in water within 10 minutes of making your cut, or you will have to make another cut.

**Never let the water stand run out of water.** Check the stand daily. The tree will use more water when you first bring it in the house than it will use a week later. A tree can use up to a gallon of water per day. If the water stand runs out of water you will need to make another 1" cut before the tree will absorb water again.

**Spray your tree with Wilt Prufe.** This spray prevents moisture loss from the needles. Wilt Prufe will help your tree stay fresher longer. It is a nontoxic, odorless spray that really makes a difference. Wilt Prufe is not a fire retardant, it just helps the tree from drying out as fast.



**Do not put your tree near a fireplace or in front of a furnace vent.** Do not put a Christmas tree in the same room with a fire; even a small fire in the fireplace can dry a tree out fast. Try to keep the tree as cool as possible.

**Always use miniature lights; never C7 or C9 lights.**

**Spray your tree with a Fire Retardant.**



### Potted Christmas Tree Care

Many gardeners buy a potted spruce or pine tree, use it for their Christmas Tree, and then plant it in the yard after Christmas. *As long as you follow a few simple guidelines you can have a successful experience with a potted Christmas Tree.*

1. Do not keep a potted tree in the house more than 10 to 14 days. A tree may start breaking dormancy or start growing when it is kept warm.

2. Water your tree regularly while inside the house and water it thoroughly when you take it back outside. Do not let the rootball dry out.

3. Spray your tree with **Wilt Prufe** to help prevent moisture loss. Spray the tree again just before you put it back outside.

4. Put your tree in a protected area when you take it back outside. The tree may have started to grow so it needs to be climatized before putting it directly in the cold.

**By following these simple guidelines you can have a healthy tree to plant after Christmas.**

### Christmas Tree Critters



Insects, spiders, and other creatures are sometimes brought into the home for Christmas. Both real and Artificial trees occasionally have these pests. A careful inspection of your tree will help detect these little friends early, and may prevent an unwanted infestation later. Some of the most common insects found on Christmas trees are aphids, bark beetles, earwigs, and spiders. None of these pests are detrimental to your home but they are sometimes an unwanted addition to your Christmas decor.

### Gift Ideas - For The Gardeners In Your Family



J&L has a good assortment of gift ideas perfect for the gardeners in your family and for the gardeners in your neighborhood. What does your gardener want for Christmas?

- |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Amaryllis Bulb          | A New Shovel     |
| Windchime               | Gardening Books  |
| Slogger Gardening Shoes | Garden Furniture |
| Gardening Gloves        | Wild Bird Feeder |
| Pruning Tools           | Plant Stand      |

*A Load of Manure - delivered next spring of course.*

### Winter Lawn Care

**"Don't Leave The Leaves."** Rake all the leaves from your lawn. Try to remove the leaves within three to four days after they drop. Some trees drop their leaves all at once while other trees may drop their leaves slowly all winter. Sycamore trees, oak trees, beech trees, and willow trees, are probably the worst at dropping their leaves. Leaves left on the lawn may cause fungus or mold problems in the lawn that are much easier to prevent in the fall than to cure in the spring. Snowmold is often caused by a layer of leaves left on the lawn too long. If snowmold is a yearly problem, you should apply a fungicide to your lawn after you rake the leaves, after you mow it for the last time, and just before a long-lasting snowfall. If it does snow before you have a chance to apply your fungicide, you can apply it on top of the snow, or wait for the snow to melt and apply it anytime during the winter.



Cut your lawn short the last time you mow in the fall. By cutting the grass a little shorter in the fall you reduce the chance of it laying down and creating a snowmold problem during the winter. Do not cut your lawn short until the last time you mow it for the year.

### Container Plants in Winter Weather

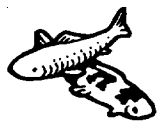
Many gardeners want to grow plants in containers for their decks and patios. Unfortunately, many of these containers will not offer your plants enough protection to survive the winter. Example. In many areas Japanese Maples are used extensively in containers on the porch or patio. In our climate they do not survive without some major winter protection. Many Japanese maple roots die if the soil temperature drops below 14 degrees F. If you can protect your Japanese maple, in its container, from getting below 14 degrees F., you can usually have Japanese maple trees grow in pots on your patio. You may have to move the pots into an unheated shed, put them next to the house, bury them in straw, or make a structure to hold straw around them during the winter. This straw may help to keep them above the critical temperature, if not, your tree will die.



