

Happy New Year, Hope & Celebration

Woo hoo! It's a new year and there is so much to be hopeful for. Days are getting longer, a COVID-19 vaccine is happening, we'll have a new administration, and gardeners are making plans for spring! (Please excuse the excessive exclamations, but it has been almost one year since we have celebrated anything.)

Speaking of celebrations, we are only one year away from our 100th Anniversary, doing business at the same location in North Berkeley. This will be a big one, and event planning has begun. To whet your appetite, pique your curiosity, and otherwise get your attention, we'll have cool stuff happening for gardeners and non-gardeners alike. Over the course of 2022, there will be free stuff for shoppers, then in August, September and October, each week we will offer live music, guest speakers, workshops, art exhibits, food, fun, and more. The last time we had a blow-out like this was 25 years ago. Stay tuned for updates on our centenary.

As for seasonal chores in the garden right now, here is one that you can skip. A few years ago, I posted a True/False quiz

for Bay Area gardeners, and one statement seems worthy of repeating.

"You must prune your fruit trees in winter when they are dormant." The answer is FALSE. A deciduous tree pruned at this time of year will grow rapidly back to its original size... perhaps too big for a small garden and too tall to reach the fruit. **Now** is the ideal time to prune *only* if you have a large garden with full-size trees, the ability to pick fruit 20 feet above your head, and a way to use

or dispose of a pile of branches. How many Bay Area residents have these options? I secretly envy those who do, but they have their work cut out for them. For all the rest of you, consider summer pruning. So take a break, relax, be lazy, and don't feel guilty.

For obvious reasons we are not offering our pruning workshops for roses and fruit trees. There is talk of putting videos online for you to check out, but that will come later this year. By the way, now is a good time to prune roses. In this issue read *Rose Pruning for Hesitant Beginners* which covers most of the basics. Get out and get dirty!

— Paul

The Frost Poem*

(not Robert)

The windshield's dry.
The stars are in sight.
The trees are all quiet.
Expect frost tonight.

—Anonymus



Winter hours: 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, no entry after 4:20 pm • Closed Thursdays

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WEEKEND SPECIALS

Jan. 2-3

Sluggo Bait

All sizes ~ 20% OFF

Jan. 8-10

Primroses

4 in. pots ~ \$2.99 *reg. 3.95*

Jan. 15-17

E.B. Stone Organics Fertilizers

4 lb. box ~ \$7.50 *reg. 9.99*

Jan. 22-24

Azaleas

#1 size cans ~ 30% OFF

Jan. 29-31

Camellias

#5 size cans ~ 30% OFF

Feb. 5-7

Strawberries

bareroot plants ~ \$1.99 *reg. 2.95*

Feb. 12-14

Vegetable Seeds

all varieties ~ 25% OFF

Feb. 19-21

Fish Fertilizer

32 oz. bottle ~ \$9.75 *reg. 12.99*

Feb. 26-28

Bareroot Plants

trees & shrubs ~ 30% OFF

LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND.
NO DELIVERIES ON SALE MERCHANDISE.

NEW ARRIVALS

Citrus 'Mandarin'

Just because it feels cold outside is no reason to avoid these icons of the Chinese New Year. We love these Oranges because of their complex flavor and attractiveness in the garden. Close to a dozen varieties are typically available at this time of year.

#3 size cans \$54.95 to \$59.95

Summer Blooming Bulbs

A bit of planning now will keep your bulb garden going through August. Check out our selections of Dahlias, Lilies, Gladiolus, Freesias, Ranunculus, Sparaxis, Tuberoses, Callas and more.

Bulk and packaged call for pricing

Ecoforms Pots

Made from renewable grain hulls and natural binding agents, these heat & pressure-molded pots come in array of sizes, shapes, and colors. They will last up to 5 years outdoors. A great plastic alternative, they contain no wood or petroleum products.

Various shapes & sizes \$2.99 and up for decorative pots

Diospyros 'Fuyu'

This persimmon is the most popular non-astringent variety. They are firm-ripe, eaten much like apples, and highly ornamental. Be patient as these trees will take 6 to 8 years to bear a good-sized crop to maturity, but it will be worth the wait. Spectacular fall color!

