

EAC NATURE NEWS

Brought to you by the Charlestown Township Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

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We hope you and yours had happy and healthy holidays

MISSION

The Charlestown Environmental Advisory Committee's (EAC) mission is to advise the Board of Supervisors on environmental issues, the protection and preservation of natural resources, the use of open land and creating inventories of natural areas with unique features. All of the aforementioned advice to be focused within the township and in the best interest and general welfare of its residents.

HAPPENINGS

Environmental Activities Coming Up

- Woods in Your Backward webinar series.

The Charlestown Environmental Advisory Committee encourages Charlestown residents to register for [The Woods in Your Backyard](#) webinar series, which is given by PennState Extension, to learn about how to be a

good land steward. If you do not have a lot of land, it can apply to garden maintenance and promoting a healthy environment in your gardening practices. If you are interested, register early as there is a limit to the number of attendees and it is open to all Pennsylvanians. The series goes from January until March. The cost is \$45 for nine webinars. Visit <https://www.cvent.com/events/woods-in-your-backyard-webinar-series/event-summary-909b1e6173294da09809d6b424e13920.aspx?i=b5bf0afd-65be-408f-8229-31711cd930fa> for more information and to register.

- Watershed Certification

You can certify your property as Watershed Friendly, including signage, at [Certify your Property | Nurture Nature Foundation](#). Remember to have supporting pictures ready when you complete the application form.

Did you Know....

What does winter gardening in the Northeast part of the country mean? Most of us probably do more garden viewing and monitoring in winter than actual gardening. The dark days of winter are a time to reduce our outside adventures and watch the brown trees and plants, hoping for an early spring. However, if you are one of those "ambitious outdoor-in-all-weather enthusiasts" there are some do's and don'ts to know about gardening in the winter.

Garden dos and don'ts are specific to the climate zone you live in. We are in zone 6/7 and should follow guidelines for planting in this zone.

<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>

The tips come from treehugger.com, <https://www.treehugger.com/winter-gardening-tips-4863366> and from <https://www.almanac.com/10-tips-prepare-your-garden-winter>

Also helpful is

https://www.gardensalive.com/category/you_bet_your_garden

Winter Dos

1. Continue to plant as long as the soil is soft enough to dig a hole. Bulbs are an excellent choice for early spring color.
2. Add mulch that is natural and not dyed. Shredded or even whole leaves are best. It will help keep root temperatures stable.
3. Add compost. It supplies organic nutrients to the soil (but no more than three inches thick).
4. Water. Watering in advance of a predicted freeze helps plants, especially potted plants and annuals, make it through a hard freeze because it allows plants to take up moisture before the ground is frozen and prevents water from reaching the root zone. Be sure to hydrate above-ground shoots as well as the roots.
5. Give container plants extra protection. If you can't bring your container plants inside, cover with a frost cloth or other heat retentive blanket and move pots and other containers close to the foundation of the house or under eaves.
6. Bring in houseplants if you can. Spray or wipe both sides of the leaves with a mix of mild soap (castille soap is excellent) and water. Avoid insecticides. Position plants indoors where they will receive indirect, bright light for at least five hours a day. Be sure to keep them away from drafts and heating vents and water sparingly because most houseplants do not actively grow in winter.
7. Cover vegetable gardens with cardboard, extra carpet, or hemp cloth. Avoid plastics and the environment will thank you.

Winter Don'ts

1. Don't fertilize. This is a time for garden plants to go dormant and rest. Forcing them to start new growth before the ground warms in the spring not only interrupts this period when they are rejuvenating but ice storms and temperatures below freezing or even hard frosts will kill tender new growth.
2. Skip your regular watering cycle. Only during dry periods, when the ground isn't frozen or covered with snow, a once-a-week deep watering is beneficial. New plantings especially need to be watered.

3. Don't worry about bulb foliage. Leaves of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs should be just fine during temperature dips.
4. Don't prune trees and shrubs right before winter.

Herbs in the Winter

Many herbs are hardy and will survive the winter.

1. Thyme is almost indestructible. It is a perennial that is dormant in the winter and revives itself in spring.
2. Sage needs no special treatment over winter. It should provide you with more fresh sage in the spring.
3. Oregano is a perennial that is somewhat hardy but needs some winter protection, for example a layer of straw mulch.
4. Chives are hardy perennials. If you dig up a clump in the fall, pot it and bring it inside you can have chives all winter.
5. Parsley will withstand a light frost. If you cover it lightly and find a place outside that is a bit protected from the elements it should come back.

What is going on down under in winter?

<https://www.treehugger.com/winter-gardening-tips-4863366>

Frozen soil is still teeming with life. "When things are looking bleak and you are not comfortable being outside, there are plenty of organisms that have evolved to survive the harsh conditions of winter," said Mary Tiedeman, a PhD student in Soil Microbiology at Florida International University.

Prolific among these organisms are the microscopic ones invisible to the human eye. These include bacteria, amoebas, fungi, as well as slightly larger ones such as earthworms.

One of the fun facts about microscopic organisms is that one teaspoon of [healthy soil](#) can have more microscopic organisms than there are people on the planet. There are billions and billions of these organisms in the soil year-round. They perform important functions in the garden, and all have developed biological or evolutionary strategies to survive winter. What is amazing is that life finds a way in spite of harsh conditions. Plants have adaptive strategies to protect themselves in winter and these strategies differ by climate zones.

Of course, some of the microscopic organisms in your garden will die. "But even certain fungi or bacteria that might not survive winter pass on their DNA to the generations to come by leaving spores or reproductive material in the soil," Tiedeman said. "That material will bud and regenerate new organisms once the environment becomes more suitable for growth."

Suggestion of the Month courtesy of

<https://www.motherearthliving.com/cooking-methods/buying-cooking-with-winter-spices>

Winter spices offer bold flavors. For pie crusts and savory dishes, use a light touch. Fruits and sweets are better able to stand up to these rich spices, so you can use a heavier hand in pie fillings, fruit custards and other desserts. When flavoring, it helps to think of allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg as sweet; cardamom, cloves, ginger and star anise as pungent; and coriander as peace-making. Be sparing with the pungent spices, and add coriander whenever you want to bring sweet and pungent notes into harmony. Spices' flavors come from their volatile oils, which dissipate in time as they are exposed to air. All spices should be stored in airtight containers away from extremes of light, heat and humidity. Whenever possible, buy small quantities and grind your own whole spices to ensure fresh flavor.



Charlestown Oaks Townhome Backyard in Winter

"I prefer winter and Fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape--the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show. "

--Andrew Wyeth