



Greetings!

It seems that Jack Frost has moved in for good these days! Right now, most of us can only dream of lush green grass and colorful flowers blooming in warm spring breezes. But before you know it, good old Mother Nature will get wise to Jack's wily ways and the growing season will be upon us. In the meantime, while the weather outside is frightful, why not whip up some delightful things to do...indoors?

In the News...

Help Keep Bees Buzzin' Through the Winter

There's no question that honeybees are the most important pollinators gardeners have. So what happens to our buzzing buddies in the winter? As cold weather sets in, honeybees take to their hives and huddle together to stay warm, rotating around so that each bee has a turn at the center of the cluster. Their survival depends not only on their ability to stay warm, but also on the calorie-rich honey they produce—and the more honey they have, the better their chances for making it through the freezing months. That's where we come in. Planting late-blooming flowers and early spring bloomers in our yards will help busy bees gather enough pollen to load up their combs for the long haul. <http://tiny.cc/r9vq0y>

“In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.”

—William Blake

This Season's Hot Topic:

Keep Your Cool and Stay Warm!

Instead of cranking up the old thermostat this winter, try a few of these frost-free tricks:

- Lower your thermostat by 1 degree each day for a few days. When you find a temperature that's comfortable, make it your daytime setting.
- Seal up any gaps around windows and doors with caulk or weather-stripping.
- Install a programmable thermostat and turn the temperature down while you're sleeping and anytime you'll be away for more than a few hours.
- Take advantage of the most powerful “furnace” of all to warm things up. Ol' Sol's power will send your indoor temps soaring, even in the coldest weather. So keep 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 your windows sparkly clean, inside and out, because even a thin film of dirt will block out a whole lot of light. My No More Streaks Glass Cleaner (above) will keep your windows clear, spotless, and free of wintertime grime, so the sun's rays can shine through with all of their welcome warming power.

No More Streaks Glass Cleaner

This easy streak-free solution will make your windows and other glass surfaces sparkle!

1/3 cup of white vinegar

1/4 cup of rubbing alcohol

3 cups of water

Mix the ingredients in a handheld sprayer bottle, and shake well. Spray the solution onto a soft microfiber cloth, or directly on the smudgy window, and swipe it clean. Your windows will sparkle—all winter long.



Baking soda is famous as a miracle cleaner, but here's a fact you might not know: Those cleaning powers are severely limited if the soda isn't fresh. So how can you tell if it's still fresh enough to use? Add 1 tablespoon of baking soda to ¼ cup of vinegar. If it fizzes, you're good to go. If it just sits there like a bump on a log, pour it down the drain.

(cont.)

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aerating lawn sandals, and more!

Dr. Onion Is In...So Make an Appointment for 5 Healthy Solutions!

Believe it or not, the humble onion is one of the best bronchial medicines you could ever ask for. The pungent bulbs are a rich source of quercetin, a chemical that helps relieve chest colds, bronchitis, and even asthma attacks. What's more, it works whether you eat your onions raw or cooked. Here are some of the other health problems this medical miracle worker can solve:

- **Athlete's foot.** Rub onion juice into your tootsies twice a day to relieve the itching and burning.
- **Banged shin.** Cut a slice of raw onion (the stronger, the better), put it over the bump site, and leave it on for 15 minutes. If you've acted fast enough, no bruise should develop. That's because the same chemicals that make your eyes water also flush out excess blood from the area.
- **Earache.** Heat half an onion in the oven until it's warm (not hot). Wrap it in cheesecloth, and hold it against your sore ear.
- **Nagging cough.** Put one finely sliced onion in a pot, and add enough honey to cover the slices. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Let it cool, and strain the syrup into a bottle with a tight stopper. Take a teaspoonful every hour or so until your cough has gone away.
- **Wooziness.** Hold a cut onion under your nose and try to breathe normally until the sensation passes.



ANOTHER GREAT IDEA!

Take care of your Christmas cactus even after it's finished blooming. Start by placing it in a cool location, and water it just enough to keep it from wilting. Repot the cactus in April, and water it thoroughly whenever the soil begins to dry out. Around mid-September, cut back on watering, and move the plant back to its cool location until flower buds form. Increase the water and temperature during blooming. If your Christmas cactus is only drooping—not blooming—give it a few days of cool weather to trigger the blooming sequence. Then place it in a shady window until mid-October, and you'll have new blooms by Christmas!

Don't Forget About Your Garden This Winter!

When the days are cold and the nights are long, you should still be thinking about ways you can help your yard spring back to life when the weather warms up. Here's how:

- **Make plans.** Leaf through gardening books and magazines. By the time the weather becomes suitable for working outside, you'll know exactly what you want to tackle in your yard.
- **Collect catalogs.** Seed and nursery catalogs are like dream books—so start shopping for seeds, plants, and pretty garden accents!
- **Lighten the snow load.** Snow does a great job of insulating the ground, but its weight can be too much for trees, shrubs, and evergreens to bear.
- **Spoil your houseplants.** When you can't garden outdoors, keep things growing indoors.

*That's not
all, folks!*

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