



Home, Health & Garden Line®

Greetings!

Ol' Man Winter has arrived in full force, and by the looks of things, it seems like he's settling in for a long visit. Right now, most of us can only dream of lush green grass and colorful flowers blooming in warm spring breezes. But the growing season will be here before we know it, and in the meantime, there's plenty to be done to prepare for Mother Nature's about-face. So while the weather outside continues to be frightful, why not do something delightful...indoors? Now's a great time to keep your windows clean and clear so you can enjoy whatever daylight you can—and get a terrific view of the colorful backyard birds!

Jerry Baker

In the News...

Weather Affects Produce Aisle Offerings

Record low temps in California last fall threatened local citrus crops, but farmers were able to keep the cold at bay by using wind machines and warm water. However, the long drought and scorching temps in the South have had an impact on Vidalia onion, peanut, and cotton crops. The lower than average rainfall also means you can expect to see smaller than average Florida-grown oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines in the produce section this winter.



This Season's Hot Topic:

Help for Happy Houseplants

Now that the holidays are over, the days are shorter, and the skies are mostly gray, your rooms might seem a little drab. So turn your attention to your houseplants (or visit a garden center and treat yourself to a few) and let them brighten your days! Spotted or striped, patterned or plain, houseplants come in practically every color of the rainbow. And here's a simple formula that will keep yours at their vibrant best throughout the year.

Mix 1 twice-used tea bag, 1 teaspoon of antiseptic mouthwash, 1 teaspoon of baby shampoo, 1 teaspoon of ammonia, and 1 quart of water in a bucket, and let the mixture steep for about 10 minutes. Fish out the tea bag, pour the liquid into a handheld sprayer bottle, and mist-spray your plants' foliage every week or so.

Soothe That Sore Throat

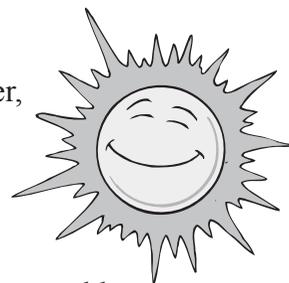
If you're suffering from a raging sore throat, put down that hot tea! Drinking piping-hot liquids swells your uvula—the soft structure that hangs at the back of your throat—and increases your discomfort when your throat is already tender. To help curb swelling and pain, it's better to drink cool or even icy drinks. Just crush some ice in a blender, add your favorite juice, and sip it throughout the day.

For an easy-to-make cooling soother that also boosts your energy, whip up this great little drink: Combine 1 cup of orange juice, 1/3 cup of nonfat dry milk, 1 tablespoon of chocolate-hazelnut spread, and 1 tablespoon of unsweetened cocoa powder in a blender, and blend until creamy. Pour the super-duper smoothie over ice and sip away.



Let the Sun Shine In!

If you've turned down your thermostat to lower your utility bills this winter, turn to the most powerful "furnace" of all to warm things up. Here's how to take advantage of Ol' Sol's heating power and send your indoor temps soaring, even in the coldest weather.



Start by keeping your window coverings open during the day. As soon as the sun sets, close them to hold in the warmth. And be sure to keep the glass sparkly clean, inside and out, because even a thin film of dirt will block out a whole lot of light. My Super Warm-Up Window Cleaner will keep your windows clear, spotless, and free of wintertime grime, so the sun's rays can come through with all of their welcome warming power. Here's how to whip up a batch:

Mix 1/2 cup of distilled white vinegar, 3/4 cup of rubbing alcohol, and 1/2 cup of water in a handheld sprayer bottle. Spray the cleaner onto the glass, and wipe it away with paper towels or crumpled-up newspaper. That's all there is to it—shine on!

It's for the Birds!

Unless you're lucky enough to live where flowers bloom all year long, winter means plenty of gloomy days that can all too easily get a grip on you. Feeding birds helps fend off the moody blues—after all, it's hard to stay down when you look out the window and see a busy bunch of cardinals or jive-talkin' jays. And it's easy to mix marvelous meals with a fast, free funnel that you can make yourself. Here's how:

Start with a rinsed and dry 2-liter plastic soda bottle, cap removed.

Carefully slice off the loose, narrow plastic band from the cap at the neck of the bottle using a sharp kitchen knife.

Stick the knife into the bottle about 3 inches from the bottom, and saw smoothly around the bottle to remove the bottom. (Save the bottom; it makes a good feeder for bird treats.)

Turn the top of the bottle upside down, and you're ready to go. This funnel fits neatly into the opening of a gallon plastic milk jug, so you can measure and mix your favorite recipes right in the jug. Your new funnel will come in handy when you mix up this come and get it treat.

Good 'n' Pretty Prime Time Treat

Sometimes, it's fun to make your mixes to appeal to your eye, as well as to the birds' taste! This one combines such eye-catching ingredients that you should offer it in a clay plant saucer right on your patio table, where you can admire it—at least for a few minutes before the birds scarf it up!

1 part hazelnuts (filberts), whole

1 part Spanish peanuts, raw or roasted, with skins still on

1 part sunflower chips

1 part slivered almonds

Pour equal parts of whole hazelnuts, Spanish peanuts, sunflower chips, and slivered almonds through the funnel into a clean, dry plastic milk jug. Gently shake the jug to mix the ingredients, then pour the treat out into a clay plant saucer. Place the saucer where you can get a good view of the birds as they enjoy their meal.

That's not all, folks!

Check out www.jerrybaker.com for fantastic features like:

- ▶ Jerry's Blog with his thoughts on what's new in gardening and household hints.
- ▶ Critter Control solutions for battling bugs and critters in your home and garden.
- ▶ How-to videos to guide you through the growing season.
- ▶ Jerry's favorite tips and tonics—you're just a click away from a super solution.