

Some things to do in the winter garden.

Dec 2016

It may seem like yardwork is slowing down now that most of the leaves have fallen and the grass is growing slower but now is the time to take advantage of winter dormancy. This is the time to move plants, plant bare root plants and do the majority of your pruning.

From December through late February local nurseries will have bare-root plants. These are plants that are dug while they are dormant, and are sold with their roots exposed. Often they are more affordable than containerized plants, and they are definitely easier to handle. You'll find fruit trees, cane berries, asparagus, artichoke crowns, rhubarb, kiwi, strawberries, grapes, roses and vines available as bare-root plants. If you are stressed with holiday activities, getting out in the garden and planting can help get you in a better frame of mind. If you are short of time, ask the nursery to hold the plants until after the first of the year. This gives you an opportunity to prepare the planting hole when the ground is pliable but not soggy and to enjoy the planting process.

January is also time for winter pruning, make sure to space your tasks between rains so that pruning cuts have a chance dry out. Wait to prune your apricot trees until mid-summer when there is no chance of rain for weeks. This prevents Eutypa dieback that commonly kills branches or whole apricot trees.

This time of year is also a good time to prune back ornamental grasses and perennials that were not cut back in fall. And it is the best time to prune out the old canes from cane berries such as raspberries and blackberries. If you plan to move a plant or dig it up and divide it, January and early February are the best times for this.

Another winter chore is treat fruit trees with dormant sprays. Apply a horticultural oil to control scale, mites, aphids, and other insects and a copper based spray to control leaf curl in peaches and nectarines. Once again, check the weather and make certain that there is at least 24 hours of dry weather and around the application. When spraying the tree with dormant sprays make sure that you follow label directions and wet the entire tree until the branches are dripping.