

February, 2020

The VINE

“The Real Dirt from the Keyport Garden Club”

Events to catch:

(Please note: some events require fees and/or preregistration)

Keyport:

Keyport Recreation Family Valentine's Dance

Friday, February 14

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

First Aid Squad

Elsewhere:

Winter Eagle Festival

Saturday, February 1

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Wells Mills Park

Waretown

Morning Walk

Saturday, February 1

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary

Bernardsville

Birding

Saturday, February 1

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

State Park

Cape May Point

Birding

Saturday, February 1

8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Merrill Creek

Washington

Roving Naturalist

Saturday, February 1

9:00 a.m.

Big Brook Park

Marlboro

Confessions of a Wildlife Photographer

Saturday, February 1

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Duke Farms

Hillsborough

Growing Native Plants from Seed

Saturday, February 1

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

New Hope, Pennsylvania

Evergreen Exploration Tour

Saturday, February 1

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Grounds for Sculpture

Hamilton

Planning the Garden and Starting Seeds Indoors

Saturday, February 1

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County

Ewing

Conifer Tour

Saturday, February 1

1:00 p.m.

Morris Arboretum

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Art of Garden Photography

Saturday, February 1

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Frelinghuysen Arboretum

Morris Township

Maple Sugaring Demo

Saturday and Sunday, February 1 and 2

1:00 - 2:00 and 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center

Chatham

Introduction to Herbalism: Spicy Oxymels

Saturday, February 1

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Grounds for Sculpture

Hamilton

What Bird Is That at My Feeder?

Saturday, February 1

2:00 - 4:00

Big Brook Park

Marlboro

Bird Walk

Sunday, February 2

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Van Vleck House and Garden

Montclair

Eagle Watching Trip
Sunday, February 2
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center
Chatham

A Bountiful Year: Six Seasons of Beauty from Brandywine Cottage
Sunday, February 2
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Scott Arboretum
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Strategies for Forest Restoration: Assessing the Impact of Deer and Invasive Plants
Sunday, February 2
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Exploring the Milkweed Village: A Photo-Journal
Monday, February 3
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts
Millville

May the Force Be with You Class
Tuesday, February 4
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

A Healthier Environment -- One Yard at a Time
Tuesday, February 4
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Ocean County Library
Toms River

The Brilliant Butterflies of Panama
Tuesday, February 4

7:30 p.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Morris Township

Rock Stars of the Landscape
Wednesday, February 5
12:45 p.m.
Community Center
Fair Haven

All About Hydrangeas
Wednesday, February 5
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Dey Mansion
Wayne

Introduction to Organic Land Care
Thursday, February 6
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset County
Bridgewater

The Casual Birder
Thursday, February 6
9:00 a.m.
Dorbrook Recreation Area
Colts Neck

Wicked and Wearable Plants: Jewelry
Thursday, February 6
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Deep Cut Orchid Society Orchid Show
Thursday, February 6, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Friday and Saturday, February 7 and 8, 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 8, 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 a.m.

Dearborn Markets

Holmdel

Morning Walk

Friday and Saturday, February 7 and 8

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary

Bernardsville

Harrisville Nature and History Walk

Friday, February 7

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Wells Mills Park

Waretown

Composting with Manure Worms

Friday, February 7

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Scott Arboretum

Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Floral Fun: Oscar Winners

Friday, February 7

1:00 - 3:00 or 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Longwood Gardens

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Birding

Saturday, February 8

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

State Park

Cape May Point

Birds of Longwood Walk

Saturday, February 8

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Longwood Gardens

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Inspirations for the Grand Resign of the Perennial Garden at Colonial Park

Saturday, February 8

10:00 - 11:30

North Branch Park

Bridgewater

Houseplants -- Bringing the Garden Indoors

Saturday, February 8

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Victorian Pressed Flower Valentine Workshop

Saturday, February 8

11:00 a.m.

Morven Museum and Garden

Princeton

Turn and Learn Compost Work Day

Saturday, February 8

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanic Garden

Staten Island

Maple Sugaring Demo

Saturday and Sunday, February 8 and 9

1:00 - 2:00 and 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center

Chatham

Animal Tracks

Saturday and Sunday, February 8 and 9

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Owl Prowl

Saturday, February 8

7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Freneau Woods Park

Aberdeen

Winter Bird Life Survey

Saturday, February 8

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Bayshore Waterfront Park

Port Monmouth

Won't You Be My Tweet-heart

Saturday, February 8

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Hawk Rise

Linden

Sunday Morning Birding

Sunday, February 9

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Turkey Point

Port Norris

Sunset Beach: A Place for All Seasons

Sunday, February 9

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area

Cape May Point

Winter Woodland Walk

Sunday, February 9

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

New Hope, Pennsylvania

Tu BiShvat Hikes

Sunday, February 9

11:00 a.m., 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.