Another important part of winter protection is water. Do not let the container completely dry out during the winter months. Water it when it starts to dry out. The best way to water plants in containers during the winter is with snow. As the snow melts just give the container another shovelful.

### Winter Pond Care

During the freezing winter weather fish may die in a garden pond if a few simple precautions are not taken. Fish do not die simply because a pond freezes over. However, it is a good idea to prevent the surface from freezing solid. A solid layer of ice prevents the exchange of gases from the water to the air. Fish can die from the lack of oxygen if the pond remains frozen too long. Fish can also die from the build up of toxic gases in the water. Organic material on the bottom of the pond (leaves, fish waste, etc.) decomposes during the winter, producing toxic gases. If these gases cannot escape into the air the fish will die.



Fish don't mind a frozen top layer, as long as there's nothing rotting on the bottom layer to poison them. However, just to be safe, try to keep the surface from freezing solid. Use an electric pond de-icer to keep a small opening in the ice or run a small water pump to circulate the water near the surface.

## Mice, Gopher & Vole Problems

Last winter was a good example of what happens when we get a snowfall that lasts for an extended time. Rodents love it, it makes their life much easier. They can dig tunnels through snow instead of frozen dirt. They tunnel between the snowline and soil line, eating the grass crowns as they tunnel. The lawn recovers from this damage quite easily but flowers, shrubs and trees are not as forgiving. Mice, rabbits, gophers, and voles can do a considerable amount of damage during the winter and you will not notice the damage until the following spring when the snow starts to melt.

If you think you might have a rodent problem this winter you should put some rodent bait out early. Do not put it where cats and dogs will find it. You should put it somewhere that it will not get wet. Rodents will not eat spoiled rat bait when there are fresh grass roots or peony roots nearby.

Build a bait station out of PVC pipe to protect your rodent bait from the weather. The bait station will keep the poison dry and it will attract the rodents. They will think they have just found a place to make a home. Buy 3 pvc tees, 1 pvc cap, and 3 feet of PVC pipe. Any size pipe from 1" to 2" will work because rodents are not claustrophobic, they like to live in tight places. Do not glue any fittings together, just push them together. Put the bait inside the pipe and place the bait station in the yard near the shrubs and trees you are trying to protect. You may want to make two or three of these bait stations.

## Salt or Ice Melters?

*Do not use fertilizer, salt, or any ice melter on concrete less than 1 year old. Use sand, kitty litter, or sawdust to control ice on new concrete.*

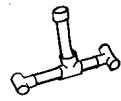


De-icing salts are a vital part of winter road maintenance, but they can be harmful to most trees and shrubs along the roadside or even along your driveway. You would be amazed how much salt you bring home on your car every time you go to the grocery store or to work. This salt has to go somewhere, just try to make sure it doesn't end up in your flower gardens or on your shrubs.

Unfortunately, we have no control over the amount of salt used on the streets or how much salt gets plowed onto the parkstrip. We can, however, control how much salt or ice melter that we use on our own sidewalks and driveways.

The most common ice melter used, the type used on most roads, is sodium chloride (table salt, rock salt, water softener salt). This salt is very effective and inexpensive. Sodium chloride will melt ice even on the coldest days of winter. The sodium in this salt is harmful to plants and can also damage the soil structure. This salt can damage concrete if used excessively. Just look at many of the sidewalks and porches in your neighborhood and you can see the damage caused by salt.

Some people like to use fertilizer to melt ice. Fertilizers are safe for plants but some fertilizers are more damaging to concrete than salt is. If you use a fertilizer for melting ice make sure it does not contain any iron. Iron will make rust spots on cement that takes a long time to go away. **Urea** is probably the safest garden fertilizer to use to melt ice. It does not damage concrete, in fact, airports often use Urea on their runways because it does not harm the concrete or the airplanes. However, Urea has a drawback, it will only melt ice when the temperature is above 11 degrees Fahrenheit. Below this temperature Urea will not melt any ice. **Ammonium Sulphate** is another common fertilizer that



is often used as an ice melter. This fertilizer melts ice until the temperature is -25 degrees Fahrenheit. However, you must be very careful using Ammonium sulphate, because it is very harmful to concrete. It reacts with concrete to create a mild acid that can damage your concrete. Ammonium sulphate can actually damage concrete worse than table salt does, so be careful applying it to melt ice on concrete.

