

## February 2026 Newsletter

It feels like spring by alas it's still officially winter!

### WINTER TREES

See the bare arms of the trees!  
Ah, it is good that it is winter,  
And all the fuss and struggle of leaves is over,  
And we may step into the anonymity of winter.

It is good that it is winter,  
And the trees are stripped of all the nonsense of leaves,  
As one who has shed the pretensions of clothes  
Is bare unto the soul.

David Austin

## FEBRUARY GARDEN CLUB MEETING:

**Date:** February 11, 2026

**Time:** 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Georgann will share about her English Garden Tour in 2025

12:30 - Clean-up

**Location:** Our Savior Lutheran Church  
745 Front Street South  
Issaquah, WA

**Horticultural Corner:** Thyme - Cathy W.

### **Snack Crew:**

Hostess: Jean P.

Crew: Joy J.

Joan H.

Karen M.

Lois H.

**March Meeting:** March 11, 2026

**Horticultural Corner:** Rosemary - Maura E.

**Program:** Amanda from Countryside Floral & Garden will present

## **LETS SAVE ON KITCHEN SUPPLIES:**

Please remember to bring your own plate, napkin and silverware so we don't deplete the club's supplies and reduces our garbage footprint! And, attention coffee and tea drinkers - remember to bring your own cup (THANKS)

**MONETARY DONATION FOR FOOD BANK: At the February meeting bring cash or check for Sandra who will then write one check in the name of Issaquah Garden club as a donation to the Issaquah Food Bank**

## **YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED:**

### *January Meeting:*

Tea Discovery Class by Roberta Fuhr

Teas discussed and tasted were: white, green, oolong, black and pu'erh. All come from just one plant species - the Camellia Sinensis. Teas are grown in many countries but the presentation focused on teas from China, Taiwan, Japan, Sri Lanka and India.

Herbals are NOT teas! Teas talked about today all come from the same plant. How it is processed determines the type of tea and gives it the unique flavor profile. The first flush is the most valuable as it contains all of the nutrients stored over the winter. The processing of tea primarily creates and controls oxidation which facilitates flavor due to cellular collapse and the mixing together of natural chemicals.

Of interest, these teas are grown without chemical partly because the caffeine in the plants are bitter tasting to bugs and as a result act as a natural persticide.

Making tea: This can be done in either short or long steps.

WHITE TEA: Ideal temperature is 195 degrees. It is processed by being laid out to dry for a short period of time so there is minimal oxidation.

GREEN TEA: Ideal temperature is 180 - 185 degrees. The processing includes being heated and "rolled" which brings moisture and compounds to the surface of the leaves. The process may include heating the leaves in a wok to stop the exidation process.

OOLONG TEA: This tea is only partially oxidized.

BLAK TEA: This tea is fully oxidized.

PU'ERH TEA: a unique tea sold in "bricks" or "cubes". It begins as green tea and you can tell by the color of the tea what processing has been used. Light in color is raw but a darker color means it has been "cooked".

## **COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON REPORTS:**

### **PLANT A TREE (SANDRA):**

\*\* Sandra reported that it is about time to send another donation.

### **GARDEN THERAPY (JOAN H.):**

\*\* The last flower arrangements done after the November meeting lasted longer than usual. Staff and patients were appreciative and sent a “Thank You” note.

\*\* *The next flower arranging session will be right after the February 11 meeting. Gale will get the flowers. Everyone else needs to bring greens from their yard and clippers.*

### **POST OFFICE (GEORGANN):**

\*\* Georgann is watching it and will alert us if attention is needed.

## **Board Meeting (January 26):**

The Eastlake Washington District now has 291 members now that three new clubs from Skagit Valley have joined our District:

LaConner Civic Garden Club - 27 members

Tulip Valley Garden club - 22 members

Designing Women Guild - 7 members, all who belong to one of the above clubs

### **General Membership Meeting (GMM):**

**\*\* Issaquah Garden Club is signed up to provide a raffle item**

Date: Monday, February 23

Time: Registration begins at 9:30AM / Program begins at 10:00AM

Location: St. Andrew's Church

2650 148th Ave SE

Bellevue, WA

Cost: \$10.00 (at the door)

Programs: Horticulture will be a presentation by Alma Cardenas speaking about “The Resilient Yard - Battling Climate Change at Home”