Cora Harshorne Arboretum
Short Hills

Mystery Walk
Sunday, February 9
1:00 p.m.
Duke Farms
Hillsborough

Orchids, Bromeliads and Ferns: Our Favorite Epiphytes
Sunday, February 9
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Morris Township

Strangers in the Night: The Essential Role Moths Play in a Healthy Ecosystem
Sunday, February 9
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Great Horned Owl Expedition
Sunday, February 9
5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Cloverdale Farm Park
Barnegat

Designing and Installing Retaining Walls
Monday, February 10
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Cook College
New Brunswick

Birds of Ocean County
Monday, February 10
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Ocean County Park
Lakewood

Love Birds -- Dating and Courtship in the Bird World

Tuesday, February 11

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Bauer Community Center

Millburn

Everything You Even Wanted To Know about Victorian Gardening Practices

Wednesday, February 12

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Morven Museum and Garden

Princeton

Grow It, Make It

Wednesday, February 12

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Deep Cut Gardens

Middletown

Make and Take: Supermarket Bouquet to Super Bouquet

Wednesday, February 12

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Camden County Environmental Center

Cherry Hill

Designing with Native Plants

Wednesday, February 12

7:30 p.m.

NY-NJ Trail Conference

Mahwah

New Jersey Pinelands: A Photographic Journey

Wednesday, February 12

8:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Tower Hill Church

Red Bank

Getting To Know Orchids -- An Introduction

Thursday, February 13

9:00 a.m.

Duke Farms

Hillsborough

Garden How-To: Pruning

Thursday, February 13

10:00 - 11:30 p.m.

Van Vleck House and Garden

Montclair

Birds of Ocean County

Thursday, February 13

1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Grow Fruit and Vegetables in Pots

Thursday, February 13

6:00 p.m.

Bird Haven Farm

Pottersville

Backyard Forestry in Ninety Minutes: New Jersey's Big Tree Program

Thursday, February 13

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Forest Resource Education Center

Jackson

Morning Walk

Friday and Saturday, February 14 and 15

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary

Bernardsville

What Is That??? Plant Identification and Plant Names

Friday, February 14

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Scott Arboretum
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Waterfowl of Barnegat Bay to Brigantine
Friday, February 14
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wells Mills Park
Waretown

Jump Start Your Garden Indoors
Friday, February 14
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Bridgewater

Raised Bed Construction and Design
Friday, February 14
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Bartram's Garden
Philadelphia

Birding
Saturday, February 15
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.
State Park
Cape May Point

Great Backyard Bird Count
Saturday, February 15
8:30 - 11:00 a.m.
Cattus Island Park
Toms River

Roving Naturalist
Saturday, February 15
9:00 a.m.
Freneau Woods Park
Aberdeen

Bird Walk
Saturday, February 15
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Cloverdale Farm Park
Barnegat

Pruning Basics
Saturday, February 15
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Deep Cut Gardens
Middletown

From Under the Earth
Saturday, February 15
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Rutgers Gardens
New Brunswick

Great Backyard Bird Count
Saturday, February 15
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
State Park
Cape May Point

Great Backyard Bird Count
Saturday, February 15
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Beyond the Potted Palm: Victorians and Their Houseplants
Saturday, February 15
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
North Branch Park
Bridgewater

Build a Birdhouse

Saturday, February 15
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Essex County Environmental Center
Roseland

The Garden Flowers of 18th and 19th Century America
Saturday, February 15
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Rutgers Gardens
New Brunswick

Witchhazel Is Your Favorite?
Saturday, February 15
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Morris Arboretum
Philadelphia

Maple Sugaring Demo
Saturday and Sunday, February 15 and 16
1:00 - 2:00 and 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center
Chatham

Margaret Roach, Nonstop Plants: A Garden for 365 Days
Saturday, February 15
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Morris Township

What Bird Is That at My Feeder?
Saturday, February 15
2:00 - 4:00
Freneau Woods Park
Aberdeen

Sunday Morning Birding
Sunday, February 16
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Turkey Point
Port Norris

