

Northern Gardener

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Photo by Tracy Walsh Photography, from *The Family Guide to Terrariums for Kids* by Patricia Buzo, Cool Springs Press



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INTER GIVES US SOMETHING the growing season rarely does: time. Without a summer garden waving from the window, it's easier to dig into gardening classes, leaf through seed catalogs and revisit notes from past seasons. I like to use this quieter stretch to celebrate what thrived, laugh at what didn't and daydream about what might happen this spring. It's a season for curiosity, learning and a little harmless scheming for the growing year ahead—perfect prep for some hands-on fun.

This issue embraces winter's slower pace, offering smart ways to wrangle your tools and seeds, tips for creating indoor terrariums and easy tricks for turning cuttings into more plants—all designed to inspire and equip as you plan for the season ahead and squeeze the most out of winter downtime.

So, dig in, dream big and savor this slower season—spring might sneak up on us before we even finish our hot cocoa.



Rebecca Swee

Rebecca Swee, Editor in Chief
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STAFF GARDEN BOOK PICKS

Our team's favorite reads to make you think, plan and fall in love with gardening all over again.

northerngardener.org/2026-garden-book-picks



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FOR MORE INFORMATION



Welcome

As a member of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society, you are connected to a unique community of northern gardeners and you get first access to all resources in The Tool Shed and our online classes in the Northern Gardener School. This issue, we are looking back at what made 2025 great.

2025 VOLUNTEER LIST

A heartfelt shoutout to the many volunteers who shared their time and energy with us in 2025. Your kindness and dedication make everything we do possible.
northerngardener.org/2025-volunteers



• We believe gardening has a vital impact on sustainability, health, food security, beauty and connection •

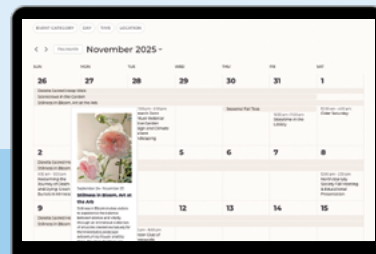


2025 IMPACT REPORT

Take a quick look at the amazing things we accomplished together in 2025! Our annual Impact Report highlights the programs, partnerships and people who helped make this an extraordinary year of growth.
northerngardener.org/2025-impact-report

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Find gardening-related events across the Upper Midwest. Bookmark the full calendar online – updated weekly!
northerngardener.org/calendar



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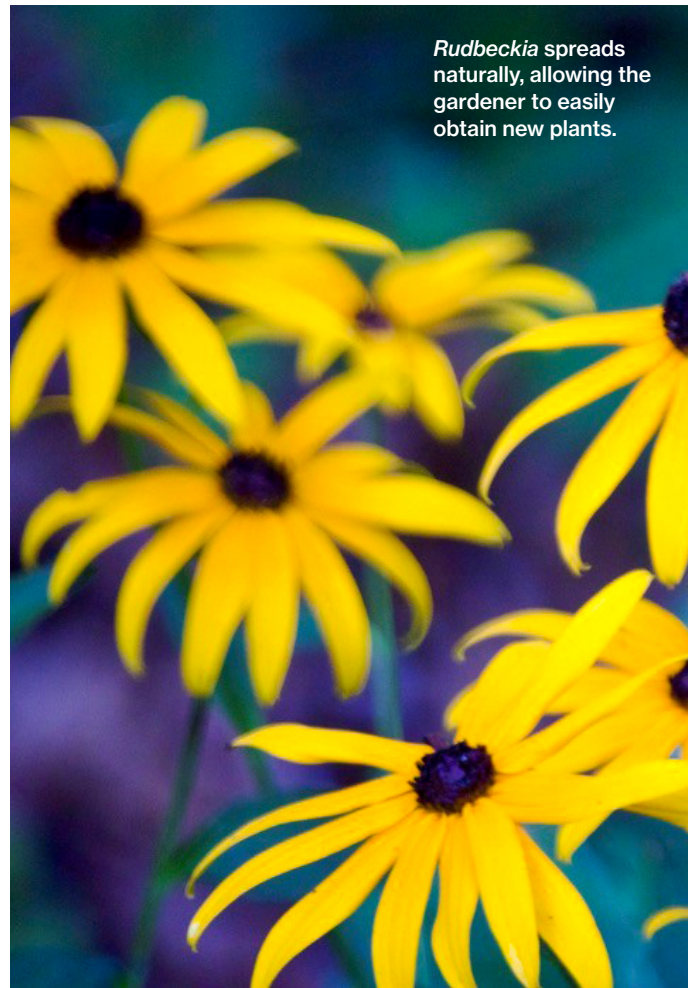
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Get More Plants for Free

A frugal gardener's secret weapon? Propagation.

