



UConn Plant Science & Landscape Architecture Knowledge to Grow On!



Planning Your Gardens Early

Whether you're planning a vegetable garden, foundation planting, or otherwise, January can be a great time to sit down and start planning! Here are a few tips that are helpful.

- **Check out those seed catalogs!**
 - This is a great way to think spring during the coldest time of year! Be sure to look at catalogs from multiple vendors to get a complete picture of the varieties you're growing. A lot of plant growth data can be based on averages. Looking at multiple sources keeps you more informed!
 - The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station provides a [quality control test of vegetable seed](#) every year! If you felt you had issues with a particular brand or variety they may have some data for you!
- **Get out your calendar and check your seed packets!**
 - Most seed companies recommend counting backwards from your last frost date. Instead, some find it easier to review your *days to germination* & *days to maturity* to create this timeline.
 - As a general rule of thumb, "days to maturity" for seeds started indoors, will mean the number of days your plant will take to mature after the transplant date. Using this knowledge and giving yourself a buffer for failed germination, you will be able to calculate when your plants will be ready for seeding and transplant into your gardens!

- **Review your notes!**
 - If you didn't do this in the fall, take some time to reflect on your previous growing season. Take stock of what plants performed well, and what you might skip next year to maximize space or increase yields.
 - **Get out the tracing paper!**
 - Sketch out your garden on a blank sheet of paper. Mark all the hardscape, pathways, and established plants. This will be your "foundation."
 - Grab a sheet of tracing paper for each season. On each season's respective page draw ONLY the plants that are in place in that season.
 - For additional affect, color them the color that they bloom.
 - You should only draw over plants that are annuals/replaced on a regular schedule.
 - For veggie gardeners this can help you plan crop rotations!
 - Layer your 4 sheets on top of each other in seasonal order to see the flow of your colors, shapes, or produce in the garden. This is a great way to make sure you have plants in flower/production for as long as possible!
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Winter Sowing Native Seeds



Seed heads stored in paper bags. Photo by HZidack

At the 2023 UConn Pollinator & Native Plants Conference, Sarah Michel, a Community Ecologist with the Land Conservancy of McHenry County in Illinois shared her knowledge about sowing native seeds in the home landscape.

It turns out, saving the seeds of native plants is an easy, cost effective and family friendly way to create a native landscape in your yard! Seeding native plants in January and February can be a great way to save time and get out into the garden in those "off season" months.

While Sarah is from a different region with some different native plants, her tips on harvest, storage and sowing were invaluable! She also highlighted the importance of always harvesting seed ethically and respecting community and private spaces. To learn more about how to sow native yourself, see the links below.

[Watch: Sarah's Presentation on Native Seed Sowing](#)

[Read: Autumn and Winter Seed Sowing in Six Easy Steps](#)

Creating Brush Piles for Wildlife



Brush pile created against natural stone wall. Photo by MW2023

Got extra brush? Why burn it when you can build a brush pile for wildlife. With more people being aware of the environmental effects of burning, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection recommends this rediscovered method. Brush piles not only help the environment, but they create cover for small birds, reptiles and mammals who may be facing limited habitat. This is a great way to provide protection from harsh winter conditions. To learn more about brush piles and how to build them, visit the link below.

[DEEP Brush Piles for Wildlife](#)