Family Winter Woodland Hike
Sunday, February 16
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
New Jersey Botanical Garden
Ringwood

New Jersey American Kestrel Nest Box Project
Sunday, February 16
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Natural Winter Foods of Pineland Birds
Sunday, February 16
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Cloverdale Farm Park
Barnegat

Bird Walk for Beginners
Monday, February 17
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
State Park
Cape May Point

New Jersey Pinelands
Monday, February 17
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Ocean County Park
Lakewood

Belvidere: Evolution of a Plantsman's Garden
Tuesday, February 18
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Jenkins Arboretum
Devon, Pennsylvania

Wake up Your Garden

Tuesday, February 18

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Shrewsbury Historical Society

Shrewsbury

Nature's Best Hope: Lecture and Book Signing

Tuesday, February 18

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Public Library

Cherry Hill

Rethinking the Role of Woody Plants

Tuesday, February 18

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Longwood Gardens

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Hometown Habitat, Stories of Bringing Nature Home

Tuesday, February 18

7:00 p.m.

Hunterdon County Library, North Branch

Clinton

Winter Birding Expedition

Wednesday, February 19

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Thompson Park

Lincroft

Tree Planting and Installation

Wednesday, February 19

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Cook College

New Brunswick

Houseplant Care 101

Wednesday, February 19

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Carnivorous Plant Terrarium Build

Wednesday, February 19

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Freneau Woods Park

Aberdeen

Botanical Paradise: Kazakhstan and Altai Mountains\

Wednesday, February 19

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Cathedral Village

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Pruning Basics

Wednesday, February 19

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Deep Cut Gardens

Middletown

Benefits of Dormant Oils, Neem Oil in the Garden

Wednesday, February 19

7:00 p.m.

Medford Leas

Medford

Birding Troy Meadows

Thursday, February 20

8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Essex County Environmental Center

Roseland

Franklin Parker Preserve

Thursday, February 20

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Jakes Branch Park
Beachwood

Tree Pruning
Thursday, February 20
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Cook College
New Brunswick

Orchid Extravaganza Sale
Thursday - Saturday, February 20 - 22
9:00 a.m.
Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Backyard Forestry in Ninety Minutes North: Managing Wildlife (Deer!) for Forests
Thursday, February 20
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Morris Township

Macro Photography: Carnivorous Plants
Friday, February 21
8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. or 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Morning Walk
Friday and Saturday, February 21 and 22
8:00 - 9:00 a.m.
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary
Bernardsville

Birding
Saturday, February 22
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.
State Park
Cape May Point

Urban Oasis Birding Field Trip

Saturday, February 22

8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Essex County Environmental Center

Roseland

The Gardener and the Chef: Honey Class

Saturday, February 22

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Longwood Gardens

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Home Landscape Design -- Fundamentals

Saturday, February 22

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Berries and Bristles Tour

Saturday, February 22

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Grounds for Sculpture

Hamilton

Home Landscape Design -- Incorporating Hardscape

Saturday, February 22

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Winter Rose Pruning

Saturday, February 22

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Grounds for Sculpture

Hamilton

Knowing Native Plants: Trees in Winter

Saturday, February 22

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

New Hope, Pennsylvania

Maple Sugaring Demo

Saturday and Sunday, February 15 and 16

1:00 - 2:00 and 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center

Chatham

Nature Walk

Saturday, February 22

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Cloverdale Farm Park

Barnegat

A Winter Marsh Walk

Saturday and Sunday, February 22 and 23

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Owls of Ocean County

Saturday, February 22

4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Wells Mills Park

Waretown

Sunday Morning Birding

Sunday, February 23

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Turkey Point

Port Norris

Let's Talk Perennials

Sunday, February 23

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

Frelinghuysen Arboretum
Morris Township

Connect with Nature -- Maple Sugaring
Sunday, February 23
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Rancocas Nature Center
Westhampton

How To Help Birds Nest in Your Backyard
Sunday, February 23
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
New Jersey Botanical Garden
Ringwood

New Jersey Pine Barrens Communities: Not Barren at All
Sunday, February 23
2:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve
New Hope, Pennsylvania

Sustainable Landscape Design
Monday, February 24
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Cook College
New Brunswick

Turn and Learn Compost Work Day
Tuesday, February 25
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanic Garden
Staten Island

Managing Insect Pests of Ornamental Plants
Wednesday, February 26
9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Cook College
New Brunswick

Grow Vegetables from Your Kitchen Scraps

Wednesday, February 26

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Honeybees Inside the Hive

Wednesday, February 26

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Emergency Squad Building

Highbridge

The Casual Birder

Thursday, February 27

9:00 a.m.