STORY AND PHOTOS **DIANE MCGANN**



Rudbeckia spreads naturally, allowing the gardener to easily obtain new plants.

WE PLANT LOVERS can never seem to get enough. If you're like most northern gardeners, setting foot in a garden center usually results in a full cart and packed trunk. Yes, sigh, we love our plants but often dread the dent they make in our pocketbook.

A fix for this? Learn how to propagate plants so that you can grow your garden without spending a dime. Propagation turns your favorite plant into more to grow your own collection or share with friends and neighbors. What a beautiful way to cultivate connections with fellow plant lovers and create a bountiful garden without spending a lot of money.

How to propagate your plants

METHOD 1

Division

This is my favorite method. By cutting my perennials into two or more chunks, I get new plants instantly. To do this, ideally wait until fall or spring, although I have divided in summer, too. Lift up the entire plant and gently pull or cut the root ball apart, making sure that each resulting section has a few healthy roots. Immediately place the plants in your desired location. This works beautifully for plants with clumping root systems—think hostas, catmint (*Nepeta*), sedum, coneflowers (*Echinacea*), *Rudbeckia*, *Phlox*, daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), ornamental grasses, ferns, iris and plants with tubers and rhizomes (dahlias and potatoes). A nice bonus is that many perennials, such as iris, tickseed (*Coreopsis*) and spiderwort (*Tradescantia*), actually require division to stay healthy.

METHOD 2

Layering

Choose a low-lying stem, nick the underside, dust it with rooting hormone if you have some, and then bury that portion in soil. After a few weeks, roots form. Cut them free from the parent and, voila!, you have a new plant. This technique works great with clematis, azalea, forsythia, weigela and viburnum.

METHOD 3

Suckers

Root sprouts from plants such as summersweet (*Clethra*), raspberry, dogwood, chokeberry, snowberry and staghorn sumac can often be harvested to create a new plant if they have at least a few of their own roots and are far enough from the host plant to separate. Carefully dig 6 to 8 inches from the main plant, keeping as many roots intact as possible, and you'll have an instant clone of the original.

garden

weather or not

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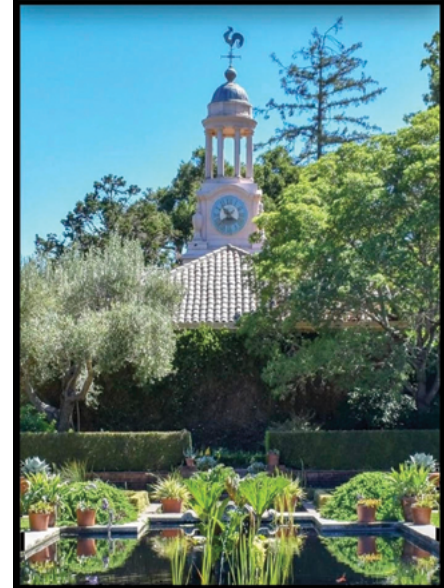
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METHOD 4

Stem cutting

This method requires patience but results in new, free shrubs. For those of you with the ability to wait for your reward, take hardwood cuttings from dormant, mature stems of shrubs such as lilac, forsythia, weigela and dogwood. Harvest a section in late fall to early spring, dip it in rooting hormone and place in a moist soil medium. Then wait—hardwood cuttings take months before rooting to the point that they can be transplanted. Softwood cuttings offer faster results. They are taken from pliable, young stems in late spring to early summer. Good candidates include hydrangea, ninebark and honeysuckle. You can even use this method to propagate trees such as willow, redbud and maple. Cut 4 to 6-inch stems with several sets of leaves, remove the lower leaves, dip in rooting hormone and place them in a moist potting mix or water. Roots usually form within 2 to 4 weeks.

METHOD 5

Seeds

Many plants, including perennials and annuals such as *Nicotiana*, moss rose, *Rudbeckia* and *Phlox*, spread seeds easily. I deadhead my *Rudbeckia* in early fall so the seeds I gather enrich my native garden instead of spreading throughout more formal perennial beds. You can also gather seeds still on the plant, dry them to prevent mold and store in labeled envelopes. Keep them in a cool, dry place over winter and then sow in spring. If you don't want to wait to plant them, you might try winter sowing. Another growing source of seeds is your local library or community center—check to see if they have a seed exchange and you might find new varieties free for the taking.



Top left: Perennials grown from bulbs, including *Iris* and *Allium*, benefit from periodic division to maintain healthy blooming. **Above:** *Cleome* seedpods will turn brown when mature, signaling they are then ready for collection. **Inset:** *Bergenia* has a clumping root system which makes for easy dividing.

