The Grapevine

Winter Thoughts

It’s a rainy or snowy day in Butler County as I write this article and while I love the moisture we are getting, and the snow activities my family gets to do outside, these dreary days can impact my mood and motivation. The “winter blues” are an issue for approximately 40% of Americans, with 5% of people experiencing SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder. The “winter blues” are one of the reasons I started collecting houseplants such as the Raven ZZ we are talking about in this newsletter. I still have quite a few plants now that I’ve moved to Kansas but I also have found that starting my own vegetable and flower seeds helps to boost my mood. It is still early in January but cool season vegetable planting is just around the corner. Some of our cool season vegetables such as celery and onions should be seeded 10-12 weeks while broccoli and cauliflower can wait till 4-6 weeks before your planned transplant date. It’s not just vegetables we should be starting from seed, annuals including pansies or wax begonias, herbs such as parsley and many perennial flowers should be planted soon. As you flip through your garden catalogs and start planning your garden for this year be sure to make a list of seeding dates so they don’t sneak up on you. Be sure to check out those seed catalogs for your daily dose of spring color. Happy Growing!!
Raven ZZ - Zamioculcas zamiifolia 'Raven' By Chris Stuhlsatz

The Raven ZZ plant is a stunning variety of the popular ZZ plant, known for its dramatic dark purple-black leaves. It's a relatively new addition to the houseplant market, having been introduced in 2019, but it has quickly become a favorite among plant enthusiasts for its unique appearance and easy-care requirements.

Here are some key features of the Raven ZZ plant:

- **Appearance:** Shiny, deep purple-black foliage with lime-green new growth. The leaves grow in clusters on fleshy stems and can reach up to 6 inches in length.
- **Growth:** Slow-growing, reaching a mature height of 1-2 feet.
- **Light:** Tolerates a wide range of light conditions, from low light to bright indirect light. However, it will not thrive in direct sunlight.
- **Watering:** Requires very little water. Allow the soil to dry completely between waterings.
- **Humidity:** Adapts to average household humidity, but prefers moderate humidity.
- **Toxicity:** Non-toxic to humans and pets.
- **Other names:** Raven ZZ, Black ZZ, Eternity Plant

Here are some of the reasons why the Raven ZZ plant is a great choice for houseplants:

- **Easy care:** It is one of the most low-maintenance houseplants available. It can tolerate neglect and is perfect for beginners.
- **Unique appearance:** The dark purple-black foliage adds a dramatic touch to any room.
- **Air purifying:** Like other ZZ plants, the Raven ZZ helps to purify the air by removing harmful toxins.
- **Long-lasting:** With proper care, the Raven ZZ plant can live for many years.

Here are some tips for caring for your Raven ZZ plant:

- Use a well-draining potting mix.
- Water your plant thoroughly when the soil is dry to the touch.
- Avoid overwatering, as this can lead to root rot.
- Fertilize your plant monthly during the spring and summer.
- Repot your plant every 2-3 years when it outgrows its pot.
- Wipe the leaves with a damp cloth to remove dust.
- Keep your plant away from drafts and cold temperatures.

Overall, the Raven ZZ plant is a beautiful and easy-to-care-for houseplant that makes a great addition to any home. These plants were once expensive and hard to find; however, they now can easily be found locally at various stores.
What’s Your Winter Wellness Plan?

By Bonnie Brewer – FCS Agent K-State Research & Extension Butler County

Winter is here! This season ushers in cold winds, shorter days, winter blues, and the risk of unwanted sick days. It’s crucial to prioritize self-care and assess your needs for a healthy winter season. Building a winter wellness arsenal involves preparing yourself physically and mentally to navigate the challenges of the colder months. Here are twelve tips to help you create a comprehensive winter wellness plan, shared by Nutrition and Wellness Extension Educator, Kristin Bogdonas.

1. **Focus on a Nutrient-Rich Diet:** Before relying on natural remedies, supplements, or vitamins, it’s crucial to pay attention to the food you eat and the products you use on your body. Nutrients are often synergistic and more potent in nature’s packaging.

2. **Consider Vitamin Supplements:** Winter can bring feelings of isolation or seasonal affective disorder (SAD) – winter blues. Since sunlight exposure may be limited in winter, consider taking vitamin D supplements to support your mood. Additional supplements to consider this time of year include zinc, vitamin C and echinacea.

3. **Get Regular Exercise:** Engage in regular physical activity to support your immune system and improve mood. Choose indoor exercises like home workouts, or fitness classes to stay active during cold weather. Take it outdoors and enjoy a brisk walk in the fresh air.