Bareroot \$69.95



Contemplating Navels

(and other Citrus in the event of a frost*)

Although uncommon, local winter temperatures do occasionally drop below freezing, so before any such big chill hits, it's good to spend a little time contemplating how to protect your navel oranges and other citrus from frost damage.

Should a frosty dip in temperature be forecast, do water all your citrus (and the rest of the garden, especially frost-tender plants.) The roots of thirsty plants suffer much more from icy-cold soil than do hydrated ones. Shelter potted plants in a warm spot inside, if possible, or under an overhang. If that's impractical, cover the foliage with a frost blanket/row cover such as **Harvest Guard** (120 square feet @\$18.00). Citrus in the ground should also be protected with frost blankets, which can remain on the plants during the day. [Other fabrics may be used for this purpose, but should not touch the foliage, and should be removed during the day.]

Another interesting, optional practice is to spray fertilizer monthly on your citrus through the winter. Don Dillon, co-founder of Four Winds Citrus Growers, has said that winter foliar feeding can be helpful for a couple of reasons: plant roots can't take up nutrients very well from the soil when temperatures are low, but the trees are able to take in nutrients through their leaves. Also, even if tender new growth produced by this feeding is hit by frost, those damaged leaves will still act as a protective frost shield for the rest of the plant (providing you don't prune them away too soon.) This liquid fertilizer could be **Citrus Grower Blend** (from Grow More, 10 oz. @ \$6.99), or an all-organic alternative like fish emulsion and kelp (**EBS Fish Emulsion with Kelp**, 32 oz. @\$12.99). Be sure the plants are well watered before applying the fertilizer.

Finally, don't fret too much if a freeze "prunes" your pommelo or glacées your grapefruit. With nurturing, many damaged citrus recover quickly after a cold snap.

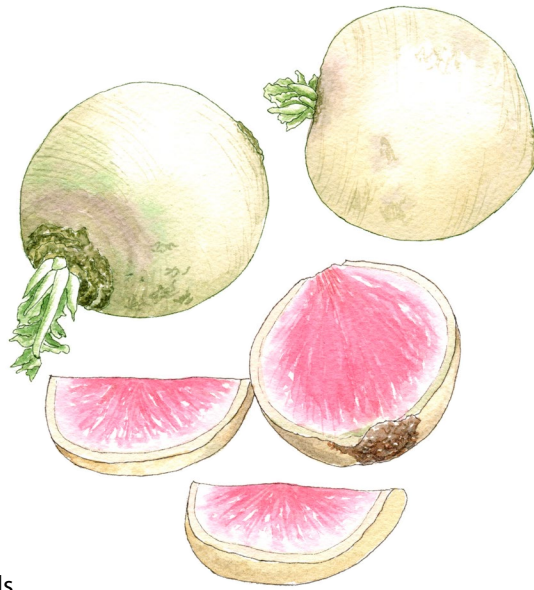
Food for Thought

The term 'seasonal' produce takes on new meaning for Bay Area gardeners. In early December, I was enjoying a salad of fresh mozzarella with tomatoes from my home garden. A few ripe homegrown strawberries that the birds had overlooked topped a bowl of ice cream after that very same meal.

By planning, we can extend the range of harvest time and increase the selection beyond that already offered by such wonderful produce purveyors as Berkeley Bowl or Monterey Market; we can also ensure freshness similar to that found at our local farmer's markets. BHN buyer Che has made his choices of small-fruit and berry plants to be available during these months. Among his selections, you will find eleven different blueberries, ten cane berries, grapes, a mulberry, a kiwi, four flavors of strawberry, and a couple of fine garden asparagus. Later, as the weather warms he will turn his attention to the fruits of summer...so make haste. Plan now and keep your kitchen stocked through the rest of 2021.