METHOD 6

Grafting

The more adventurous among us can try grafting or attaching a stem from a compatible new plant to a cut area on a host plant. This allows a more tender plant to adopt the hardier characteristics of the base plant. This method is commonly performed on apple trees and roses. For details on how to do this, search “edu” and “grafting” online.

Whatever your method, propagation can be fun, surprisingly easy and certainly rewarding. Determine the best method to multiply your favorite plants, give it a go and pat yourself on the back when surveying your crop of beautiful new flowers and shrubs next spring.



See which plants you can propagate—and how—at northerngardener.org/propagation



The *Organized* Gardener

Get a jump on spring—a little attention to tools, tasks and time will set your garden up for a strong start in the new year.

STORY AND PHOTOS **MARY LAHR SCHIER**

Thanks to plenty of hanging storage, this gardener's shed stays tidy. It's a joy to work here.

Everything in its place

Organized gardeners keep the tools they use most close by when they work. A garden apron or pants with slots for tools works or you can carry a small canvas bag, plastic bucket or craft caddy with tools in the garden. Be sure to include gloves, snips, a dibble, scissors, zip ties, string and other useful tools. Some gardeners with large spaces install a mailbox on a post to keep tools handy and prevent them from getting wet.

In the garage or shed, create designated spaces for storing larger tools. Try Julia Child's pegboard approach, outlining the spaces for shears, saws, shovels and trowels. Or, you can add hooks to the wall for rakes and larger shovels. If your garage is unfinished, nail a board between studs to create slots for longer tools, an inexpensive and effective solution for keeping tools in their space. Don't forget to find a dry spot for hoses in winter. A pair of utility hooks hung in the garage or basement will keep them off the ground and out of the weather.

Indoors or out, consider creating a potting area. Two metal shelves with a plywood board or old table top provide work and storage space. Add a bin for potting soil, a bucket to hold trowels and dibbles and you're in business.

LIKE MANY GARDENERS, I spend way too much time hunting for lost tools, schlepping to the garage for the twine I forgot and standing in front of a beautiful plant and wondering, what is this and when did I plant it?

I had an epiphany about my disorganized state last June while touring a beautifully kept garden. A discreet area in the backyard hid neatly arranged pots, seed trays, potting mix, a table and trowels and a bin for compost. Everything the gardener needed to pot a plant was right there, handy and in one place. In the garage, she'd hung two simple key rings with plant tags on them—one for shrubs and one for perennials—for easy reference. Genius!

I was inspired and immediately started hunting for ways gardeners can be better organized with tools, tasks and time.



Seeds and plant tags

Seeds keep best when stored in a cool, dry, dark place. A simple, plastic storage bin works for many gardeners, but if you have a lot of seeds, consider buying a three-ring binder with plastic sleeves to keep them visible—old photo albums are perfect for this. If you save your own seeds, purchase small, brown, kraft paper envelopes or use small canning jars to keep them dry. Some gardeners use tackle boxes, photo storage boxes or small glass tubes for seed storage.

Many seed storage options can be purchased at the Dollar Store or other discount shops. No matter the system, keep your seeds somewhere dark and cold. And label, label, label.

With plants you've bought, it's tempting to just slide the plant tag into the ground near the plant. This works for one or two seasons at most before the tag breaks and fades (or your dog digs it up). Instead, keep a rough map of your garden and store plant tags indoors in simple file folders, a photo album or plastic bags labeled for each section of the garden. Or store plant tags together on a key ring or carabiner (*shown above*). If you have a shed, consider stapling them to the shed wall for easy access to important growing information on the tags.

More tool storage tips

Use an old toilet tissue holder or a paper towel dispenser to keep twine neat and accessible.

Hang items where you will use them. I attached a sturdy hook to a large planter on my deck to hold the hose when it isn't in use.

Use a metal garbage can or sturdy plastic bins to keep potting mix and soil amendments handy and neat. These are also good for storing potting mix over the winter.

When storing pots on shelves, place the heaviest ones on lower shelves and lighter ones above. For a quick start in spring, clean them before storing for winter.

Tasks and time

Organizing tasks involves knowing when to do which tasks and giving priority to the most important ones. For new gardeners, a regionally specific book may be helpful. Or bookmark monthly to-do lists on northerngardener.org. As you work in your own garden, you may want to develop a “punch list” of tasks for spring, summer, fall and winter relevant to your style of gardening. Keeping a journal of when things bloom and when to tackle specific tasks can also be helpful. At the end of the season, I use next year's calendar to note when some tasks should be done or to remind me to buy (or not buy) particular plants.