Crosswick Creek Park

Upper Freehold

Branches and Buds Walk

Thursday, February 27

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Great Swamp Outdoor Recreation Area

Chatham

Make and Take Workshop: Soap with Herbs and Essential Oils

Thursday, February 27

6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Frelinghuysen Arboretum

Morris Township

Morning Walk

Friday and Saturday, February 28 and 29

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary

Bernardsville

Birding

Saturday, February 29

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

State Park

Cape May Point

Home Landscape Design -- Incorporating Plants

Saturday, February 29

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Beds and Breakfast

Saturday, February 29

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Greater Newark Conservancy

Newark

Daytime Owl Prowl

Saturday, February 29

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Thompson Park

Lincroft

Backyard Chickens 101

Saturday, February 29

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Bartram's Garden

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Berries and Bristles Tour

Saturday, February 29

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Grounds for Sculpture

Hamilton

Winter Festival

Saturday, February 29

11:00 a.m.

Rare Find Nursery
Jackson

Celebrate Leap Day! Signs of Spring Walk
Saturday, February 29
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Morven Museum and Garden
Princeton

Birding
Saturday, February 29
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Brigantine Island
Brigantine

Philadelphia Flower Show
Saturday, February 29
11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Pennsylvania Convention Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Close Encounters with Birds of Prey
Saturday, February 29
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Duke Farms
Hillsborough

Home Landscape Design -- Lighting
Saturday, February 29
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Rutgers Gardens
New Brunswick

Make Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop
Saturday, February 29
1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary
Bernardsville

Maple Sugaring Demo

Saturday, February 29

1:00 - 2:00 and 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.

Great Swamp Outdoor Education Center

Chatham

Winter Birds

Saturday, February 29

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Cattus Island Park

Toms River

Landscape Design: A Process for the Homeowner

Saturday, February 29

2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve

New Hope, Pennsylvania

Vegetable Gardening Boot Camp Class

Saturday, February 29

2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Longwood Gardens

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Lots to do in the garden this month (courtesy of the New York Botanical Garden):

Review your notebooks from previous years, finalize your garden plans for the coming season, check out the seed library and seed and nursery catalogues and send in your mail orders.

Inventory tools and repair and recondition those that need it; have mowers sharpened; inventory supplies and replenish as necessary; clean and repair garden furniture and ornaments as necessary.

Check bulbs in storage and discard any that show signs of rot.

Keep houseplants standing on shallow trays filled with moss, sand or pebbles to be kept constantly moist, and spray non-hairy leaves with clear water often, keep them off radiators and make sure that temperatures are not too hot and that they are neither saturated nor allowed to dry out.

On very cold nights, move houseplants away from windows or insert paper between the plants and the window; otherwise, expose all houseplants, even shade-lovers to sun; do not fertilize houseplants at this time.

Branches of pussy willows, forsythia, spirea prunifolia, dogwoods, fruit trees and other early spring flowering shrubs or trees with attractive foliage may be cut and forced indoors in water in warm, light room.

Many leggy houseplants may be propagated through air-layering.

Geranium, lantanas and hibiscus to be repotted in March may be cut back severely now and kept on the dry side.

Do not allow puddles to form and then freeze around perennial crowns, and push frost-heaved perennials back into the ground during mild spells.

Check that winter coverings are in place, but not smothering plants; mulches should be pulled several inches back from the trunks of trees.

If shallowly planted bulbs begin to show above ground, they can be covered with 2-3" layer of peat moss or peat moss and sand if extremely cold weather is expected.

During a period in which temperatures have been above 40 degrees for at least 24 hours, grape vines, fruit trees, and flowering shrubs that bloom in summer on new wood may be pruned.

Dormant spraying of trees, shrubs and vines may be done when temperature is above 45 degrees and there is no chance of the temperature's dropping below freezing that night.

No Time To Hibernate

After a hot, humid summer of staking, weeding and watering and an arduous autumn of harvesting, raking and cleaning up, curling up by a log fire with a seed catalogue and a cup of tea may seem a just reward for a tired gardener, but there is still plenty to do to prepare for the next growing season. Many of those seeds -- particularly those of perennials, both herbaceous and woody, and hardy annuals -- require attention now if they are going to grow in the spring. Specifically, they require vernalization.