We recommend **Ice Fighter Plus**. It is an excellent alternative to plain rock salt even though it does contain sodium chloride. The salt in this product is coated with a polymer, **Propolyce**, which prevents damage to concrete by inhibiting water from penetrating into the concrete. By keeping the water out of concrete, the freezing-thawing damage caused by salt is reduced. If used correctly, this ice melter will not harm concrete nor will it kill most plants. We have a handout that goes into more detail about the advantages of salt and other ice melters. Stop by for a copy or download it from our website.

## Wild Birds

If you are one of many bird feeding enthusiasts be sure to take time to learn more about the birds you are feeding. Feed your birds high quality food and food that is also beneficial to them. Most birds love sunflower seeds. They are a 'Bird's Dessert', but they are not always the best food to feed them. If you have too many birds and you want to reduce the quantity, be more selective about the types of seed you put in your feeder. Sunflower seeds will attract all types of birds; safflower seeds and nyger seeds attract only a few types. Nuts and berries attract some of the larger birds. Try different mixes until you attract the birds you want to come to your yard.

Birds are particular about the food they eat. Some birds will scatter all of some types of seed just to get to the sunflower seeds, wasting most of the food in the feeder. If this is a problem, separate the sunflower seeds from the other wild bird seed. Put out one feeder of just wild bird seed and one feeder with just sunflower seeds. You will have less waste from your feeder and you can control when you give them 'dessert'. Feed your wild birds suet or peanut butter once in awhile, they love it, and it is good for them. Many birds also enjoy nuts, berries, and fruit.

There is little or no regulation with regard to wild bird food products. This makes it difficult to know exactly what the bag of bird food contains. Are you purchasing the cheaper milo or millet seed or the more expensive vitamin-enriched seed. The **Wild Delight Company** packages several high quality wild bird mixes. Each of their mixes contains vitamin enriched seed. They even have one mix that all the seeds are completely shelled, so there is no mess to clean up. Moldy seed and bread are not beneficial to birds, so do not just throw out table scraps to feed birds.

During cold winter weather, one of the best ways to attract birds is to have an unfrozen source of water for them to drink. Water will attract wild birds faster than food when the ground water is frozen.

Imagine a fast food restaurant where nobody cleaned the kitchen or tables. Now think about your bird feeder. When was the last time you cleaned it? Salmonella can grow in moldy, wet seed, and in bird droppings. While you don't have to wash your feeder daily, you should clean it regularly. Now is a great time to check your wild bird supplies and make sure they are ready for the coming winter season.



## Wild Bird Questions



### Q. What do I do about all the seed on the ground?

**A. 1.** Many seeds have hulls that the birds crack open. They eat the meat and then drop the hulls - Sunflowers, Nyger, Safflowers. To prevent this mess either put a catch tray under the feeder or buy seed that has already been shelled.

**A. 2.** Check your seed mixture. If the mixture contains a lot of milo or millet many birds will simply drop this seed to the ground. In general, the cheaper the mix, the more waste you will have. Try purchasing a waste free mix such as **Total Quisine** or **Nut N Berry** mix.

**A. 3.** Cook your wild bird seed at 100 degrees for twenty minutes to prevent the seed from germinating. This doesn't reduce the amount of seed on the ground but it does prevent 'weeds' next spring.

### Q. How much will birds eat?

**A.** Birds have a very high metabolic rate and have a body temperature of 109 degrees. They need to eat constantly in order to maintain energy for cold winter weather. Some birds will consume more than their body weight every day.

### Q. Will bird's feet stick to metal perches in winter?

**A.** No, Birds do not have sweat glands in their feet so they will not stick to metal surfaces.

### Q. What about moths and insects in the bird seed?

**A.** Birds love them! Since wild bird seed is not a high priority seed for many companies, it is not cleaned as thoroughly as other food products. Wild Bird Seed is often stored in warehouses that are hot and perfect to breed meal moths, weevil and other seed loving insects. Unfortunately there is not an easy way to keep insects out of Wild Bird Seed. The only real caution about Wild Bird Seed is not to store it near your other foods. These moths will migrate from wild bird seed to Wheaties, Cornflakes and your brand new flour.