2024 Perennial of the Year

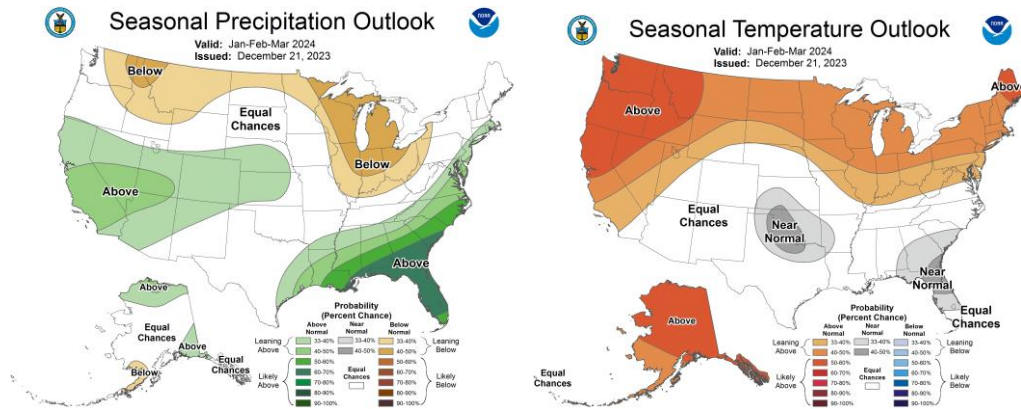


Photo by Dan Jaffe

The Perennial Plant Association has named *Phlox paniculata 'Jeana'* as its perennial of 2024! This tall garden phlox was highlighted for its impressive height and ability to hold up its showy flower heads without too much flopping over. This particular variety is also resistant to powdery mildew and is a great performer in the pollinator garden!

[2024 Perennial of the Year](#)

January 2024 Weather Outlook



A seasoned gardener always keeps their eye to the sky at any time of year! NOAA's National Weather Service released their discussion on weather this January about how weather patterns will continue to shape this winter season.

[30 Day Outlook for January 2024](#)

Knowledge to Grow On



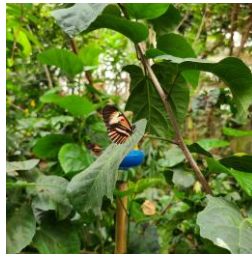
Read our Ladybug blogs written weekly
[Managing Micronutrients for Healthy Plants](#)
[2023 Holiday Gift Guide for Gardeners](#)
[Weird Weather in 2023](#)
[What's the Tea?](#)

Upcoming Events and Things to Do

- Visit a greenhouse! The [UConn Botanical Conservatory Greenhouse](#) is open to the public Monday - Friday 8AM-4PM. The [Greenhouses at Marsh Botanical Garden](#) at Yale are also open to the public at this time of year!
- January 13th - [Life on the Webster Farm: Work Days](#). Visit the museum on select Saturdays every month from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. and enjoy live demonstrations from our experienced team of museum educators. Each demonstration will focus on a unique

aspect of early American work and play. Stop by and learn about the trades and activities of life on the Webster farm

- Visit a local [brewery, winery, or distillery](#). Many of these local businesses are still open at this time of year and offer entertainment options during the winter months like comedy shows, trivia nights, and even workshops to learn a new skill!
- See butterflies up close! The Connecticut Science Center's [Butterfly Encounter](#) is open! Explore their all season butterfly habitat housing over 40 species of butterflies! If you're looking to take a day trip, [Magic Wings Butterfly Conservatory](#) is in South Deerfield MA. This conservatory hatches and maintains its butterfly population year round as well.
- Mark your calendars! The CT Flower & Garden Show will be Feb 22-25, 2024! We will be there and offering free soil pH testing at our booth! As long as the ground is still not frozen, we'll be able to process this for you at the show!



Educational Opportunities and Workshops

- January 24th - [Plainfield Fish Hatchery Bird Walk](#) - Join Andy Rzeznikiewicz as he leads you around the extensive hatchery grounds. This location often has many bird species wintering there, due to the open water conifer trees and dense shrub areas. Registration required. See link for details.
- Multiple Dates in January - [Owl Prowls](#) - Join the CT Audubon Society for an evening walk to look for Owls in nature!
- January 28th - [Winter Ecology and Wildlife Tracking hike/snowshoe at Northwest Park](#) Windsor, CT 1-3pm. Join naturalist Aimee Gelinias M.Ed, Director and co-founder of the Tamarack Hollow Nature & Cultural Center on a winter ecology hike (or snowshoe) through Northwest Park. Participants will learn how to observe and identify wildlife tracks and patterns, signs of wildlife such as scent markings, scat and other wildlife activity that gives a glimpse into the lives of wildlife that stay active in winter. Along the way, participants will learn how to identify evergreen and deciduous trees in winter by bark, buds and branching patterns plus evergreen ferns and plants. Exploring the woods in winter provides an opportunity to understand how fauna and flora adapt to the

cold. This program is sponsored by the Friends of Northwest Park. Registration required. See link above

- Registration is now open for [NOFA's Land Care Accreditation course](#) to start Feb. 1st, 2024



The CT Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers Conference still has spots open!

