

DIRT CHEAP

LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN SUPPLY

DIGGIN' THE DIRT

In this issue:

- Winter Garden Maintenance
- How to: Sheet Mulching
- New! Workshop series

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Fall/Winter 2009

Garden Tips

Mendocino's coastal gardeners have an extended growing season. Many summer vegetables will keep producing right up to Thanksgiving. This is a gift, though it can present some interesting gardening challenges. What do I plant now? What should I prune? What and when to dig and divide? And of course, our favorite fall and winter task, what can I simply leave alone for a few more weeks?

In this issue of *Diggin' the Dirt*, we will provide you with some of the benefits of our nearly 20 years of coastal gardening experience. We'll help you interpret the messages that your garden is sending, keep you in the loop for upcoming events and sales, and help you peek around winter's frosty wet corners to get a head start on spring. Keep this newsletter handy while you are contemplating the beauty of your efforts and how well they have combined with nature to make your garden special.

What to Plant Now

BRASSICAS — Now is the last chance to get winter and early spring brassica crops in the ground. You want them to grow just a little before winter sets in. Broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, chard and even collards are all hardy enough to survive our chilly wet winter while they wait for spring to burst forth with abundance!

ROOT CROPS — Potatoes, leeks, shallots, onions, garlic, beets, rutabagas, carrots and parsnips all take some time to mature. Get them in the ground now for an early spring harvest. Most varieties will work fine but to try to select those that are known for overwintering.

COVER CROPS — Sow a cover crop on the beds that you plan to work in the early spring. It is the most cost effective and easiest way to boost the fertility and improve the structure of your soil. Plant now and till it in when the ground is dry enough to work. There are many different commercial mixes available that include legumes and grasses, so just ask us and we'll help you decide which one is right for your garden.

HOW DO WE KEEP OUR GARDEN SO BEAUTIFUL?

Healthy soil begins with lots of organic matter. Healthy plants begin from the roots up. Add to your garden beds, fruit trees and perennials: Mendo Organic compost, E.B. Stone worm castings, OMRI-listed organic dry crumbles. This will create rich soil and plenty of food for your plants all winter long. The results will be healthy and vigorous plants next spring.

Visit our Website at: www.dirtcheapgardensupply.com

10 Great Gift Ideas for everyone on your list:

1. Felco® pruning snips
2. Teak garden bench
3. Great tools, rakes and pruners for the gardener
4. Japanese hand tools
5. Recycled fair trade outdoor floor rugs
6. Bamboo plates and bowls
7. Load of compost, mulch or planting mix
8. Seed starting mats and propagation trays
9. Gloves, scarves and Balinese crafts
10. Dirt Cheap Gift Card



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Winter Garden Maintenance

PERENNIALS

Perennials need some attention at this time of the year. Remove dead flowers, broken limbs and any diseased plants, or simply cut them back to a shape you like. Adding a layer of mulch now will keep the weeds down, help your soil from compacting through the winter, and a layer of mulch will protect tender roots from the occasional hard frost.

NO-FAIL SHEET MULCHING

Follow this fast, labor-saving technique for building beds and suppressing weeds for spring-ready soil.

Layer 1 – Slashed vegetation, spread out roughly six inches of nitrogen, mixed with lime rock dust. Use compost, blood or bone meal, glacial rock dust, seaweed, and green waste or get creative. Dampen layers.

Layer 2 – Cover manure with overlapping layers of cardboard or newspaper. Dampen.

Layer 3 – Throw all of your non-woody yard and food waste on top of the cardboard or newspaper (no meat or milk).

Layer 4 – Six inches leaves, grass, or straw.

Layer 5 – Four inches finished compost, seaweed, or well-rotted manure.

Top with a layer of high carbon material: wood chips, sea grass, sawdust, rice hulls, leaves, pine needles or straw.

DIGGING AND DIVIDING

Many gardeners don't know that they have a nursery at their fingertips, or perhaps more accurately, at the tips of their toes. Mature plants can be, and even should be, dug up and divided into smaller clumps each fall or spring. Doing this creates healthier gardens and a plethora of free plant "plugs". By following these simple steps over the next few weeks, we promise that early next spring, you'll have a new garden bed or two to enjoy!

First, select a mature clump or cluster by its appearance and size. If the center of the plant is sparse and the plant is starting to lean outward, or has overgrown its space and is crowding out its neighbors, you've found a good candidate for dividing.

Continued on page 3

NEW!

WINTER WORKSHOPS at Dirt Cheap Mark your calendar!

