



## Greetings!

Here's hoping that 2018 finds you happy, healthy, and warm, while Old Man Winter is having a blast outside! But maybe the weather is getting to you, so why not brighten up your home with a few green friends? Focusing on keeping your houseplants perky might be just the ticket for making all the ice, snow, and bone-chilling temps a little more tolerable. And when you do venture out, make sure your car is frost-free and ready to handle the season's worst weather.

*Jerry Baker*

## In the News...

If last summer was any indication, the trend toward vegetable gardening is still on the rise. In fact, during the past five years, the number of Americans growing their own food at home or in community gardens has grown by 17%. But the most recent trend is sustainable gardening, which takes growing your own food to an entirely new level by using native plants; composting; avoiding chemical fertilizers, weed killers, and pest repellents; and utilizing renewable natural resources, such as rain water. Learn more about how to create a sustainable garden at <http://bit.ly/2n02KOI>.

**“Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them.”**

—Eeyore from A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh

### *This Season's Hot Topic:*

#### **Go Green!**

After putting all of your colorful holiday decorations away, your house can look a little dull and dreary. So pick up a houseplant or two (or three! Or four!), and let them give your lackluster décor a green boost. Then treat 'em like the treasures they are with these get-growin' tips:

- Make the most of the winter sun's rays by placing each plant on a mirror. The sun will bounce off the glass and reflect onto the foliage, giving your potted pals the sunshine they crave.
- Add a few drops of lemon juice to the watering can. It'll lower the water's pH, thereby allowing the plants to take up more nutrients from the soil.
- If you need a stake for a floppy houseplant, grab a pencil. Just shove it into the soil, and tie the plant loosely to the pencil with soft yarn.

### **Houseplant Perk-Up Potion**

Keep your green friends looking their very best with this old-time chow:

- 2 crushed multivitamin-plus-iron tablets
- ¾ cup of ammonia
- 1 tbsp. of baking powder
- 1 tbsp. of Epsom salts
- 1 tbsp. of saltpeter\*
- ½ tsp. of baby shampoo
- ½ tsp. of unflavored gelatin
- 1 gal. of water

Pour the water into a bucket, then mix in the remaining ingredients. Pour the mixture into several jars with tight-fitting lids, then once a month, replace your regular fertilizer with 1 cup of this potion per gallon of water. Your plants will jump for joy! \*Available at drugstores.

## **Going Somewhere? Don't Forget About Your Houseplants!**

Before you take off on a trip this winter, line your bathtub with trash bags, and cover them with a big wet towel. Set your plants on the towel, and just before you leave, water them thoroughly. Assuming the pots have drainage holes in the bottoms, your fern, ficus, and philodendron should stay in fine fettle for two weeks or so. Happy trails to you!



(cont.)

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[jerrybaker.com/how-to-videos](http://jerrybaker.com/how-to-videos)  
to get the most out of your hose-end sprayers,  
aerating lawn sandals, and more!

## Get Floored!

Has your kitchen floor seen better days? Maybe the problem isn't the floor, but the stuff you're using to clean it. After all, you can't use the same agent on wood as you can on vinyl—that would be like using nail polish remover to clean your carpet! Here's the lowdown on how to get your kitchen floor looking its very best—no matter what it's made of:

- **Good, old-fashioned linoleum.** Squirt a little dishwashing liquid into a bucket of warm water, and use it to mop the floor. And if you need a little extra protection from scuffs and scratches, add a tablespoon of baby oil to the mix.
- **No-wax flooring.** Rub a solution of equal parts vegetable oil and vinegar into the wood.
- **Painted wood.** Mix 1 teaspoon of baking soda with 1 gallon of hot water, and mop, mop, mop.
- **Brick or stone.** Add 1 cup of vinegar to a bucket of warm water, mop, then rinse with clean water.
- **Ceramic tile.** Wipe the floor with a solution of  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of vinegar added to a bucket of warm water.



### ANOTHER GREAT IDEA!

To really add some a-peel to your complexion this winter—and wipe out blemishes at the same time, try this overnight treatment. Use a

spoon to scrape off the insides of a very ripe banana peel, and apply the pulp to any trouble spots on your face. Keep the banana mush in place by covering the area with gauze that's secured with surgical tape. The sugars and enzymes in the banana pulp will draw out dirt, pus, and oils from your pores. In the morning, you can just gently wipe it all away and your face will feel fresh and invigorated!

## Super Solutions for Snow-Day Woes

If there's a winter snow or ice storm warning for your area, and you need to keep your car parked outside, here's a few frost-freebies to do before you hit the hay—trust me, they'll save you lots of time and energy in the morning:

- Cover your exterior door locks with masking tape. That way, you'll be able to peel the tape off the locks and get into your vehicle.
- Rub the windshield with an onion that's been cut in half crosswise. Sounds crazy, I know, but it'll keep snow from sticking to the glass.
- Place an old rug runner, carpet side down across your windshield. Secure it to the window by closing the ends in the front doors. In the morning, you can just roll up the rug and hit the road without lifting a scraper.



*That's not  
all, folks!*

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- ▶ Jerry's Blog with what's new in gardening, health care, and household hints.
- ▶ Critter Control solutions for battling bugs and thugs in your home and garden.
- ▶ How-to videos to guide you through the growing season.
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