If finding enough time to garden is a challenge, here are a few ways to maximize your minutes.

Designate a day of the week for particular tasks. Fertilizer Friday for feeding containers, weeding Wednesday to remind you to pluck unwanted plants, tie-up Tuesday to encourage consistent trellising of vegetables.

Create some “me time” and do a bit of weeding by walking around your garden for 15 minutes each morning or evening. A few minutes of daily attention adds up and often reduces work. Alternatively, designate a specific period, such as Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon, as your garden time. Make sure your family knows that's your time and respects it.

Plant more perennials and fewer annuals if you are in a busy season of life.

Recruit help. Children as young as five love to pick berries and green beans. Young teens can mow the lawn or help with planting.

Add mulch to reduce the amount of time you need to spend weeding and watering.

Choose plants that don't require extensive deadheading or pruning and need less day-to-day care.

Let go of perfection

Whether you are hyper-organized or a happily disorganized gardener, remember your garden is yours — for growing food, creating beauty or just enjoying a quiet spot to relax.



An outdoor potting bench is placed under cover and close to the hose for comfortable use.

Keeping a Garden Journal

Garden journals help us plan, observe, track and learn from season to season. Here are 10 practical tips for getting started.



1 Use tools you already carry especially your phone

Your phone is an easy, always-available way to record garden observations. Try the Notes app, Reminders and the camera (with date stamps and info tags) to track plants and changes over time.

2 Explore a variety of journaling formats

Garden journals can be paper notebooks, phone apps, computer software or a mix. Choose a format that feels natural so you're more likely to stick with it.

3 Try specialized garden journaling apps or general organizational tools

Dozens of garden-specific apps exist, but general tools like spreadsheets, Trello and Evernote also work well for logging data, organizing thoughts and tracking seasonal tasks.

4 Consider templates if you don't want to build your own system

Etsy offers ready-made garden journal or planting templates compatible with Google Sheets and Excel. These can save setup time and help you begin tracking right away.

5 Use tagging systems to stay organized (e.g., Evernote)

Tags help sort your notes and make it simple to locate past information about specific plants, projects or issues. This improves your ability to revisit and analyze your garden history.

6 Choose a journal that allows multi-year tracking

Whether digital or paper, pick a format that lets you see multiple years at a glance. This makes patterns in bloom times, harvests and plant performance easy to compare.

7 Use paper for creative planning and layout design

Grid paper, sketchbooks and cutouts (or even magazine clippings) let you visualize and plan garden beds or entire landscapes. This tactile method is ideal for design-oriented gardeners.

8 Explore digital garden design tools

Platforms like Canva, GrowVeg, iScape and Smart Gardener help you digitally design garden layouts, visualize plantings or get customized recommendations. They're great for testing ideas before planting.

9 Start with free versions but expect paid upgrades

Many design or journaling programs offer trials or basic free access. For deeper functionality—like full design features or long-term data tracking—you may need a paid version.

10 Personalize your system and experiment

Garden journaling is highly personal: the “right” system is the one you'll actually use. Experiment with tools and formats until you find a style that supports your gardening habits and inspires consistency.



WATCH THE VIDEO

Explore more ways to track plant performance, weather patterns and design ideas using everything from simple notebooks to powerful digital tools.

northerngardener.org/garden-journal

Planning Resources

These trusted tools highlight seasonal planning projects and guide northern gardeners in what to do—and when—throughout the growing season.



Northern Gardener Planning Calendar

Key cold-climate gardening tasks laid out by month.
northerngardener.org/planning-calendar

Northern Gardener Plant Journal

A guide to caring for your houseplants.
northerngardener.org/plant-journal

Northern Gardener Garden Designs

Access a growing collection of easy-to-use garden plans.
northerngardener.org/garden-plans

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Week-by-Week Vegetable Gardener's Handbook by Jennifer and Ron Kujawski.

Step-by-step, seasonal instructions based on last frost dates. Look for the spiral-bound version with room for record-keeping.

Month-by-Month Gardening in Minnesota and Wisconsin by Melinda Myers.

Look for this trusted monthly guide for northern gardeners at your local library.

Buy these books in our curated Bookshop at bookshop.org/shop/northerngardener

A portion of your purchase will support our educational mission.



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Hennepin County Master Gardener Volunteers Upcoming Events

For more information: hennepinmastergardeners.org/events

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Hopkins Pavilion, 11000 Excelsior Blvd., Hopkins, MN

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To learn more:
Hennepinmastergardeners.org/events/spring-plant-sale/

Learning Garden Tour

Saturday, July 11, 8:30am-4:30pm

Explore 10 inspiring gardens!

