



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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Greetings,

We are keeping very busy this off season. Hope you enjoy our combined January/February newsletter this month. Our next newsletter will be sent in mid-March.

### **Botanical Garden Destination Getaways**

Got the winter blues? These cold and sullen days call for a dose of flora and fauna for some greener relief. Whether you are an armchair traveler or a real world jetsetter, here are a few suggestions.

The [Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens](#) in Fort Bragg, California is a great start. It is the only botanical garden in the continental U.S. with striking, ocean front views of the Pacific.

Its diverse landscape includes wetlands, bluffs that overlook the ocean, canyons and pine forests. It is well known for its heath and heather collection as well as its conifer collection. The acidic soils and warmer temperatures provide ideal conditions for these plants. In fact the American Conifer Society has recognized it as a distinguished reference collection of conifers.



Mendocino Coast  
Botanical Gardens

There is also an impressive collection of Rhododendrons, Fuchsias, Camellias, Dahlias, Magnolias, Maples, Begonias and Succulents.

It even has a large garden that supplies local food banks with interesting heritage varieties of produce. The organization is committed to involving the community by demonstrating best practices in organic food gardening. In 2013 its "kitchen garden" produced more than 4,000 pounds of fresh produce for those in need.

If the aloha spirit is calling to you, then check out the [Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden](#) on the Big Island. Like

Mendocino Coast, this botanical garden also offers remarkable views of a warmer and lush Pacific. With over 2,000 species of plants, some of the highlights include ginormous monkeypod trees, coconut groves, and mango trees ripe for the picking.



[Onomea Falls](#)

The palm jungle and fern tree forest sections provide a backdrop for spectacular waterfalls. This destination will surely allow you to get in touch with your inner Adam or Eve while escaping the New England winter drabness!

For those who have time only for an outing closer to home, we suggest wandering around the world class tree and shrub collections at the [Arnold Arboretum](#) or [Tower Hill Botanic Garden](#). Snowshoeing and cross country skiing are welcomed as conditions permit.



Winter scene at the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden

[Mt. Auburn Cemetery](#) welcomes walkers and strollers only on its winding roads and pathways. This is a superb landscape for birding throughout the seasons. There are several destination vistas.

The [Coastal Maine Botanical Garden](#) in Boothbay, Maine is open all year long. This newer botanic garden is well worth the trip as there are many different cultivated gardens and plant communities to explore. An imaginative children's garden depicts settings from children's books set in the state of Maine. Trails through wild areas are particularly appealing during those intervals of warmer winter temperatures. On some trails you can glimpse the harbor waters beyond.

## What's New at Pumpkin Brook? Design and Planning Time Is Here!

Let's grow together in 2014! In order to do so, we are taking the quieter winter months to spend time planning both our business operations and client projects for the coming year. Paul Marean is already at work on one master plan and several planting plans - could you be next?

Let us know if you have a planting or hardscape project in mind. Remember that our springtime rush starts quickly once the snow melts. So I hope you can take advantage of our "down time" to design and finalize the details of your project.

I am poring over seed catalogues and lists of bareroot roses, berries and perennials so that we can place orders by the end of February. Our organically grown seedling pre-order list will be available, as usual, on February 15. In the meantime, please forward your requests for special colors, varieties or types of plants that we might grow or order early for you. I'm excited to peruse many new sources this year, with more organically grown seed available now than ever before.



Carmine is preparing Plant Health Care contracts for 2014, including our compost tea, tick and mosquito and winter protection programs. These will be sent out on February 15.

## **Best Practices for the Winter Season: Trees, Turf and De-icers**

### **Tree Tips**

Keep a close eye on the type of snow load that settles on your trees and shrubs this winter. Conditions can range from a light dusting to a wet, heavy dumping to an icy coating. The latter two are the most damaging.

A corn broom can be useful to tap the woody plants to gently remove an excessive snow load. If branches are frozen into snowbanks, you'll have to wait until some melting occurs to safely remove them. Small branches and twigs are very brittle in the cold and will easily snap off.



Carefully remove snow from woody plants with a corn broom!

**Watch for our  
Spring mailing in  
your inbox  
around the 15th  
of February**

An insulating layer of snow packs down well and is a wonderful thing here in New England, where temperatures and conditions can vary so greatly from one day to the next. We can only hope that this protective layer will last well into March. At that time, temperatures swing from low to high and back to low within a given day. During this month we often experience winter burn on rhododendrons, hollies and other broadleaf evergreens that have not been protected with anti-desiccant. Winter sun and wind draws moisture from their leaves. While you may have enjoyed the recent January thaw, your trees and shrubs did not. Serious damage can occur if the

thaw period is lengthy, followed by a cold snap.

We always encourage deep watering through the fall until the ground freezes for newly planted trees and shrubs. That way their roots can become well established before the stresses of winter. Mulch around these plants further moderates the soil temperature, keeping it more even. On our first visit of spring, we will scout for winter damage to your plantings and will prune out broken branches at that time.

### **Turf Tips**

Voles may be tunneling right now under the snowbanks. You'll see their telltale runs on the lawn in spring. A period without snow cover exposes their territory, and they will abandon their open area habitations then. Predators will provide some natural population control.

Be sure to avoid walking on frosted or frozen turf. Hopefully late last fall you marked the edges of your driveway to prevent damage from plows! Additionally, avoid piling snow on turf areas whenever possible to reduce the chance of snow mold or winterkill on the grass beneath. Early spring will be the time for repair of any damaged lawn areas through topdressing and overseeding.

### **De-Icers**

This industry is still unregulated, so read labels carefully. It's best to avoid salt (chloride) of all kinds as it is damaging to brick, mortar, stone, plants, groundwater and paws of your pets! Purchase a brand such as Happy Paws Ice Melt or Safe Paws Ice Melt, available at selected veterinarians, pet stores or hardware stores. These products can also be ordered online. Pellets release heat as they dissolve and can be applied at the same rate as salt. You may not need to apply them as often.

### **January/February Is the Time for:**

- Planning changes to the landscape
- Reviewing notes from the 2013 garden
- Planning vegetable gardens
- Reading up on new plants
- Ordering bareroot plants such as roses, small fruits and trees for April planting
- Sharpening garden tools
- Watering houseplants lightly until well after February 1 (when light fertilizing can begin again)
- Scouting for pests on houseplants such as scale and aphids, treating with a blast of water from the kitchen sink,

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- insecticidal soap spray, or wiping leaves with baby wipes
- Stocking birdfeeders with high calorie seeds and suet
- Enjoying indoor displays of forced paperwhites and amaryllis

Our staff will be attending the annual New England Grows regional conference and trade show during the first week of February. I will also be attending a Soil and Nutrition Conference to forward my study of nutrient dense soils. We will be meeting up with colleagues and suppliers to "talk shop."

And, we will be seeing you in the garden before too long.

**Sincerely,**  
Priscilla

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