December 2 · 5:30–7:00 p.m.
Master Herbalist, Karin Uphoff,
of **Rainbow Connection**
Natural healing and health herbal workshop

January 9 · 1:00–3:00 p.m.
Bob Boddy, Descanso Nursery
Hosting a propagation workshop at 20100 Hanson Road, Fort Bragg

February 3 · 5:30–7:00 p.m.
Maggie Watson and Bruce Erickson of Mendocino Solar
Solar living workshop

March 3 · 5:30–7:00 p.m.
Matthew Starkweather, of Navarro River Farm
How to install a simple drip irrigation system

April 1, 5:30–7:00 p.m.
Sakina Bush, Noyo Food Forest
Presenting a composting workshop

More to come this spring!

Call to reserve your space now!

707-964-4211

Clip It Out! — Newsletter Special — Clip It Out!

Bring in this coupon for 10% off your purchase, through December 31, 2009!

WINTER GARDEN MAINTENANCE: Digging and Dividing — Continued from page 2

Carefully dig completely around the plant you have selected, starting just outside the drip-line (outer foliage). Once you have dug around the plant, slide your spade or your hand deeply under the plant, lifting gently until the whole plant comes loose. Then, depending on the tenderness of the plant, either pull clumps apart by hand using a slight up and down motion or, for woodier plants, use clippers, a saw or even a sharp shovel or spade to chop the plants apart.

Finally, generously blend aged compost into the hole where the plant will be replaced. Remember to tamp the soil before and after planting to help reduce settling. At this time you can “heel-in” or pot up your extra plant divisions to be placed later, or to be given out as gifts to your friends!

Below are the more-common plants that dig and divide well in the fall, organized by hardiness and common name.

Plants to Be Divided Now**These plants can be pulled apart by hand:**

Blanket flowers (*Gaillardia* spp.)
 Bleeding hearts (*Dicentra* spp.)
 Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)
 Columbines (*Aquilegia* spp.)
 Coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.)
 Cranesbills (*Geranium* spp.)
 Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)
 Deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*)
 Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sylvatica*)
 Hellebores (*Helleborus* spp.)
 Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium*)
 Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)
 Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*)
 Moss pink (*Phlox subulata*)
 Primroses (*Primula* spp.)
 Pussytoes (*Antennaria dioica*)
 Spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*)
 Stonecrop (*Sedum spectabile*)
 Sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)
 Violets, pansies (*Viola* spp.)
 Wormwood (*Artemisia ludoviciana*)
 Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Divide these plants with a spade or pitchfork:

African lilies (*Agapanthus* cvs.)
 Anemone (*Anemone* × *hybrida*)
 Bellflowers (*Campanula* spp.)
 Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* spp.)
 Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
 Catmint (*Nepeta* × *faassenii*)
 Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
 Daisy (*Leucanthemum* × *superbum*)

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.)
 Fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)
 Garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)
 Gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*)
 Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.)
 Hostas (*Hosta* spp.)
 Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum')
 Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis russeliana*)
 Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
 Ligularia (*Ligularia dentata*)
 Penstemons (*Penstemon* spp.)
 Perennial sage (*Salvia* × *superba*)
 Pinks (*Dianthus plumarius*)
 Poppies (*Papaver* spp.)
 Red hot poker (*Knifophia* spp.)
 Sedge (*Carex morrowii*)
 Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*)
 Silver grasses (*Miscanthus* spp.)
 Snakeroot (*Cimicifuga racemosa*)
 Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*)
 Tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*)
 Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
 Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)

Slice apart with a handsaw:

Astilbes (*Astilbe* spp.)
 Bear's breeches (*Acanthus spinosus*)
 Doll's eyes (*Actaea pachypoda*)
 Gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*)
 Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)
 Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)
 Lilyturf (*Liriope spicata*)
 Meadowsweets (*Filipendula* spp.)

Peonies (*Paeonia* cvs.)
 Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum odoratum*)
 Wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*)

Cut apart with a knife:

Caladiums (*Caladium* spp.)
 Dahlias (*Dahlia* cvs.)
 Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)
 Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
 Rhubarb (*Rheum palmatum*)
 Spurge (*Euphorbia griffithii*)
 Wild ginger (*Asarum europaeum*)

Plants that should NOT be divided:

Alyssums (*Alyssum* spp.)
 Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*)
 Carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*)
 Delphinium (*Delphinium* × *elatum*)
 Euphorbia (*Euphorbia characias* ssp. *wulfenii*)
 Foxgloves (*Digitalis* spp.)
 Garden sage (*Salvia officinalis*)
 Geraniums (*Pelargonium* spp.)
 Lavender cotton (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*)
 Lavenders (*Lavandula* spp.)
 Rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria*)
 Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
 Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)
 Sea hollies (*Eryngium* spp.)
 Silvermound (*Artemisia schmidtiana*)
 Sweet pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*)