This year's self-guided tour showcases 10 gardens in the southeast area of Hennepin County. Join us for inspiration, education, and garden-related shopping.

Cost: \$15 in advance; \$20 day of tour.

Discounts for groups of 10 or more. Children under 12 free with a paying adult. Tour held rain or shine.

To buy tickets & learn more:
Hennepinmastergardeners.org/events/learning-garden-tour/

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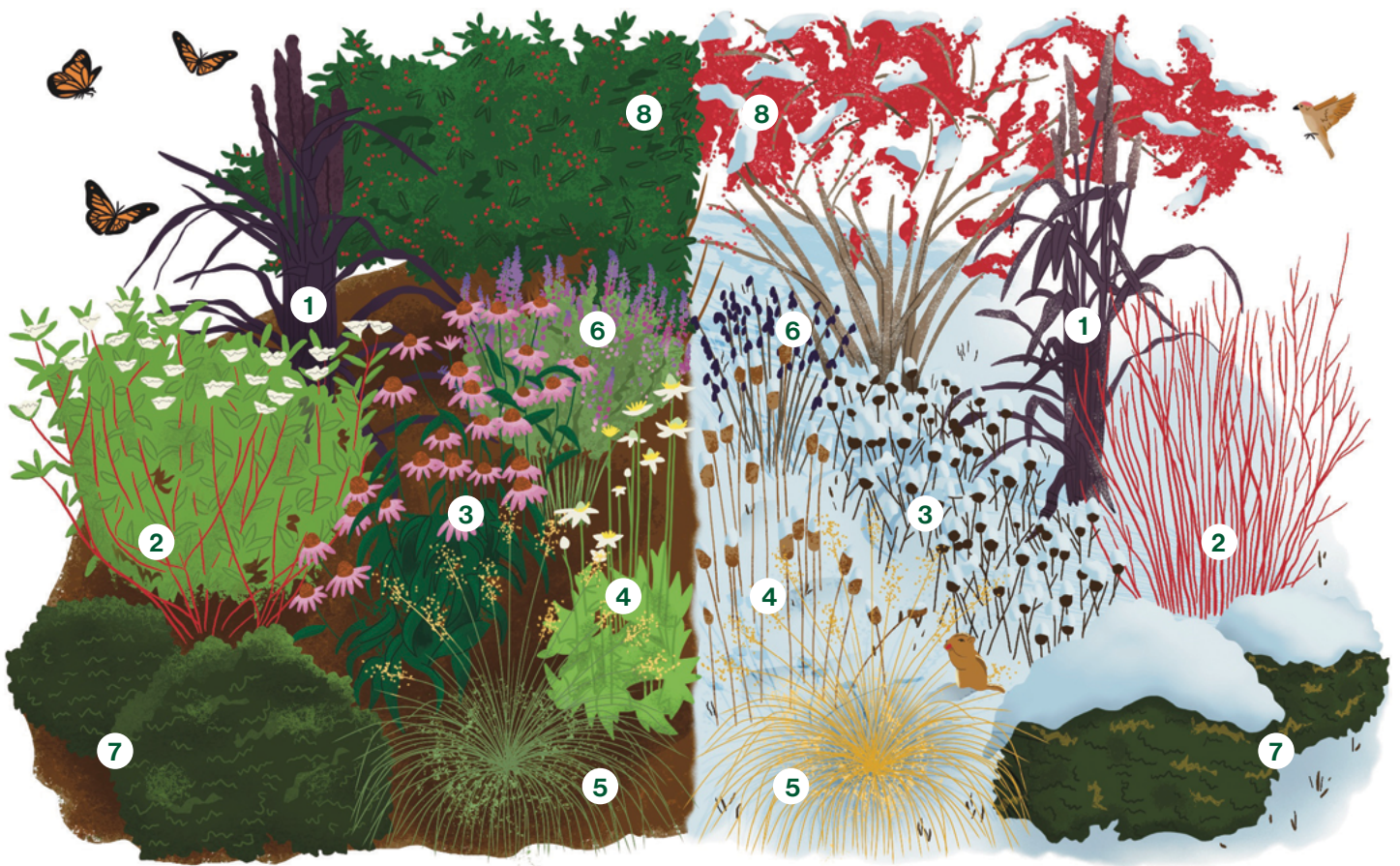
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A Garden that *Doesn't Hibernate*

Planning a garden that also looks beautiful in the snow is a gift to your winter self. While so much of the snow season is monochrome, we can create beautiful winterscapes by considering shadows, color, structure and seasonal interest from seed pods, foliage and berries, which can also be a tasty winter snack for some nearby creatures.