— Paul

Radishes: The Reliable Year-Round Crop



Want to grow a zesty snack that can be directly sown in the garden at any time of the year? Radishes are a perfect choice. They thrive in the Bay Area's mild climate. Most radishes reach maturity in less than two month's time. These peppery root veggies make a great addition to salads, soups and sandwiches, and they're delicious straight from the garden!

Native to Asia and Europe, radishes have long been cultivated on both continents. Selective breeding of radishes has resulted in an abundance of varieties. They can be long or short, thick or thin, and have either a mild or spicy flavor. Colors range from black, purple, red, or pink, to white. Many can be found at your local grocery store; many more can be grown from seed. The following are a few recommended varieties that can be found in the BHN seed section.

'Holmes' Royal Red' ~ A classic red variety introduced to the U.S. before 1950. Early maturing (read, fast turn-around). Roots are entirely red and round, each measuring just over 1 inch. Crisp, juicy, and mild.

'Garden Party' Mix ~ A virtual rainbow of colorful varieties including purple, pink, red, white and gold. Add them for flavor and color to any green salad, or slice for eye-catching appetizers. A staff favorite!

'Watermelon' ~ (a.k.a. Beauty Heart or Red Meat) Probably the most spectacular looking of all radish varieties, it has a light green outside and a hot pink heart. It adds the perfect bit of flair and peppery sweet flavor to green salads.

'Karaine' or 'Miyashige White' Daikon ~ These carrot-shaped white radishes grow to six, or ten inches in length, respectively. They have a refreshingly crisp texture and mildly peppery flavor. They have long been used in the celebration of the Japanese New Year and are perfect for use in Namasu (pickled radish) and your miso soup. If you enjoy eating steak, try grated daikon with a little soy sauce as a garnish.

Like most root vegetables, radishes can only be purchased to start from seed. Small pots are not very accommodating to the bulky roots of these plants. With many radish varieties available, these warm peppery roots are worth a second look.

Happy sowing!

THE GARDENER'S CALENDAR

January Checklist

- › Plant cool weather veggies like Cauliflower, Broccoli, Collards, Kale and leaf crops.
- › Check your compost to make sure it isn't too wet or too dry.
- › Spend a Saturday morning cleaning and reconditioning garden tools.
- › Repot container plants that have gone 2 years or more in the same pot.
- › Get a jump on planting CA natives like *Ceanothus* or *Arctostaphylos*.
- › Prune Roses

February Checklist

- › Plant summer flowering bulbs like Begonias, Gladiolus, Lilies and Dahlias.
- › Turn in cover crops or green manure.
- › Finish pruning perennials.
- › Last chance for direct seeding of annuals.
- › Select winter flowering shrubs such as Forsythia, Chaenomeles, and Syringa.
- › Bareroot berries are a bargain: Strawberries, Blueberries, and Raspberries.

BHN Staff Q & A: What is your 2021 New Year's Gardening Resolution?

Kat ~ "Grow Ranunculus and other flowers for cutting in the growing space at my new rental."

Priska ~ "Add more cool houseplants to my cool Tiny House."

Alex ~ "Be successful at growing productive tomatoes."

Jason ~ "Grow as many edibles as possible on our small apartment patio."

Maddie ~ "Grow more medicinal herbs and other plants for tea."

Brandon ~ "Grow as much food as possible."

Miguel ~ "Learn more about Bonsai."

Susan ~ "Build and start a raised bed veggie garden."

Trevern ~ "Propagate more from other plants."

Meg ~ "Plant more pollinator-friendly and native plants."

Amy ~ "Fill in the growing space along the fence line between me and the neighbors."

Ellie ~ "Nurture my Avocado tree back to thriving."

