

Winter upkeep needed to prepare spring blooms

I survived this month's single-digit freeze, but my garden wasn't so fortunate. What to do now?

Ironically, one of the water garden pumps froze and burned out, but I kept open water for wild birds, some of which will soon be getting drunk on shriveled, fermenting holly berries. As for plants, in spite of my best preparations some are left to recover from partial damage, but a few are deader than doorknobs.

Though the cold-hardy red flowering quince is already popping fresh new flowers, and tender leaf buds on roses, hydrangeas, and other early sprouters will be replaced by dormant buds, I'm afraid this year's blueberry crop is gone.

But it was a no-brainer that the fully-open flowers of my camellias, paperwhite daffodils, and early white iris were zapped and are thawing into dripping mush.

Some of my winter annuals like snapdragons, a few pansies, ornamental cabbage, and newly-planted English peas, all which can easily survive normal winter temperatures, were lulled into tenderness by warm, sunny days and killed by the sudden deep freeze; I'll replant winter veggies but wait a few weeks to plant summer annuals.

I expect dozens of emails about sago palms, star or

confederate jasmine, and a few other widely-enjoyed shrubs and vines are now uniformly tan. Most will leaf back out later, shedding the damage with new growth pushing off the brown foliage.

While waiting to see if the sagos made it, I recommend either cutting the brown fronds off entirely so the new stuff comes out nice and green, or spray paint them whatever your sense of the absurd or family members will allow. Show neighbors you can laugh off garden humility.

Most of those plants will live to flower another year, but I had the foresight to go out before the freeze and take photos and a few flowers for cheery indoor bouquets. In an effort to stave off a bout of Seasonal Affective Disorder and banish the winter blues, I printed out one of my colorful photos and taped it to my bathroom mirror, hoping to keep my color-starved pineal gland pumping out feel-better endorphins.

A lot of folks keep winter color by lining kitchen windowsills with tinted glass bottles; even when coated in ice my bottle trees brighten the entire yard, especially when perched with colorful birds.

The worst that has happened is how countless azaleas, pittosporum, confederate jasmine, oleander, and a few other taken-for-granted



FELDER RUSHING



Gone but not forgotten.

but borderline hardy shrubs have had their bark split. Every few years a sudden hard freeze ices up the layer of moist green tissue just beneath the bark and bursts open the stems.

Those shrubs will look fine for a while, but as soon as they start sprouting new growth from stored energy in the upper twigs they will be unable to get replenishing moisture and nutrients to the upper parts, and the pull of green leaves causes the plants to suck themselves dry.

It may be spring or even midsummer before branches or shrubs will suddenly, as horticulturists say, "brown

out" and die seemingly out of the clear blue.

Dramatic as it sounds, the only thing to be done for them is, as soon as you see the split bark, to quickly cut them off just below the split bark; most will sprout healthy new growth and resume a rejuvenated life.

So now what? I'm done with hand-wringing, starting cleanup, proactive pruning, replanting too-far-gone flowers and vegetables evaluating borderline shrubs. Its about all I can do; like cleaning up after unruly party guests, I'm taking it stride, and hoping and planning that it doesn't happen again.

Felder Rushing is a Missis-



February 25 - Jordan Pritchard, Taylor Phillips, Jonathan McBride, Phil Williamson, Trent Johnson, Cindy Middleton, Marc Boutwell, Livi Howell, Kim Rutledge, David Wallace, Joanna McLaurin, Candice Edwards Parish, DeeDee Cobb, Kendall Smith, Wayne Wong, John Koll, Jimmy Pate

February 26 - Cleotha Baker, Samantha Williamson Giles

February 27 - Taylor Ellison Bethany, Caleb Guest, Robert Hawkins, Francine Smith, Larry Killebrew

February 28 - Mac A. O'Neal, Tunga Newton, Jimbo Thomas, Wade O'Briant, Michael Fancher, Jill Nichols, Linda K. Gibson, Troy Golden, Ray McCleskey, Chris Howard, Jonwiley Jones, Coby LeClair, Earline Wright Hart

February 29 - Deloris Adkins, Madison Sims, Judy Richards, Gene Brooks

March 1 - Whit Ables, Cliff Bishop, Audrey Tate, Samuel Brown, Keith Dean, Cayson Milum, Christyn Truitt, Christi Richmond, Kay Robertson, Molly Hanks, Rosie Pate, Dorothy

sippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.



February 25 - George and Li Ables

February 26 - Chris and Miranda Killebrew

February 28 - Andy and Shelly Ledbetter

March 3 - Josh and Heather Guest, Lake and Nicole Lindsey

To add your birthdays and anniversaries to our list, please send your information by mail to P.O. Box 60, Lexington, MS 39095; fax 662-834-1074; email to hcherald@gmail.com; or stop by our office at 308 Court Square in Lexington. No phone calls, please.

March 2 - Beverly Marshall Edwards, Fred Horton, Christy Pritchard, Mike Hood, Ryder Cotten, Sasha McMorris, Jan Pullen, Barry M. Jones, Faye Roy, Johnny McBride

March 3 - Hayley Drennan, Silento McMorris, Kim Upshaw, Claire Suzanne Sheppard, Anita James

*Break-ins

(Continued from page 1.) break-in at the CMI (Central Mississippi Inc.) office next to the former Fred's building.

March said the investigation is ongoing and law enforcement were checking available surveillance videos.

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