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# Happy New Year!

## Gardening by the Moon

January 2024

### 2024 INS and OUTS

#### INS:

- Taking a soil test to determine fertility needs for the spring
- Planning for spring planting
- Watering your yard prior to a freeze event
- Applying pre-emergent in beds & turf in February, May, and September to help with weed prevention
- Checking your irrigation system yearly to ensure it is operating effectively
- Attending your bi-annual HOA Landscape Seminar with Dr. Moon + Associates
- Enjoying the outdoors
- Applying Neem Oil for overwintering insects & diseases
- Using a systemic insecticide such as Merit for season long control of bores & scales

#### OUTS:

- Leaving your sprinklers on when it's below 32°
- Committing Crape Murder
- Planting trees in the heat of the summer
- Using weed & feed combined products
- Not being nice to your neighbors
- Applying fertilizer without a soil test
- Treating for insects & diseases when you only have a few leaves involved
- Planting a plant that is out of your planting zone
- Creating mulch volcanoes around trees and in beds
- Not removing stakes from trees that are rooted

# Winter Pest Control

By Jennifer Hall

Most of us do not consider controlling insects, mites, and diseases in our plants during winter. But now is an excellent time to reduce those overwintering pests and diseases for next spring and summer.

Be sure to clean up leaves and other debris from your yard. This debris provides a perfect place for pests to overwinter. Also, be aware of stacked firewood in your yard. It is another overwintering site for pests.

Neem Oil is an excellent organic control for these overwintering insects, mites, and some diseases. Treat all your trees, shrubs, ground cover, and perennials by spraying thoroughly. Spray several days before an expected rain event and when temperatures exceed freezing. Apply at rates given on the label instructions. It is safe to use on fruits and vegetables until the day of harvest. This preventative treatment will benefit you by reducing insect and disease problems during the spring and summer.

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## Prepping your Landscape for Arctic Cold!

In Texas, when temperatures fall below freezing for an extended period, the temperatures can damage tender plants that have not acclimated to the brutal cold. The best protection for these plants is to keep them from being dry going into this type of weather.

Recent rains may not supply an adequate amount of water. Provide extra water to all trees, shrubs, ground cover, vines, perennials, ornamental grasses, annual color, and turf (lawns). Additional watering is especially needed on all new plantings since they have a limited root system before cold weather arrives. All plants still use water in the winter. **Hydrated plants survive cold weather better because they have frost protection.** Water releases heat slower than plant tissue, protecting plants from the cold. Moisture in the soil also traps heat and gives off heat to plants to stay warmer for a few days. This simple task can make all the difference in plant survival.

Water early and do not water after the cold arrives. **Make sure irrigation systems are off during freezing weather!** During an extended freeze, you can also cover plants for extra protection. Use a fabric material, not plastic, if possible or affordable. Remove materials immediately once temperatures warm back up to prevent disease.



Arctic air is on its way to Texas, and the below-freezing temperatures can cause plant damage. Before a freeze event, the best thing to do is to water your plants and yard.

Watering will help protect your plants and grass when the freezing temperatures come. Make sure to turn off your irrigation system before the freeze!

After freezing events, patience is vital. You might notice freeze damage to your plants immediately following the event but do not be quick to remove damaged tissue. That tissue can help protect the plant while it is trying to heal. Time will tell the extent of the damage, then pruning can be the next step, with plant removal as a last resort. Trees can also get freeze damage and have cracks on their trunks. Do not remove the bark. Thankfully, in Texas, the freezing temperatures don't usually last long. Be patient and allow time for your plants and trees to recover.

**~FREEZE DAMAGE~**



# **Mistletoe Kiss or Curse**

By Dr. Louie Gradilla

Christmas may have passed, but mistletoe could still be hanging around in your trees- when we think of mistletoe, most of us have a romantic notion of Christmas and kissing, but mistletoe is a parasitic plant that can harm your trees.

## **How does mistletoe spread in trees?**

Birds love consuming the berries from mistletoe. Then, as they move from tree to tree, they spread mistletoe through their droppings.

## **How is mistletoe harmful to trees?**

Because mistletoe is parasitic, it takes necessary water and nutrients from the tree. This infection weakens the tree, making it susceptible to other harmful diseases and parasites.

## **What do you do if your tree has mistletoe?**

The most effective way to control mistletoe and prevent its spread is to prune out infested branches immediately. Pruning out limbs is an acceptable technique when dealing with smaller limbs. However, if the mistletoe grows on a more significant branch, cut out the mistletoe and wrap the cut site with duct tape to maintain the tree canopy shape.

Let's keep the Christmas tradition of mistletoe hanging above a romantic Christmas kiss but out of our trees.