4. **Get Adequate Sleep:** Prioritize quality sleep by maintaining a consistent sleep schedule. This is vital for a strong immune system. If you have trouble falling asleep, consider including more foods rich in magnesium, vitamin D, C, and omega-3 fatty acids.

5. **Wear Winter-Appropriate Clothing:** Exposure to cold and wet conditions can compromise your health. To combat the wintry mix, invest in warm and weather-appropriate clothing.

6. **Practice Hand Hygiene:** It’s estimated we touch our face 23 times an hour! This is especially problematic during cold and flu season. Wash your hands often with soap and water to prevent the spread of germs.

7. **Develop a Skin Routine:** Moisturize your skin regularly, as cold and dry air can lead to dry skin. Balms and salves made with all-natural ingredients and oils will lock in the moisture longer than a lotion. The latter is water-based and will need to be applied more often.

8. **Plan Relaxation Time:** Amid the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, make sure to schedule downtime for relaxation. Whether it’s reading a book, taking a bath, or practicing a hobby, find moments to unwind and find peace in the present.

9. **Engage in Winter Hobbies:** Find winter activities you enjoy, to stay active and embrace the season. Plan indoor hobbies like crafting or cooking to keep yourself engaged during colder days.

10. **Remember to Hydrate:** Despite the colder weather, continue to stay well-hydrated. The dry air can quickly lead to dehydration. Consume warm beverages like herbal teas or soups to stay hydrated and mend sore throats.

11. **Respiratory Health:** Be proactive in supporting respiratory health. Use a humidifier to add moisture to the air and prevent dryness in your living space.

12. **Stay Informed:** Stay updated on weather forecasts and be prepared for any extreme weather conditions. Have a plan in place and keep your car stocked with an emergency kit for the unexpected.

Remember, everyone’s winter wellness needs are unique, so tailor these tips to suit your individual preferences and health requirements. Always consult with a healthcare professional for personalized advice.
Creating a Terrarium

A terrarium is a sealed or open clear container where plants are grown. This skill dates back at least 2,500 years to ancient Greece, however, the modern terrarium is credited to a 19th-century London physician. Dr. N.B. Ward buried a sphinx moth in damp earth inside an enclosed bottle, when the moth emerged he was surprised to see a seedling fern and grass also growing in the bottle. He observed the bottle for four years and during that time never needed to water or care for the plants. Hence the modern terrarium. Creating one is a wonderful winter project to help those plants that need just more humidity than your house can provide.

Supplies:
- Clear Container (glass or plastic are best)
- Growing Media (Clean and well-drained)
- Plants (If using a closed container use humidity-loving plants)
- Pebbles
- Activated Charcoal
- Decorations

Instructions:
1. Prepare the container by washing it thoroughly and allowing it to dry.
2. Add pebbles or rocks to the bottom of the terrarium for drainage. Put approximately 1/2” of activated charcoal on top of the rocks. Activated charcoal cleans the water that drains from the soil.
3. Add the growing media. Approximately ¼ of the container should be taken up by the growing media, pebbles, and charcoal.
4. Add in your plants. Be sure to use plants free of disease and insect issues since the terrarium conditions would be ideal for them to thrive.
5. Water it in and place where it receives bright indirect light. Direct light could heat the terrarium and kill the plants.
LAWN & LANDSCAPE CARE
FOR NEW HOMEBUYERS

Buying a home can be overwhelming and that is without factoring in that you now have a yard to care for. While we can't help with the house maintenance we can help you figure out what to do outside of the house. This class is designed to help you figure out the basics of lawn and landscape care, determine what plants are currently growing around your home, and how to maintain them or create a whole new landscape. This program is free of charge.

TOPICS
- Basic Lawn Care
- Low Maintenance Lawn Care
- Basic Landscape Design
- Plant Identification
- Resources for picking out plants

TUESDAY,
JANUARY 24, 2024
7:00 P.M.

BUTLER COUNTY
COMMUNITY/4-H BUILDING
200 North Griffith Street
El Dorado, KS 67042

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Garden Magic Unveiled

Saturday, February 10th
10AM - 11:30 AM
Andover Public Library

Prepare your garden for a season of vibrant blooms and bountiful harvests. Join us for an informative and inspiring garden class led by Master Gardener, Calandria Edwards.

TO REGISTER, PLEASE EMAIL: TLARSEN@ANDOVERLIBRARY.ORG

Free and open to all ages!