If you don't like these unwanted additions in your wild bird seed try to buy fresh, high quality seed in clear plastic bags. Make sure there are no insects already in the bird seed. You can store your seed in air tight containers, in cold areas of the garage or shed, or inside your freezer. We, at J&L, try to keep our wild bird seed in the freezer during the hot summer months, and in a cold warehouse during the winter, to reduce the amount of these insects. However, they still find their way into our Wild Bird Seed occasionally.

## Protect Your Tender Plants



Plants that do not lose their leaves in the winter (evergreens) need more winter protection than deciduous plants (plants that drop their leaves). Junipers and pine trees may suffer during long, warm dry periods but they are fairly tolerant of cold and drought. Broad-leaved evergreens (**rhododendron, laurel, oregon grape, etc.**) are affected both by extreme temperatures and by moisture loss, because of their large leaf surface. When the sun shines on a plant's leaf, the temperature can get as high as 70 degrees, yet the root system remains frozen. As water evaporates from the leaf, no water is able to replace it. The leaves then 'freeze dry'. If enough leaves die, the entire plant could also die. **There are several things you can do to prevent this type of winter damage.**

**(1) Don't let the soil dry out.** Water your plants occasionally during the fall. Don't keep your plants wet, just keep the soil moist. A plant that freezes with moist soil will be much healthier than a plant that freezes in dry soil conditions.

**(2) Put mulch around the base of your plants** to help insulate the soil from hard freezes. Mulch also helps keep moisture in the soil. Wait until the ground freezes to mulch plants with **Soil Pep**, leaves, or with compost. You want the ground to actually freeze lightly, to help the plants become dormant, before you cover the ground with mulch. Do not use grass clippings because they may cause a disease problem. Apply one or two inches of mulch around hardy plants and up to six to eight inches of mulch around your tender plants. Newly planted

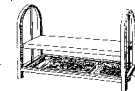
shrubs need more winter protection than your older shrubs.

**(3) Spray your plants with Wilt Prufe.** Wilt Prufe is an anti-desiccant; it seals moisture inside the plants and it stops evaporation from the leaves. Wilt prufe is not poisonous and will not harm animals. Spray Wilt Prufe when the temperature is above 40 degrees and will stay above freezing until the spray dries, usually one to two hours. Wilt Prufe is good to use on all plants, especially on 'Broad-leaved Evergreens' and all newly planted shrubs. Wilt Prufe is also great to spray on your Christmas trees to prevent them from drying out so fast inside the house.



**(4) If you need to cover your tender plants, cover them with burlap or with a bed sheet.** Do not cover plants with plastic. Black plastic absorbs the heat while clear plastic traps the heat. Excessive heat variations during the winter are often fatal to the less hardy plants you are trying to protect.

## Indoor Plant Lights



The gardening season is far too short for many gardeners. By using indoor plant lights, the gardening season can continue despite the weather conditions or the light limitations. You can use plant lights to start seedlings and cuttings, to overwinter tender plants, or to grow a special collection of plants such as succulents, orchids, or African Violets.

The basic requirements for indoor plant lighting are either fluorescent light tubes or incandescent light bulbs. The fluorescent lights are much better than the incandescent bulbs. Always buy full-spectrum light tubes when possible. These tubes are more expensive than the common fluorescent tubes but they have the full complement of light rays that plants utilize during their growth cycle.

You can buy pre-built light carts. We have many styles to choose from, ranging from table top fixtures to moveable carts on wheels. You can also build your own light cart to meet your specific needs. Be sure you can adjust your light fixtures whether you buy a pre-built cart or build your own. You will need to be able to change the light placement for different kinds of plants.

You must consider the light requirements of your plants to determine the correct light placement. The closer plants are to the light source the higher the intensity of the light they receive. Seedlings and other plants with high light-intensity needs, such as blooming plants and cacti, need the light to be within four to six inches of the leaves. Foliage plants, tolerant of lower light levels, will tolerate the light being a foot or more away from the leaves and still grow well.

Wherever you choose to place your plant lights, make certain the air temperature is suitable for the plants you're cultivating. It would be futile to grow tropical orchids, which like warmth, in a cold basement even with lights. Annual seedlings may germinate more rapidly in a warm environment, but their growth will be stockier and healthier if the temperature is kept cooler after germination.