Design program will be a demonstration by two design guilds about how to create award winning arrangements to enter in the upcoming flower show

*To reserve your spot you need to contact Joyce Vodala at [javodal@hotmail.com](mailto:javodal@hotmail.com)*

**Outing Opportunity:**

Pine Lake Garden Club is sponsoring a trip to see the Blue Poppy Garden

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Time: 9:00AM - 3:00PM

Location: Rhododendron Species Garden in Federal Way

Cost: \$25.00 which covers the cost of the privately hired bus to get you there are back and entrance fee and tour

RSVP: Nancy Way at [nancyway77@gmail.com](mailto:nancyway77@gmail.com)

Tell her your club affiliation

**SAVE THE DATES:**

**February 11, 2026** - Garden Therapy - right after the meeting at Avamere Nursing Home (right next door). Bring greens from your yard and a pair of clippers. It's great fun!

**February 18 - 22, 2026** - Northwest Flower & Garden Show at Seattle Convention Center

**February 23, 2026** - General Membership Meeting (GMM). Issaquah Garden Club is providing a raffle item

**August 21 - 23** - Washington State Flower Show "Red White, & Bloom" (celebrating the 250th Birthday of the United States. This will be held at Bellevue Botanical Gardens. Volunteers will be needed!

**EDUCATIONAL CORNER:**

# When you wrongly fertilize plants in winter, it can have 5 damaging effects

If you fertilize plants in winter when they're not growing, you risk damaging them in five ways. This guide looks at when and when not to fertilize in winter.

## Jump to: [5 Reasons Not to Fertilize Plants in Winter](#) | [When to Fertilize Plants in Winter, and How](#)

It may be tempting for some gardeners to get a head start on spring by fertilizing plants in winter. The thinking may be that it will help plants get off to a great start for the upcoming season, and what harm can it do? The truth is that it can damage plants, as well as be a waste of time and money.

Should you fertilize plants in winter? The answer is predominantly no. There is no point in feeding plants that are not actively growing, especially if you can hurt them by doing so. In the same way as you don't [fertilize houseplants in winter](#) if they are dormant, resist the temptation to feed outdoor plants during the coldest months.

The general rule is not to fertilize plants in winter in colder climates, for the reasons we reveal below. If you want to do something positive for your outdoor plants in winter, mulch them. But those in warmer climates can fertilize plants in winter as they continue to grow.

## **Can You Fertilize Plants in Winter? First, Check for Any Bans**

Depending on where you live, it may be prohibited to fertilize plants in winter. Whether you want to fertilize plants in winter or not, such regulations force your hand.

These restrictions are not widespread, but the states of New Jersey and Maryland have bans on homeowners preventing fertilizing between November and March. In addition, some other states, such as New York and Florida, have local county bans that cover [fertilizing lawns](#) and plants during winter.

Always check any local restrictions where you live before using winter fertilizer on plants in your yard. However, even if it is allowed, feeding is not beneficial, and it is a waste of time and money to fertilize plants in winter.

## **5 Reasons Not to Fertilize Plants in Winter**

If you live in cold or milder [US hardiness zones](#), where plants go dormant for winter, and the ground freezes, you should not fertilize plants in your yard for these reasons:

### **1. Plants Aren't Actively Growing**

A simple rule of thumb to remember when considering fertilizing plants in winter is: if the plant isn't actively growing, then don't fertilize it.

Think about [what fertilizer does for plants](#); it provides essential nutrients to help them grow, develop, and bloom strongly. When the plant is dormant, it is doing none of those, so it doesn't need additional fertilizer during winter.

Only [fertilize flower beds](#), shrubs, or trees when the plants are actively growing, when they need those additional [essential plant nutrients](#) that the fertilizer provides. If you fertilize plants in winter when they don't

need it, you risk encouraging growth at the wrong time, or the nutrients themselves are simply washed away and wasted.

## **2. It Can Encourage Undesirable Growth**

There are associated risks that come with fertilizing plants in late fall or early winter. It encourages new growth at a time when plants should be concentrating their efforts on going dormant for winter.

Any new growth as a result of affecting the plant's natural cycles is weak and easily damaged by cold weather. This frost damage can leave the plant increasingly susceptible to pests and diseases over the winter period.