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS
TAYLOR TINKHAM



The Plants

When choosing plants for a winterscape, variety is the key. A mix of plants with diverse heights, density of stems, color and sturdiness will create the most interesting winter view. Storms will come, stems will break and the winter garden will change. Every day we get to walk outside to see something new. This garden design reminds us to appreciate our changing plants all year round.



WINTER'S PANTRY

Some of the best plants for providing sustenance for animals:

Edible for all creatures, including humans, **chokeberry** (*Aronia melanocarpa*) tolerates most soil types and conditions and has white, spring-blooming flowers.

Tall, sturdy **anise hyssop** (*Agastache foeniculum*) stems often stand tall above even the highest snow accumulation, making their seeds an important meal for birds and small mammals.

Smooth **sumac** (*Rhus glabra*) berries dry out rather than rotting or fermenting, so they make a great, long-lasting winter snack for both birds and mammals.

Some **crabapple** (*Malus spp.*) varieties hold onto their fruit through winter—look for Harvest Gold, Candymint, Red Sentinel and others with persistent fruit.

Amaranth (*Amaranthus spp.*) provides plenty of seed that is especially attractive to small birds such as sparrows and goldfinches.

Dried **allium** (*Allium spp.*) seed heads resemble the fun pompom on top of your winter hat, and your bird neighbors will love the seeds.

1

Purple Millet

(*Pennisetum glaucum* 'Purple Majesty', 'Purple Baron' or 'Jester')

Provides shadows, accessories and snacks. Easy to grow from seed, it stands tall as an accent in the garden, providing food for birds and purple color even after they dry up in the fall. With help from a low winter sun, millet casts beautiful shadows across fresh snow.

2

Redtwig dogwood

(*Cornus stolonifera* 'Farrow', Arctic Fire®)

Provides shadows and color. The first plant I think of when I'm looking for winter color, this dogwood's red to orange-red, bare twigs stand out against white snow and are sturdy enough to stay upright in blizzard conditions.

3

Coneflower (*Echinacea spp.*)

Provides snow architecture and shadows. Large seed heads are the perfect platform to gather snow and form a little hat. The dried stems also turn dark brown and stand out beautifully in a winterscape.

4

Tall Thimbleweed

(*Anemone virginiana*)

Provides snow architecture. Similar to coneflower, dried seed heads collect tufts of snow and groups of them look like little cartoon friends with white hairdos. Their stems are less sturdy than coneflowers, but they'll survive a few storms and create lovely, delicate shadows throughout the day.

5

Prairie Dropseed

(*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Provides color and texture.

This mounding grass sports gold and bronze highlights in fall and winter and stays full all year long. A slow grower, it requires minimal maintenance to keep it from taking over.

6

False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)

Provides accessories.

Pollinators love the beautiful flowers that eventually turn into dark purple seed pods that rattle like castanets in the wind.

7

Small evergreens (*Abies balsamea* 'Nana', *Taxus cuspidata* 'Monloo' or Emerald Spreader® yew or *Thuja occidentalis* Tater Tot®)

Provides color and snow architecture.

Tater Tot® arborvitae holds snow well. Emerald Spreader® yew and other sprawling varieties provide visual interest and wildlife habitat.

8

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata* 'Red Sprite', Berry Heavy® or 'Afterglow')

Provides color, accessories and snacks.

Bright red berries, though toxic to humans and pets, are loved by birds and a festive garden addition.



Learn more:
[northerngardener.org/
winterberry](http://northerngardener.org/winterberry)

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Wintertime Wildlife Wreaths

Create festive wreaths
to support wildlife in winter.

STORY AND PHOTOS **JAMIE MILLER**



This grapevine wreath is a songbird magnet in the winter garden.



MISSING THE SUMMERTIME FLURRY of wildlife activity in your garden? Attract sweet songbirds to your backyard even in the dead of winter with wildlife wreaths. Easy to craft at home, these welcome feeding stations provide hard-to-find winter sustenance for our backyard buddies such as downy woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches, black-capped chickadees, blue jays, northern cardinals, red and gray squirrels. Both functional food sources and beautiful backyard baubles, these DIY wildlife wreaths will spice up your winter view and bring all the birds to the yard.

Birdseed Wreath

Try your hand at making a bundt pan birdseed wreath with this simple recipe.