Since plants require a period of darkness for good health it's wise to put your lights on timers, otherwise you may forget to turn them on and off as needed. **Plants need about fourteen to sixteen hours of light but they also need eight hours of darkness.**

## Boxelder Bugs

Boxelder bugs, elm beetles, and root weevils are all looking for a nice warm home for the winter. Most insects are harmless, but they can become a nuisance. They often congregate in large numbers on the south side of your home and then try to migrate inside, where it is a



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little warmer. As the temperature gets cold they will find any crack, hole, or open door to crawl through to find warmth. Prevent these bugs from getting inside by making sure all the cracks and crevices are properly caulked or sealed; the door threshold is notoriously a major entry point for many insect invaders. Check your screens to make sure they are secure. Unfortunately, you cannot keep all unwanted insects from entering open doors, so you will still have to contend with the occasional visitor.

Chemical control for these types of pests is difficult because they are not feeding on anything and they are preparing to hibernate for the winter. All chemicals must come in direct contact with each bug to kill them. There is no long-lasting, chemical for controlling these nuisance pests. You have to spray often to kill *boxelder bugs*. One of the best chemicals we have found to kill these unwanted pests is **Eight**, a fairly safe, organic insecticide. This chemical kills insects fast and does not stain your siding or brick. **Sevin** and **Malathion** are also effective in controlling these insects and most other nuisance pests. Spray weekly until the insect numbers are reduced, and then spray monthly to keep any stragglers under control.

## White Paint on Trees

Many gardeners wonder why fruit farmers paint their tree trunks white. Why not black, or some other color that attracts heat?

Plants do not produce heat. Each plant's temperature is at or near the air temperature all the time. Paint, tree wrap, and blankets serve a different purpose for plants than for animals. These protective devices help prevent the plant from getting too warm in the winter, not too cold. If a plant gets too warm in the day and then gets too cold at night there is a much greater risk of winter injury than if the plant stays cool all the time. You will often notice that more plants die on the south side of a house than die on the north side, for this very reason.

The purpose of white paint, or white tree wrap, is to reflect, not absorb, the sun's warmth. Snow reflects the sun's rays onto the brown tree bark, making the bark warmer than it should be. Your goal with white paint is to reverse the effect of the snow. Try to reflect the heat away from the tree trunk.

## Wrapping Trees

The only time wrapping a tree is really necessary is when your tree is young - that's when it's most vulnerable. Wrapping a tree helps protect it from winter sunburn. Even though the temperature is cold, young trees can still get sunburned on a sunny day. If you have ever been ice fishing or skiing on a bright, sunny day, you know how easy it is to get sunburned.

Thin-barked trees such as peach, nectarine, locust, flowering cherry, linden, and some Japanese maples are especially sensitive to sunburn, even when they are older. The best time to apply tree wrap is in the late-fall. Remove the tree wrap early in the spring to allow for new growth during the season. If you leave your tree wrap in place year round, it can hinder growth. It can also become a home for insect pests.

## Don't Forget the Lawnmower

Before you are finished for the year, be sure you check your lawnmower, lawn edger, chain saw, and any other gas powered equipment in your shed. If you do not drain the gasoline from the engine, or put fuel stabilizer in the gas, you will be making a quick trip to the lawnmower repairman next spring. The gasoline will plug up the carburetor and the lawnmower will be extremely hard to start.

## Where do bugs go during the winter?

As fall fades into winter, yards and gardens should have been cleaned up and plants should have gone dormant. **What about the insect pests?** Most insects will be protected and will be ready to reappear next season. Many common insect pests actually overwinter in plant debris left in the garden, so it does pay to clean the garden at the end of the season. For example, cabbageworms that may have infested your cabbage and broccoli plants during the summer spend the winter as pupa in plant debris left in the garden. Cucumber beetles overwinter as adult beetles in the same debris. The tomato hornworm also spends the winter as a pupa in plant debris. Lawn grubs safely rest as a larvae in the soil just below the frostline in the soil.

Other nuisance insects (boxelder bugs, snails, centipedes, earwigs, millipedes) overwinter in sheltered areas such as under plastic or weedcloth left in the gardens, in the siding of your house or in a pile of firewood. These insects may also become active pests during the warm spells of winter.

Some caterpillars overwinter on the actual tree they eat during the summer. Eggs are deposited in cracks in the bark or in the crotches of branches, ready to hatch next spring. Aphids also deposit their eggs in these same areas. You may have seen a willow branch completely engulfed with large black aphids in the fall, or an apple tree completely covered with the cottony covering of the woolly apple aphid. They are laying eggs.