[Agenda and Registration Information](#)



www.ctcompostalliance.org

January Gardening Tips

1. Start seeds of pansies, dusty miller, browallia, begonias, snapdragons, and delphiniums indoors under lights.
2. Inspect stored bulbs, tubers and corms for rot or infestation. Discard those showing signs of decay or insect damage.
3. Turn and prune houseplants regularly to keep them shapely. Pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants.

4. When placing your seed and plant orders keep in mind that many seeds have improved insect and/or disease resistance. Watch also for drought-tolerant types. Our fact sheet [Vegetable Garden: Basics and Plant Selection](#) has some useful suggestions.
5. At month's end, start seeds of onions, leeks, broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower indoors under lights.
6. Avoid using salt to melt ice on driveways and sidewalks which may end up on the lawn, when possible use sand or kitty litter. This will help prevent salt damage to plant roots.
7. Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.
8. When you are finished with holiday evergreen boughs, use them to mulch tender perennials and shrubs.
9. Use wood ashes from the fireplace as a good source of potash. Keep in mind the pH of wood ashes is 11 so only use them on areas where the pH needs to be raised.
10. Clean bird feeders and baths regularly to avoid the spread of avian diseases. Disinfect feeders and baths monthly.

[More January Gardening Tips](#)

We Want to Hear From You!

Thank you for subscribing to the UConn Home & Garden Education Center Newsletter! In 2024, we want to make sure that our newsletter is delivering content that you want to know about! Please take a moment to complete our brief survey to help us learn what topics really matter to our gardeners! Thank you, in advance, for taking the time to give us your feedback!

[**Take the Survey!**](#)

Notice something going on in your garden? The UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory diagnoses plant problems including diseases, insect pests and abiotic causes. Submitting a sample is easy! For details, visit the [UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)

Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micronutrients: Send your soil sample in for testing now to avoid the spring rush. For details on sending a sample, go to the [UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

Photo Op: Fascinating Sights



Fog over Horse Barn Hill, by Nathan Oldham

See something cool in your garden? Send your pictures to us at ladybug@uconn.edu with subject line “Newsletter Photo” and a brief caption to be considered for next month’s highlight!

Before We Go...

Did you know...

The Connecticut Greenhouse industry is the largest agricultural sector in the state! While many of us are dreaming of spring - greenhouse growers are already well underway with production for next season. Your favorite spring annuals are being planted this month, or some may be in pots already! Meanwhile, plants like succulents and houseplants are grown year round for plant enthusiasts like us!



Photo by Sean Flynn

*This Month’s Newsletter Contributors:
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**For Gardening Questions Visit our website:
[UConn Home and Garden Education Center](#)**

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center: We are on a collaborative journey working together with farmers, families, communities and businesses to educate and solve problems concerning food, health and sustainability.

Join us.

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center



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WHAT WE DO AT THE UCONN HOME AND GARDEN EDUCATION CENTER

Plant, insect, and plant disease identification and control options

Advise clients on plant selection and cultural requirements

Receive samples for diagnosis either by drop-off or mail

Give presentations on gardening topics including IPM, pollinators, lawns, invasive plants and insects, landscaping and gardening with native plants, gardening to support bees, birds and wildlife

Staff a booth every year at the CT Flower and Garden Show- bring soil samples for pH testing & your gardening questions

Publish weekly blogs and a monthly newsletter available for free by subscription

Publish fact sheets, newspaper, and magazine articles

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