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Dear Gardening Guys and Gals,

I just wanted to send you a little note to remind you that Jan. 15 thru Feb. 15 are, in my opinion,

the busiest 30 Gardening Days on the Calendar for Zone 7 and the Mid South. That is...if you want the rest of the year to be easy.

I know...you are saying,"But it is soooooooooooooo colllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllld!!!" Well honey! Most of us look better in a sweater...and you can't get naked enough to stay cool here in the Summer...and the Plants Like It ...and you will stay ahead of the weeds. Need I say more???

Here is a brief list of things to do this month, If you have not already. In order:

Finish processing your leaves. (Rake and Bag. Mow in Beds . Mow with bagger/ use as mulch. 1-2".)

Put down a Pre emerge for weeds. Corn based preferred. (The chemical ones wreaked havoc in my garden.) (Omit this step if and when you are diligent with Feb. Mulching.)

Fertilize. Use 12-6-6 or 14-7-7 Time release mixed with Blood Meal. (You mix them to keep varmints out.)
(Stringers and Dan West are very well versed in all fertilizers. Visit them.)

Mulch. Don't skimp! This step will SET YOU FREE! 1-2" on trees and shrubs. 1" on perennials. Use HARDWOOD MULCH. It does not wash. (If you have time and money you can treat your new or special plants to an inch of REAL MANURE as well...Yellow Bags. "Pure Tex" and "Black Kow". Put manure down under mulch. If you are a fantastic! gardener and don't have any weeds...just use manure.

Prune Trees and Prune or Trim Shrubs. Ladies! This Job Is For YOU!!! Women have a better eye, more patience and your Husband will just turn them all into mutilated meatballs. (My apologies to the men who are true gardeners.) Prune...that is, sculpt, your young trees to avoid your head, create an arch, give them character. Do not trim or top them. (As in Crepe Murder!) (Oy!) Call an arborist when it can not be safely reached from the ground with an extension saw or pruners.

Trimming. If your landscape is well designed you should not have to do much if any trimming. If you have shrubs that require frequent trimming now would be a good time to remove them. Don't keep them. Replace them with the right plant for the size and space requirements. You might want to trim hard...to the ground any old shrubs that just lack vigor. Now is best for renewal as they will grow vigorously from Mar. Thru May. (If you can not stand to sacrifice any flowers...wait until just after they bloom.)

You may want to do some trimming or pruning on your vines. Consult the web for precise treatment of your particular vine. In a very GENERAL recommendation. Trim your Clematis in half. And tidy your other vines by 6". (like trimming your bangs.) Pruning is an art form. Difficult to describe in an email. I highly recommend getting a good book and studying it. (Try "The Pruning Book by Lee Reich.)

Renew Mulch and Gravel Paths. Or build new ones. Hardwood mulch does not wash. Make them 3-4' wide and 3-4" tall for walking paths. Pea Gravel is nice and warm in color. I mulch first then cover with an inch of Pea Gravel. It will not wash if it is level. #14(??) crushed dark grey limestone is also very nice. Place a few large flagstone occasionally throughout for beauty. (A few are affordable. Buy the good stuff. Bluestone.)

Hope I haven't forgotten anything.

Remember...your garden will be ready for spring and you will be ready for the Hammock.

And you can Read, Sleep and Dream...Best Wishes. Diane Meucci

no nonsense plants and gifts

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