Most borers that attack trees and shrubs spend the winter as larvae inside the host tree. They spend much of the warm weather, during the winter, tunneling around and eating the tree.

During winter, or at any time of the year, we can't forget about *cockroaches*! No one likes to see these brown, shiny, flat-bodied creatures scurrying around the house, but you would need a lot of luck to eliminate them completely. Cockroaches have been around for thousands of years and are among the most persistent insects. Be glad that the cockroaches we have in Utah are not as big as the ones that found in the southern US and in Central America. A six inch cockroach is not unheard of.

In the United States, five or six species of cockroach are common. They are mainly nocturnal, which means they are active at night, and they feed on a wide variety of plant and animal products. They prefer high temperatures and they have a low tolerance for the cold.

Spend some time in the fall controlling these pests and you may save yourself some time and money next spring.

## Household Ants

While in South Africa, I left an open candy bar on top of my dresser. Within a few hours there was a trail of '**BIG**' ants going up the wall, across the ceiling and down the other wall into the floor with '**BIG**' pieces of my candy bar. Have you ever noticed a crumb from yesterday's sandwich sprouting legs and moving across the kitchen counter? What was yesterday's crumb is now a feast for an army of ants. Ants usually take regular routes to and from their nest and their food source by creating a chemical scent trail. Instead of leaving a trail of bread crumbs to find their way back home, they leave a scent trail to find their way back to the bread crumbs.

Ants can be common pests in homes. Damage from ants varies. Most ants are primarily just a nuisance; they cause little damage. However, carpenter ants can weaken wooden struc-



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tures. Unlike termites, ants can nest in wood but they do not eat the wood. Ants have a wide range of nesting habits and food preferences. Some ants build nests in soil producing characteristic mounds, while other ants nest in homes behind moldings, baseboards, under countertops and in other similar places. Still others, like carpenter ants, nest in decaying wood.

Not all ants found outdoors become pests indoors. Outdoors, ants are important in aerating the soil and in seed dispersal of many wildflowers. Outdoor ant colonies generally do not require any kind of control.

Inside, ants become a nuisance. They like to eat sweets, fats, starches, grains, and other foods, including meat. That's why they hang out in the kitchen. They may be nesting either inside or outside. They can nest in walls, under floors and even in potted plants. Most indoor ants do not cause any structural damage to buildings.

Spraying a pesticide on the occasional ant foraging for food is only a temporary fix. However, spraying ant crawl ways, tunnels, and the ant nest may help eliminate the problem. Permethrin pesticides provide a safe chemical control for ants if used correctly. Two other excellent indoor sprays are **Bioganic Crawling Insect Killer** and **Concern Citrus Home Pest Control**. These are not toxic chemicals and they do not leave a chemical residue. In fact, **Bioganic Crawling Insect Killer** has a strong clove smell that is quite pleasant and **Concern Citrus Home Pest Control** has a pleasant citrus odor.

Ant traps and baits can also be effective. Put the traps under the sink, in the food closets, or behind the drawers in your kitchen. The **Grant Company** makes an excellent ant trap that attracts ants and then sends the poison back to the ant hill with the soldiers. Do not set baits where small children or pets can reach them. A mixture of boric acid and honey is also a safe, attractive bait that may help control your ant population.

## Insect Problems in Firewood

Firewood, in addition to being a source of energy for us, is also attractive to insects as a source of food and shelter. For the most part, infested wood will not lead to problems. However, many questions arise when you hear noises coming from your wood pile, or when you see 'boring dust' being pushed out of the wood, or when you find insects crawling around the pile of firewood.

There are four types of wood-infesting insects: ants, termites, wood borers and bark beetles. Generally speaking, the first three types are found in the older, dead wood. The bark beetles are found in living trees, and in trees that have recently died.

Ants and termites are generally not a problem in our area unless you bring a lot of them home from the mountains. Termites are small, white insects that look like ants. Both ants and termites live in older wood and can move into your home if the conditions are right. Termites are more damaging to homes than ants and need immediate attention if you find them. Burn the wood as soon as these insects are found and move your woodpile away from your home if you suspect these insects are present. You can spray with an insecticide, and cover the wood pile with a plastic tarp to keep both the fumes and insects inside the tarp.

