

**Transform Your Garden into a Winter Wonderland**  
**Rick Abrahamson**  
**Week of October 5, 2009**

Now that most areas have had at least light frost I think it is time we discuss winter gardening. With the changing of the seasons we find that spring, summer, fall, and winter can provide very different gardening challenges. We use spring flowering bulbs like crocus, tulips, and daffodils to provide early color in our gardens. Flowering perennials, trees, and shrubs hold our interest during spring and early summer. And later in the year we grow many annuals and perennials to provide colors other than the lush greens of summer. During the fall, chrysanthemums can bloom as late as November in some years. This brings us to the off-season for gardening; but does it have to be that way?

We tend to think that gardens are done when the snow flies. This is not the case as many plants can add winter interest to our gardens. Shrubs like red-twigged dogwood and cranberrybush viburnum can provide brilliant red color to our winter landscape from December through February. Many trees also provide winter interest as well. Amur chokecherry has bronze exfoliating bark; 'Red Splendor' crabapples retain medium sized red fruit throughout the winter and can actually appear to be blooming during the dead of winter. Perennials like 'Autumn Joy' sedum, 'Coronation Gold' yarrow, and 'Karl Forester' feather reed grass stay upright in the landscape and will poke their heads out through snow even if it is a foot or two deep.

Gardeners can force many bulbs to bloom indoors during the winter. Tulips, daffodils, and crocus force well but require a cold treatment, called vernalization, before flowering can take place. Bulbs should be stored at 38-48 degrees F for a minimum of 12-13 weeks (the crisper in your refrigerator works well). Planting chilled bulbs will provide color to your home in about two weeks.

After Christmas many prop your Christmas tree into the snow to give the illusion that you have just planted one or more trees. If you don't use a live tree then look around on the boulevard during the week after Christmas; they can be found everywhere. This practice can totally change your landscape for the remaining months of winter.

As always if you have additional questions about horticultural topics you can call me at 605-394-2188 or email to [ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu](mailto:ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu). Also be sure to check out our website at <http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html>.

**Upcoming Events of Interest**  
**(please call for more information)**

October 5-10 – National 4-H Week  
October 3 & 4 – 4-H Open House – Rapid City Public Library  
October 5-10 – Western Junior Livestock and Consumer Science Show  
October 17 – Leaf Imprint Workshop – Rapid City  
November 21 – Bulb Forcing Workshop – Rapid City