

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

Yuletide yearnings

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A robin's nest nestles in a bare tulip magnolia with a camellia beginning to bloom in the background.

Here are few safety tips for "exercising" in the garden:

1. Like any exercise, warm up before you go outside. Stretch.
2. Use a cushion when kneeling to plant, weed, or dig.
3. Bend at the knee when you need to lift something. This decreases stress on your neck, shoulders and back.
4. Keep your back straight as much as possible. Minimize lumbar strain by refraining from slouching.
5. Use lightweight tools that suit your body type.
6. Pull branches to your eye level or use an extender when pruning. Don't twist or try to reach too high.
7. Don't overload the wheelbarrow or the buckets. Make more trips.
8. Wear gloves, boots with treads, a hat, sunscreen, and clothes that you don't mind ruining. (Personally, I have three drawers of old ratty tatty garden clothes that I love because they are comfortable and disaster proof. When they are too worn out or too ripped, they become gardening rags!)



Cyclamen red and white.

9. Employ a spotter whenever you climb on a ladder. Severe injuries and even death can occur when a ladder fails or falls.

Research has indicated that gardening helps with lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, prevents heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes. It also boosts your creativity, reduces stress, and fights depression. Gardening is a physical, mental and spiritual sport. When you garden, your entire body gets a work out from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head. All of your senses will be awakened as the sights, sounds, tastes, textures and scents are stimulated by the natural world. The added attraction is that you can harvest what you grow – flowers, herbs, vegetables, fruits, branches, even weeds.

You'll burn calories, work your muscles, and enhance your senses by working in your garden. If you don't want to join the green thumb tribe, go outside to hike in the beautiful hills. Trails abound throughout our area. Anytime you walk in nature (also known as forest bathing), you will be rewarded with a plethora of benefits that will keep you in good health and more satisfied with life.

Become a green, lean, gardening machine! Happy New Year!

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