Wood borers are not a problem to houses but they can cause anxious moments when their feeding noises are detected, or when their dust from 'boring' begins to pile up around firewood. The adults may emerge from the wood and become a

nuisance. Wood borers are either beetles or non-stinging wasps. They can be a problem if you have the same type of plants in your yard because the wood borers prefer dead or dying trees of the same species. However, the chance of borers from firewood finding suitable material to infest is remote. Generally, burning firewood within a year after it is gathered will help prevent this problem.

Bark beetles in firewood present the biggest problem to living trees but they do not affect your home. Bark beetles live in the bark, or in between the bark and the heartwood. Problems arise when you stack infested firewood next to living trees. For example, a lodgepole pine, commonly infested by the pine beetle, that is stacked near another pine tree could lead to infestation of all pine trees in your yard. When bark beetles infest a tree, they release a pheromone that will attract more bark beetles to the tree. This is the biggest problem with firewood. Most firewood that is brought home is from dead trees that have recently died from bark beetle damage. Unless the wood is very old, the bark beetles are usually still in the wood.

Several options are available to control bark beetles. One option is to completely strip the bark off the firewood. Another option, is to lay the firewood in an open area, exposed to the summer sun, for 2-3 days and then turn it to expose the bark on underside. High temperature will kill insects in the bark. Another option is to cover your infested woodpile with clear plastic during summer to create lethal, high temperatures inside the plastic. Chemical insecticides are also available for bark beetle control. Spray the wood and then cover it with plastic long enough for the chemical to kill the pests. If you use chemicals, make sure your fireplace is properly equipped to handle any chemical fumes, or wait long enough for the insecticide to dissipate before burning it.

## Lucky Bamboo

The Chinese say that Lucky Bamboo will bring good fortune to your home or business. In Asia, it is given as a gift to those starting a new business, or to someone moving into a new home, or to anyone at any time of celebration. Since Lucky Bamboo requires no natural light it is especially nice in a home or office; in an area where no other plants can grow. It is very easy to grow and will live for many years. Unlike its name, Lucky Bamboo is not a bamboo at all; it just looks like bamboo. Lucky bamboo is a dracena - *Dracaena sanderana*.

Ancient Chinese tradition has it that the number of lucky bamboo stalks in a container have different meanings and bring different beneficial factors into your life. Everyone loves to receive good luck and beautiful decorations for the home or office. Lucky bamboo is the perfect gift, it represents good luck and it is extremely easy to care for. Give one to your friends and neighbors.

We have a Lucky Bamboo Care sheet available, stop by and pick one up, or download a copy from our website.

## Winter Chemical Storage

Your chemical storage area should be secure from unwanted visitors, both human and animals. Good lighting and ventilation are important to consider. Proper ventilation can prevent volatile chemicals from contaminating other materials in storage. Store flammable products outside living areas and away from ignition sources. Keep chemicals and fertilizers cool and dry. Extreme temperature variations can cause unwanted problems such as



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frozen, ruptured containers, or hot, volatile gases. Too much humidity or moisture may cause paper bags and metal containers to disintegrate prematurely. Do not store bags of fertilizer directly on the floor as it can absorb moisture. Wet fertilizer turns into hard bricks making it unusable.

Store all chemicals in their original containers that have legible labels. Do not ever transfer chemicals into an empty food container. Do not use an empty pesticide container to store food or water, even if the container has been thoroughly washed. Do not store pesticides near food, medicine, or cleaning materials.

One way to minimize pesticide storage problems is to plan ahead and buy fertilizers and pesticides one season at a time. The small containers that seemed 'expensive' in the spring may actually be the 'best buy' in the fall.

### Houseplants that Clean the Air

Do you remember what you learned about plants in your high school biology class? The part where you learned that all plants absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen?



Besides absorbing carbon dioxide, many houseplants can also absorb other chemicals that are common inside houses. **Formaldehyde, Benzene, and Trichloroethylene** are three of the most common chemicals found inside our houses. These chemicals, if present, are usually only found in very small quantities. They may not even be detectable in most homes, especially during the summer months when the windows and doors are open. Winter, when the doors and windows are kept closed, is the most likely time these chemicals may build up in the air. Many houseplants can absorb these chemicals and eliminate them.

**Formaldehyde** may be found in particle board, plywood, insulation, paper products (paper bags, paper towels, tissue paper), and in permanent press fabrics.