A good general guideline is not to [fertilize shrubs](#) or perennials after September. Late feeding is a [fertilizing mistake](#), and no good comes from stimulating the plant into growth at the wrong time.

## **3. Plants Can't Take in Nutrients From Frozen Soil**

In colder climates, there is little point in taking the time to fertilize plants in winter, as, even if they did need nutrients, they cannot benefit from them when the soil is frozen.

When [soil freezes in winter](#), so does the water it contains. And movement of water is crucial in the conversion and absorption of nutrients by plants. As water isn't moving

and microbes in the soil are not active, the fertilizer is not converted into a usable solution or absorbed by the plant's roots.

As plant roots take in nutrients by absorbing moisture in the soil, they cannot take anything in when the soil is frozen solid. It makes fertilizing in winter a waste of time, plus, as we'll cover next, you cannot guarantee the nutrients remain in the soil once it thaws and the plants start to grow again.

## **4. Nutrients Are Wasted and Leech Away**

If you fertilize plants in winter and they don't get to take up the nutrients, then what happens to all that goodness? In an ideal world, the remaining fertilizer remains in the ground and [boosts soil nutrients](#), to the benefit of plants when they start arising from their winter slumber.

However, the reality is usually that the fertilizer doesn't [improve garden soil](#) or help plants, but actually poses more of a risk to the environment. The fertilizer often gets lost to water runoff when the snow melts or is leached away during winter rainfall. The plants in your yard never get to benefit from the nutrients, but the fertilizer ends up washing away into rivers or lakes.

## 5. Excess Fertilizer in the Soil Can Burn Roots

If the fertilizers aren't washed away and build up in the soil, where they are not being used or taken up by plant roots, they can reach a harmful level. Fertilizers, especially inorganic and fast-release fertilizers, contain salts that can burn plant roots if they reach too high a level.

The risk of fertilizer burn, as it is known, is high during winter when plants aren't efficiently absorbing nutrients. Excess salts in the soil pull water out of the plant's roots, dehydrating plants and damaging roots as they turn dry and brittle. It will also potentially cause dieback and result in sub-optimal growth in spring.

### When to Fertilize Plants in Winter, and How

If you live in the warmest US hardiness zones where plants grow throughout winter, and the ground doesn't freeze, then you can fertilize plants in winter. As long as your plants are actively growing, they will benefit from the nutrients.

In milder or colder climates, rather than fertilizing in winter, focus on developing soil health through [mulching](#) instead, as this offers great long-term benefits to plants. If you [mulch flower beds](#) and spend time [mulching a vegetable garden](#), it brings many positives without the risk of damaging your plants.

By mulching with a thick layer of organic matter, such as [compost](#), well-rotted manure, or [leaf mold](#), you lock moisture into the soil, protect plant roots from frost, improve soil structure, and slowly release nutrients into the ground as the material breaks down. There is no risk of encouraging unwanted growth or burning plant roots with mulching.

As well as focusing on [soil health](#) through mulching, winter is also an ideal time of year to [test your soil](#).

You can get valuable information on the fertility of your soil with a simple soil test kit, such as this [professional soil test kit at Amazon](#), which gives lab analysis on the levels of 13 different nutrients in the soil.

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A soil test will also give you good guidance for how to improve the quality of your soil so your plants grow to their full potential.

Compost and Manure Blend

This blend of organic reed sedge peat and composted animal manure comes in a 40-pound bag and makes an ideal mulching material in winter.

### Espoma Plant-Tone Fertilizer

An all-natural plant food made of organic ingredients to use in the spring and summer on all your backyard plants, shrubs, and trees.

### Spring Booster Fertilizer

A concentrated liquid fertilizer with an NPK ratio of 8-16-8 to provide essential nutrients to plants in spring for strong, healthy growth.

## **Drew Swainston**

Content Editor

Drew has worked as a writer since 2008 and was also a professional gardener for many years. As a trained horticulturist, he worked in prestigious historic gardens, including Hanbury Hall and the world-famous Hidcote Manor Garden. He also spent time as a specialist kitchen gardener at Soho Farmhouse and Netherby Hall, where he grew vegetables, fruit, herbs, and cut flowers for restaurants. Drew has written for numerous print and online publications and is an allotment holder and garden blogger. He is shortlisted for the Digital Gardening Writer of the Year at the 2025 Garden Media Guild Awards.