INGREDIENTS

1 bundt pan
3-foot ribbon of your choice
4 cups songbird seed mix
1 packet gelatin (roughly 2½ teaspoons)
½ cup warm water
3 tablespoons corn syrup
¾ cup flour
½ cup fresh or dried, unsweetened cranberries
Cooking spray

HOW TO MAKE

Mix gelatin in warm water to dissolve. Add corn syrup and then flour to make an edible, glue-like mixture. Add seeds and mix into glue mixture thoroughly until all seeds are coated. Spray bundt pan with non-stick cooking spray, line cranberries in bottom of the pan, press seed and glue mixture around bundt pan evenly. Let sit for 24 hours to ensure the mixture dries and hardens fully. Attach a ribbon and hang outside near your favorite critter-watching window.



You need only a few simple ingredients to make this easy birdseed wreath.

Grapevine Wreath

Filled with nutrient-rich native plant seed heads, bird seed and other fruits and berries, this wildlife wreath is easy to make at home. Explore your backyard or forage in neighboring woods or fields for intact seed heads to clip and stick into a grapevine wreath base. In this example, I wove in these songbird seed favorites: goldenrod, bee balm, white snakeroot (*Cimicifuga*), blackberry lily, rose hips, *Liatrix* and *Ligularia*. Add “sunflower skeletons”, the dried flower heads the birds have picked clean of seeds—they make the perfect vessel to dip into peanut butter and coat with a delicious songbird seed mix.

INGREDIENTS

14 to 16-inch grapevine wreath
3-foot ribbon of your choice
6-foot green floral wire
1 apple, sliced and dried rounds
1 orange, sliced and dried rounds
1 handful fresh cranberries (optional)
½ cup natural peanut butter (no sweeteners)
1 cup songbird seed mix
5 to 7 pinecones with wires or sunflower skeletons
5 to 7 bundles of various native seedpods/heads, 3 to 5 stems per bundle, trim to 4 or 5-inch stems

HOW TO MAKE

Get creative and have fun! Dip wired pinecones and/or sunflower skeleton heads into peanut butter and then roll in the birdseed mixture to fully coat. Attach them to the wreath by twisting the wire, repeating until all are attached. You can place cranberries either in the center of the sunflower heads or around pinecone as desired. Next, take sorted and trimmed native seed head bundles and tuck them into wreaths in between the grapevines, alternating by seed type or as desired. Add apple and orange slices by attaching with wire or tucking under vining until you achieve the desired look. Add ribbon at the top and hang in a location you can see frequently. Enjoy!

TIP For longevity and to protect from rain, hang wreath(s) under an overhang or eave.

The Tiny, Terrific World of
Terrariums

Artful little ecosystems are beautiful, fun and easy to make.

STORY
ERIC JOHNSON



PHOTOS **TRACY WALSH PHOTOGRAPHY,**
FROM *THE FAMILY GUIDE TO TERRARIUMS FOR KIDS* BY PATRICIA BUZO, COOL SPRINGS PRESS



AS SNOW BLANKETS the frozen ground, magical, miniature gardens in glass can thrive on your coffee table or windowsill. Calming little pockets of nature, terrariums bring forest floor vibes to your bedside table and botanical, jewel box beauty to your buffet. In a word, they're darling. Stick your nose inside a lush terrarium for a whiff of that damp, humus-rich sweetness that smells like a June morning in the woods.

These tiny glass gardens ask so little and give so much. A bit of sunlight, occasional pruning, light watering now and then... that's all they require. Through the magic of photosynthesis, the plants make food from light and recycle the air inside the glass. As plant materials break down, they return nutrients to the soil, feeding the ecosystem just like a forest floor does. And the cycle continues.

A fun and approachable DIY project for both beginners and more seasoned gardeners, planting a terrarium is deeply satisfying for anyone who loves working with plants. Everything about making them is tactile and almost meditative: handling pebbles, scooping soil, spreading moss and tucking in tiny plants.

I've planted dozens of terrariums over the years—some survive, others don't. If the plants start to look unhealthy, I pull them out and plant in a pot.

Though terrariums are low-maintenance, they are not completely hands-off. From my experience, some pruning and occasional plant swapping are necessary to keep a truly attractive glass garden. They love bright but indirect light. A little early morning or late afternoon direct sun is fine, but midday sun through glass can magnify heat and scorch plants. Direct sun can also create excess condensation.

Terrariums, especially enclosed ones, rarely need watering. From my experience, a little supplemental drink—about 1/4 cup a month—is sufficient. Monitor condensation. A little mist inside the glass is ideal; heavy droplets that run are a sign of an overly moist environment (leave the cover off for a bit). If very little or no condensation occurs or the soil is dry, water lightly.