**Benzene** may be found in inks, paints, oils, plastics, rubber products, dyes, pesticides, detergents, pharmaceutical products, and in gasoline.

**Trichloroethylene** may be found in inks, paints, lacquers, varnishes, and in adhesives.

Some of the most popular houseplants are excellent air fresheners. Poinsettias can help remove formaldehyde. Chrysanthemums can remove benzene. Spider plants, Philodendrons, Aloe Vera, and Dieffenbachia can all remove formaldehyde. English Ivy, Pothos, and Dracena can remove trichloroethylene.

It's hard to imagine that something as simple as a houseplant can keep your home a little healthier; but it can. Of course, houseplants by themselves can't make your home completely chemical free, but they can make a difference. The more plants you have in the home the cleaner the air will be. The longer you keep your plants inside your house the more effective they will become. No matter where you live you can breathe a little easier when you surround yourself with **Mother Nature's Natural Air Fresheners - Houseplants.**

### Fungus Gnats - A Nuisance Pest

Controlling insect pests in houseplants can be aggravating and frustrating, especially fungus gnats. Fungus gnats generally do not kill houseplants. The adults are considered a nuisance pest because they just lay eggs, torment people, and die; they do not feed on the plants. Before they die, however, they do make themselves a nuisance. Adult fungus gnats are attracted to sources of carbon dioxide, which is why they like to fly around your mouth and nose. Fungus gnat larvae are the main problem and they feed on fungus that naturally grows in soil and in plant saucers.

The first step to get rid of adult fungus gnats is to eliminate the source. The adults will eventually disappear if you eliminate the larvae. Wash all your plant's saucers and the outsides of all



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## J&L Garden Center

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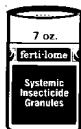
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your pots with a disinfectant of 10% clorox and water. Put a penny in the saucer after you clean it. The copper in water will sometimes control this insect. You can also apply an insecticide in the potting soil to kill the larvae. Some people will mix an insecticide, such as Permethrin, in the water and drench the soil every two or three weeks. We recommend spreading **Fertilome Systemic Houseplant Insecticide Granules** on the surface of each pot, covering it with a thin layer of soil, and watering it in. Both of these treatments produce an undesirable odor that may linger around the house for a few days so be sure to move the plants to an appropriate area before treating the plants.



Sometimes you can control fungus gnat larvae by just letting the soil dry out between waterings. The larvae need moisture to survive. Another method of fungus gnat control is to cover the soil with a 1/2" layer of coarse sand or fine gravel to smother the eggs and young larvae. This covering also prevents adults from laying more eggs in the soil. This method is probably the best solution for a long term control.

### Snow - a mixed blessing

Snow is a mixed blessing in the yard. When snow comes early, before the leaves are raked and the gardens are roto-tilled, it is a nuisance. When it comes at the right time it is one of the best, and cheapest, winter protectors available. Fluffy and light, freshly fallen snow is an excellent insulator. Snow contains millions of tiny air pockets that trap soil warmth in and keep cold weather out. Snow helps protect perennials, bulbs, groundcovers, and most other low grow-



ing plants from the alternating freezing and thawing cycles. Snow can also help prevent tender shrubs, such as azaleas, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, and other borderline-hardy shrubs from struggling, or dying, during extremely cold temperatures. It provides insulation from the cold weather and supplies the much needed winter moisture that most evergreen plants require.

Plants that have stems above the snow line may suffer some winter injury on the exposed parts. Some winter injury may simply be the lack of spring flowers. The first part of a plant that dies from winter injury are the flower buds, then the leaf buds, next the stems, and finally the roots.

Mulch is often used for the same purpose that snow provides, to help insulate plants from extreme temperatures, to help prevent the soil from heaving during the winter, and to help keep moisture in the soil. If we don't get enough snow to protect your plants then you need to provide some extra mulch.

### Fall Leaf Color - Did You Know?

The particular shade of orange, red, and purple fall color that is developed in leaves is related to the acid or alkaline condition of the sap inside the plant. If the sap is acidic, the color will be orange or red. With neutral sap the pigment turns light purple. When the sap is alkaline, a dark blue or purple color is evident.



The soil and water in this area is alkaline. If your plants aren't as bright red as you would like them to be, try watering them with a little vinegar and water solution. Mix one cup vinegar in five gallons of water. Apply this mixture once a month during the spring and summer. You must apply it at least six weeks before the fall colors start to show to influence the color.