

Timely Turf Tips



February 2014

February may be the shortest month but it will seem long if this cold weather doesn't start to warm up. Get in the spring spirit by planning your vegetable and flower gardens. See the University of Minnesota Extension link below for information on starting seeds indoors. May 15 (approximate date of the last frost) is not that far off.

Housekeeping Time for Houseplants

- Give indoor plants a cleaning with a warm water shower or dusting to discourage pests and allow more useable sunlight to the plant. Remember when wiping leaves to support the leaf from underneath to prevent damage.
- Place large plants in the shower and let lukewarm water run for a good five minutes. Hairy-leaf plants like African violets may prefer a dusting using small paintbrush to prevent possible leaf spotting.
- Check plants for salt buildup. This is a crusty white substance on the soil surface or on the inside of the pot. Scrap off the buildup and then leach the soil by watering thoroughly. Wait 20 minutes and water thoroughly again. This will help dilute and wash the salts out.
- Do not fertilize this month. Houseplants should be actively growing, wait until spring and summer to do this step.



Flower and Garden Planning

- Assemble equipment needed to start seeds indoors: pots, trays, fluorescent lights that can be raised or lowered, a timer, and, for best results, a heating device to put under the containers of germinating seeds. Check out this link for more details, www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/starting-seeds-indoors/.
- Make sure your favorite pepper plants will be available this spring. Call Steve today!
- Late February and March is the best time of year to have large shade trees and fruit trees pruned.

Monarch Overwintering Population Data just Released!

The number of monarchs on overwintering grounds is at the lowest ever recorded: 0.67 hectares. Not even one hectare. A little more than half as many as last year's record low! Here's the announcement; <http://monarchwatch.org/blog/>. Our own University of Minnesota monarch expert, Karen Oberhauser, is there in Mexico. One study conclusion is that at least 167 million acres of monarch habitat has been lost since 1996.

Like the bee's, this downward population trend is very scary as a barometer of our natural world's health. As a community, we need to educate ourselves on sustainable gardening practices; plantings that provide food for bees and monarchs and other pollinators, reduce our use of herbicides and pesticides, etc. Once we understand how we can make a difference, then we can help educate our friends, family, and neighbors. Let's all start by planting milkweed in our gardens this year.

Winter months are tough on our feathered friends – Don't forget to feed them! We've provided coupons below to help.

Previous issues of Timely Turf Tips newsletters are available at our website: www.hugofeedmill.com

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