Rose Pruning For Hesitant Beginners

- 1 WHEN to prune:** The best time to prune most roses in the Bay Area is in January, when they should be dormant. Many of our roses will still be struggling valiantly to bloom, but they actually need the rest, and should be forced to nap against their wills like exhausted toddlers. The exception to the January rule is roses that only bloom once in spring: these should be pruned right after they finish flowering. It's ok to deadhead and cut back dead or weak canes any time of the year, but avoid serious pruning in November or December: it can encourage tender new growth just in time for a freeze, and will awaken the plants just when they should be dozing off.
- 2 WHAT you need:** Invest in a sharp, comfortable pair of hand clippers and a good, thick pair of thorn-resistant gloves. Wear tough outer clothes that won't get snagged (never prune in a sweater, especially a bulky hand-knit sweater, says the voice of sad experience). I like to keep a large tip bag or debris can handy for the clippings. Welding masks are optional, unless you're planning to prune an enormous overgrown viciously thorny three-story high climbing rose. I always keep a pair of Sliver Gripper tweezers in my pocket.
- 3 WHY you're pruning:** You'll do a better job if you have a basic understanding of your purpose. First, your mission is to remove any dead, weak, or sickly plant material that can drain energy and carry diseases over to the next season. This means any twigs skinnier than a pencil have to go, and all leftover leaves should be removed. Second, you want to increase airflow to the center of the plant, and open it to more sunlight. Air and sunlight will prevent fungal diseases next spring. Third, on the modern roses, you're going to remove spent under-wood that will no longer produce flowers, to prevent the plant from becoming leggy at the base.
- 4 WHEN to prune hard:** The modern Hybrid Tea roses and Floribundas will only produce flowers on the next season's growth, so you'll want to get rid of all of this year's growth. Grit your teeth, steel your nerves, hold your breath, and cut these bushes back hard, leaving only about 6" of canes at the base. I know it's scary at first, but trust me; this will be the best thing you can do for these roses.
- 5 WHEN to prune lightly:** Antique roses, English roses, and many shrub roses don't thrive on the radical hard pruning that the modern roses need. Large, arching canes that curve gracefully up and over towards the ground should not be butchered. Thin them, and lightly prune the lateral shoots, leaving the main canes intact. Remove canes that crisscross the middle of the plant or rub against another cane.
- 6 WHEN to skip pruning:** Very young roses need time to grow before they get cut back a lot: with all roses except the Hybrid Teas and Floribundas, skip a pruning season, to let them fill out and develop their natural shape. Some of the large, wild

ramblers never need to be pruned: 'Climbing Cecile Brunner' and 'Lady Banks' are two examples. Some climbers, like 'Climbing Iceberg' and 'Climbing Peace' bloom only on old wood (last spring's new growth will be next spring's old wood), so pruning will prevent spring flowering.

- 7 HOW to prune climbers:** As with arching canes, the natural form of a climber is part of its beauty, so the long canes shouldn't be shortened or cut back much. All climbers need to be trained, and retrained: make sure the canes don't go straight up, or flowers will only bloom at the very top. Training a cane away from the vertical, so it grows horizontally or diagonally, breaks the flow of nutrients to the tip and promotes flowering lateral shoots all along the cane. These laterals can be pruned back to two or three nodes. Get rid of any unruly canes that insist on obstructing walkways or threatening innocent bystanders.

- 8 WHERE to angle the cut:** The angle is more critical on some varieties, such as Hybrid Teas, whose canes tend to die back if they're not properly slanted to shed moisture. Cutting at an exact 45-degree outward angle is an impressive habit to develop, but not a desperate necessity in most cases, so don't bother with a protractor. The same is true of trying to choose an outward facing bud. The direction of the axillary bud (at the junction of leaf & cane) indicates the direction the new cane will probably grow, and ideally you'd like it growing away from the center. But the Murphy's Law of Rose Pruning says there will not be an outward facing bud anywhere on the particular cane you're tackling, and besides, canes are prone to mid-life crises that cause them to suddenly turn in different directions for reasons that elude science. In other words, life is too short to lose much sleep over being exact. Some professional rosarians like to prune with a chain saw.

- 9 WHAT to remember:** Relax and have fun. It's not as complex or tricky as most of the books make it look. "Pruning a rose bush is not unlike giving a home haircut to a small child; you do the best you can, secure in the knowledge that if it turns out odd-looking, new growth will quickly hide your mistakes...few plants are as forgiving of beginner's efforts as are roses," says Liz Druitt in *The Organic Rose Garden*.

