

## Country Walk Gardening Club Tips-December 2010

Twas' the season of giving and all through the garden,  
Petals fell upon the ground as it began to harden.  
I had settled in front of my computer, just grasped my mouse,  
When I heard a loud racket from outside the house.  
I rushed to the garden, my gnomes sitting hats swept askew,  
It was plain to see that Country Walk's Secret Santa had just been through!  
Staked to a plant marker was one tiny note,  
I pulled free the letter and read what he wrote:  
"You tended the weeds, gave birds their seed.  
Turned the compost, and shared your tomatoes.  
You didn't even yell or cry at the lack of potatoes.  
Because of your love for all things that grow, roses to sage,  
I have created just for you this special wish.  
Treat yourself to something nice  
Or cross off the gardener on your list,  
All Green Thumbs should get the things for which they wished."  
Merry Christmas to all of Country Walk!

Now that the Thanksgiving holiday is over and the football games have played, its time to do that last minute preparation for the winter. If you want your perennials to bloom next year make sure they are put to bed properly. In gardening terms, winter is defined as the time of year when most perennials become dormant. In our region this is around November to December. Dormancy is due to the cold. We don't have the snow that forms a blanket of protection so we need to provide a 3 inch blanket of mulch, either pine straw, cypress, or crushed leaves, all of which are organic. The mulch protects plants from unusual cold spells and helps to maintain a uniform temperature so that the soil does not thaw out prematurely and expand when there is frosts and ice particles.

Before adding the mulch for the winter, make sure your garden beds are clean as possible. Clear away dead foliage and destroy all weeds. Spread the mulch just after the soil freezes. Now, step back and take a look at your pristine garden. If you have been considering improvements, decide where you would like to place new perennials and put markers in these areas. Write the name of the intended plant on each marker; this will make spring planting much easier.

It's easy to cook up your own compost. Just layer organic materials-garden clippings, dry leaves, kitchen veggies scraps, shredded paper-add a dash of dirt to create a concoction that turns into humus which is the best soil builder around. You can buy a composter or make your own. A simple circular or square structure can be made from fencing wire. 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep to provide enough space for materials to heat up. Use untreated wood or metal fence posts for the corners and wrap the fencing around them. I used limbs cut from Crape Myrtle trees which I formed into a square. (free) Stir with shovel several times a week. When the compost is ready scoop the compost from the bottom of the pile. Then re-pile the not yet decomposed materials.

**Use:** fruit scraps, vegetable scraps, eggshells, coffee grounds, grass/plant clippings, dry leaves, finely chopped wood/bark chips, shredded newspaper, straw, sawdust from untreated wood.

**Don't use:** Anything containing meat, oil, fat, grease, diseased plant materials, sawdust/chips from treated wood, dog/cat feces, weeds that go to seed, dairy products

The pine straw sale went well and we would like to thank each family that participated. Over 700 bales were delivered, and many of you have asked that we do it again.. It was a pleasure to meet each of you. Linda and I would like to give a special thank you to Amy McCauley and Darby, Dan Britt, and Ray Vaughn for so graciously delivering bales to the neighbors. And to Malcolm Paxon and Jim Taylor for unloading and loading all the bales. We truly appreciate each of you for your time and help.

Merry Christmas and Merry Gardening to all, Ann Taylor Country Walk Gardening