Perennials devote much of their energy to root development and other processes that enable them to survive from year to year. They therefore are limited in the amount of energy they can devote to reproduction. Annuals, on the other hand, devote most of their energy to reproduction, but this is the only way their DNA can survive to the next season, since one season is all they have -- one crop failure is enough to wipe them out. Thus, both perennials and annuals need to make their seeds count, and one way to do that is to make sure their seeds don't germinate in the fall or during a freak warm spell, only to be killed by a seasonable hard

frost. In short, these seeds will not germinate until they have been exposed to sufficient, prolonged cold to indicate that the winter has passed. Vernalization is the process of exposing seeds to cold so as to induce germination afterwards.

Vernalization is not limited to seeds, however. It is also used to induce flowering in such perennials as fruit trees, which require a period of dormancy in order to emerge from that dormancy in the spring and to flower, and in bulbs to be forced. Vernalization is also necessary to induce flowering in biennials. Bolting, of course, is not desirable in most biennial crops unless seed is sought at the expense of continued production of foliage. If such crops as parsley, for instance, are not being grown for seed, to keep them a second year without flowering, they can be potted up at the end of the season and "devernalized" by exposing them to highly variable temperatures. If a space is available to expose them to temperatures over 80° for two to three weeks, that should do the trick.

One way to vernalize your seeds of perennials and hardy annuals* is winter sowing. The advantage of winter sowing is not only that sowing and vernalization can occur at the same time, but that the necessity of nicking or soaking seeds to soften the seed coat, as well as that of hardening off the coddled, indoor seedlings, is obviated. By the time it is necessary to transplant the seedlings, they are tough, compact rather than leggy and acclimated to the climate in which they will spend the rest of their lives, however long or short they may be.

The easiest way to begin winter sowing is to repurpose gallon milk jugs, although two-liter soda bottles, clear plastic juice bottles or even smaller milk jugs will also work. Bear in mind that containers must be tall enough to accommodate seedlings. Slice through the chosen container on three sides to create a hinged top and (responsibly) discard the cap. Poke holes in the bottom for drainage and a few in the top for additional ventilation with a heated screwdriver or an Xacto or other utility knife. Fill the bottom with several inches of well-moistened, light potting or seed-starting mix, sow the seeds in accordance with the package directions, and mist well. Close the hinged top over the bottom part of the container and fasten it; duck tape will work, as will making holes and threading them with twist ties. Label the container with the variety and the date and set outside where it can receive rain and snow and morning or late afternoon -- but not strong midday -- sun and where it is protected from strong winds and curious animals.

The earliest seeds to be sown should be trees and shrubs, then perennials, hardy annuals and cool season vegetables in that order. Even those that do not require vernalization can be profitably winter-sown. Clearly, this entails much less work than separate vernalization

and starting seed indoors or in a nursery bed. But, it does take some work, and the time to do it is now.

* Tender annuals, tender perennials and tropicals do not need -- and often cannot tolerate -- vernalization, as they are not native to areas that experience winter at all and, as such, are not adapted to it.

Season's Eatings:

Butternut Cheese Cake (1 cake)

1 cup pecans

1 cup gingerbread or other cookie crumbs

1 1/2 cups sugar

3 tbsp. butter, melted

1 lb. butternut squash, halved lengthwise, seeds and fibers removed

2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice or any combination of cinnamon, ginger, cloves, nutmeg, mace and/or allspice

2 lb. ricotta cheese

1 tbsp. vanilla extract

3 large eggs

cooking spray

Blend or process pecans and cookie crumbs with 1 tbsp. sugar and gradually blend in butter. Spray 10" springform pan or 10" cake pan lined with foil with 1" overhanging on all sides with cooking spray, press cookie mixture into bottom, bake at 350° about 10 minutes until lightly browned and toasted, remove from oven and cool. Spray squash with cooking spray and bake cut side down in pan sprayed with cooking spray 45 minutes to 1 hour, until very tender. When cool enough to handle process in large blender or food processor with ricotta, remaining sugar, spice and vanilla until very smooth and turn into large bowl, preferably one with a pouring spout. Beat eggs, beat into squash mixture and turn into cookie crust. Bake about 1 hour until top is golden and starting to crack and center is almost set. Cool completely and chill. To serve, remove sides of springform pan or lift out cake using foil and carefully fold out from sides.