Selecting the best vessel

The container sets the tone. Begin with a piece you love and can envision in your home for years. Glass echoes the organic feel of the terrarium ecosystem, though acrylic vessels work, too. Pick any container that lets light in while maintaining a contained environment. You can find great pieces at craft and home décor stores, nurseries, Facebook Marketplace, thrift stores and antique shops. Glass-topped aquariums work well.

A sealed or nearly enclosed container traps humidity needed to keep moisture recycling. Search for a bulbous body shape with a smaller opening or a container with a cover. A lid is helpful for cylindrical containers; if yours doesn't come with one, use a glass plate from your cabinets or a thrift store. You can also purchase glass rounds online and at hardware and craft stores. Before planting, wash your container thoroughly with dish soap.



Plants that thrive in terrariums

Low-to-medium light and moisture-loving plants are the stars of the show. Some favorites include:

Moss

You can harvest this electric woodland green you from your yard (check for hitchhiking weeds).

Baby's tears

Soft and sweet but sensitive to direct sun.

Ferns

Adds instant woodland atmosphere.

Peperomia

Reliable and endlessly varied.

Polka-dot plant (*Hypoestes*)

Colorful, energetic, manageable with pruning.

Nephtytis* and *Philodendron

Fun and sculptural, but occasional haircut required.

Pilea

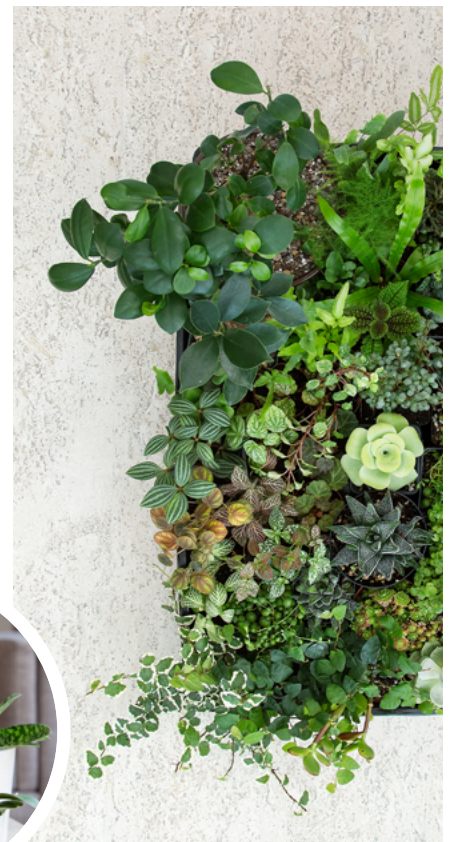
Compact, architectural and well suited to enclosed spaces.

Nerve plant

Low growing and humidity loving, with vivid, patterned leaves.

Orchids

Tucked into a little nest of orchid bark and sphagnum moss, they make a centerpiece worthy of a winter windowsill. Even after their blooms fade, their leaves remain lovely.



DIY AT HOME

5 steps to create a no-fuss terrarium

This method is simple, reliable and beautifully layered. Think of it like making a trifle, a tiny woodland parfait.

SUPPLIES

- A clean glass container
- Pea-sized river rock
- Horticultural charcoal
- Moss
- Sterile potting soil
- Your chosen plants
- A spoon and a chopstick
- Watering can or spray bottle



WATCH A HOW-TO VIDEO:
[northerngardener.org/
diy-terrarium](http://northerngardener.org/diy-terrarium)

1

Start with a drainage layer. Pour in 1 to 2 inches of river rock to form a reservoir where excess water will settle. Add a half inch of horticultural charcoal. This is non-negotiable—it helps purify the water, prevents fungus and keeps the air fresh.

2

Add moss. A generous layer keeps your soil from sifting down into the charcoal and rock. It also adds that earthy, woodland look.

3

Add 2 to 3 inches of potting soil (the kind without fertilizer) to encourage slow, steady growth, not a jungle.

4

Plant thoughtfully. Embrace the same principles you'd use outdoors. Contrasting textures, a mix of upright and low-growing plants and a mix of colors make for an interesting and beautiful terrarium. Use a spoon to dig planting holes and chopstick to guide roots. Gently shake the container when done; this settles everyone in.

5

Water lightly, just enough that about ½ inch of water appears around the bottom pebbles. This jumpstarts the ecosystem.



Tiny Wonders

More than just a sweet little garden in a jar, a terrarium is a miniature world for us plant geeks, perfectly reflecting the outdoors in a tiny, contained ecosystem. With a terrarium, a lush garden world is yours to enjoy every day, even in the dead of winter.



Learn how to create the terrariums shown in this article from ***The Family Guide to Terrariums for Kids*** by Patricia Buzo, Cool Springs Press.

