

Diggin' In The Dirt: Cold Weather Gardening

By Kim Camarda

I often think to myself, this year I am going to plan a winter harvest. I read about it, see others do it, go so far as to plan it out. Fresh salad at Christmas is my goal... but I have yet to dedicate the time to do it. Maybe next year.

These days there are all kinds of specialty patio-type fruits and berries. I grow a Sweet Bay Leaf tree-Laurus nobilis. It can be kept at 5 feet. Keep it protected on a patio close to the kitchen. It doesn't like to go below 25 degrees. There are patio versions of blueberries, citrus, etc. Look around the internet.

Steve Solomon, author of *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades*, says some lettuce varieties will hold to as low as 19 degrees Fahrenheit when grown under covers. Collards and kales taste even better when touched by frost. Once plants like kale and cabbage are hit by a good frost, you'll notice a remarkable difference in the taste. Most winter vegetables use sugar as a natural anti-freeze. As temperatures become colder, they fill their cells with sugar to prevent water in their systems from crystallizing. It's another added bonus to growing a winter garden!

There are many different methods to cold weather gardening. Some people grow in greenhouses, some in raised beds, some in straw bales-- and some window sill garden under full spectrum lights. Whatever the method, there are a few standard practices; temperatures, air movement, and light are very important. Without consistent temperatures, you'll have direct loss and damage of the plant itself; without air movement, you'll have loss to disease and insects; and without proper light, many plants will just sulk, not growing or producing.

-- Heating up your raised beds can be done with an underlayer of a hot compost material added be-

low the planting soil. This and a row cover can extend your season

-- Straw bale gardening is another alternative for winter. Using any good straw (don't use hay), put the bales so the string runs around the bale and not on the ground. This will also orient the bale so the stems run vertically as well. Since it's heavy after watering, think well about the placement of your bale garden. Wet the bales thoroughly, and they will heat up. This "cooking" will last about five to seven days. After that, the bales should start to cool down enough to plant. Pull any weeds you see, and do not fertilize. After the bales have cooled down, lay a two- to three-inch layer of compost and weed-free soil on top of the bales. Use a sharp trowel. Insert the started plant and let the bale spring back together again. Water the transplant in as you would in the garden. This method is better suited to winter beds as these bales use much more water than you would think possible. The orientation of the straw stems (vertical, remember?) means that much of the water simply runs out the bottom of the bale. Also, this method due to height is better for bush type plants and herbs. Anything tall will have trouble in a bale.

-- Cold greenhouses and cold frames are naturally heated by the sun. It's kept at averages of 40 degrees F through the winter. This type of house is used to overwinter tender plants and pots that may crack. It can be used to give you an early start with tender flowers, herbs, and vegetables. If you sprout seeds indoors, cold frames or

cold houses can also be used to harden the tender plants before they are planted outside.

-- A moderate greenhouse is kept 50-65 degrees F. This means that most plants you grow outdoors as tender perennials will survive through the winter in this environment. Some kinds of houseplants do well in warm greenhouses as well. A wide assortment of plants can be kept actively producing during the winter, including many herbs and vegetables. Good for growing beans, cucumbers, herbs, strawberries, some tomatoes.

-- Hotheouses maintain temperatures of 70-75 degrees F or warmer. They are built almost entirely translucent allowing for maximum light, and heat. Air warmed by the heat from hot interior surfaces, along with humidity from the existing moisture in plants and soil, is retained in the building by the roof and walls, creating an optimum growing environment for many tropical plant species. These types of greenhouses are typically used to grow tropical plants or crops.

Remember-- whatever method you choose, find out what works for you and stick with that.



Barnyard News: A Winter Agenda

By Dawn Carr

December, wow, how fast time goes by!

The Christmas holidays are already here. This month, I would like to talk about a few items that should be on our Barn Agenda. The first thing is worming your

horse. Horses need to be wormed on a regular basis. If you feed a continuous wormer

on a daily basis, you will still need to give a broad spectrum purge wormer twice a year.

If you worm with a paste three times a year, you will need to rotate. Keep in mind that de-wormers come with different active ingredients, each of which is effective against

different types of worms. Some of the things to consider when choosing the right wormer are: season, pasture load and pals, age of animal, travel and, of course, location. If you are unsure which is right for your horse, talk to your veterinarian. Your horse doctor will know what's best for your horse. A good time to ask is when you schedule your pre-winter dental check. When heading into the winter, exams are important for optimal health.

The second item I want to cover is Equine Manual Therapy. I was very fortunate to actually see this work. I have a thoroughbred off the track that kept tossing his head when I was riding. At a clinic I attended, Steve Ensign was there and picked my horse out for a free demonstration. Chuck (my horse) loved it! He stood there with his lip hanging down. Steve did cold laser therapy and used an activator on Chuck's body. After he was finished with him and I saddled Chuck back up, I was amazed at the difference. No more head tossing! I even

got him to collect up and hold his head in the correct position. So I decided to give Steve another try, but this time at my barn. I knew if Chuck was going to really like it, it would show at my barn. Sure enough, the same response. Chuck gladly stood and enjoyed his therapy. I have never seen a horse lick his lips so much or pass so much gas! It really did work. I also gave it a try on my daughter's horse, Brassy. For some reason, Brassy kept biting her bit and tensing up in her mouth. So we tried cold laser on her jaw and she loved it-- stretching her mouth (yawning) and licking her lips. It really did make a difference. If you are interested in this type of therapy, Steve Ensign can be reached at 503-703-2900.

One last item we should all think about is mud fever. This is a common condition that affects horses living or working in wet, muddy conditions. The skin over the pasterns and heels becomes infected, resulting in scabby or exudated lesions which can be very painful. Prevention is always the best treatment. Keep the legs dry and warm if possible, ensure they have access to a dry area and make sure bedding is dry. If you see your horse is suffering from mud fever and are unable to control it, your best treatment would be to talk with your veterinarian. Remember, mud fever can be very painful and, if left untreated, it can cause more serious injuries to your horse.

Dawn Carr is the owner of Double C Tack at 1103 Bridge Street in Vernonia. Dawn reminds everyone that if you have medical concerns about your horse or other animals, always consult your veterinarian. Dawn can be reached at 503-429-8225 or by email at dawn@doublectack.com.

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