

## January Garden Tips

If buying balled and burlapped plants, never carry by the stem, always by the ball to avoid root damage. Cut all ties on the burlap. If the burlap is green or plastic, remove it. If regular burlap has roots growing through it, cut away burlap only from shoulders. None should be above ground. Do not add amendments to the hole. Slice covering if possible to allow roots out. If roots are growing in bark soil, may have problems establishing them.

Containers with roots coming out the holes are iffy as are containers with finger size circling roots.

For most woody plants, fertilize only after you see new growth.

Excess K can tie up other nutrients and cause margin burn on potted plants.

As the daylight lengthens, houseplants start to wake up. It is an excellent time to repot, renew soil and start light fertilization (1/2 strength). Do not over water, however.

### Compost Tip of the Month

Adding wood ash to the compost pile should only be done with knowledge and awareness of its properties. Wood ash is salty, a strong source of potassium, and highly alkaline. It is best left out of the compost or only used in small amounts because it can cause a mineral or pH imbalance in the pile. Do not use the ashes from wood treated with paints or wood preservatives. Charcoal is a partially burned form of wood, but it also contains added chemicals and fats that are not safe. Barbecue ash should not be added to the compost pile. If you burn much cardboard and junk mail, this should also not be used because of excess boron and possibly metals.

### Toasting Seeds Cornell Extension

Pumpkin, sunflower, squash and melon seeds make tasty, toasted treats. Separate out any string fiber. Wash thoroughly and let dry at room temperature. Use only mature, well-filled seeds. To hull seeds in quantity, break up first with a rolling pin, then drop all in a large container of water. Stir vigorously. The shells will float, the kernels sink. Drain the seeds and dry again. The dried seeds may be roasted in a frying pan at low heat or toasted in a shallow pan in a 325°F oven. Mix about 1 cup of seeds with 2 tsp. vegetable oil and 1 tsp. salt. Heat, stirring frequently to prevent scorching.