

Did you paint any tiles for your garden using Paint-n-Bake? We've discovered that the paint disappears when the tiles are outside in the weather. You can remedy the situation by painting on a sealer or verathane.

Today's column is full of a little bit of everything. Here's a perfect book on Fuchsias. I discovered "Fuchsia a Care Manual" by David Clark (ISBN 1571456082) at my favorite bookstore Liberty Bay Books in Poulsbo. It's worth every penny of the \$19.95 purchase price. Every page has color photos displaying all aspects of growing fuchsias in our gardens and/or greenhouses. Clark doesn't cover hardy fuchsias though. I'm still searching for a book on the hardies. If you can only afford one book on fuchsias this is the one to buy.

"Cuttings through the Year" edited by Joy Spur is a treasure of a booklet purchased through The Arboretum Foundation at the University of Washington. It's one of the most complete books on cuttings I've found so far. Included are lists by month of the plants that can best be propagated from cuttings and whether to use softwood, root or hardwood. As far as I can tell the booklet is only available through The Arboretum Foundation. It is definitely worth the time to search it out. Call the Foundation for details.

If you're a new gardener or new to our evergreen Northwest you're probably wondering why the evergreen shrubs (particularly rhodies), fir, cedar, hemlock and other evergreen trees are turning brown, yellow, tan and rust colored in some parts. Don't panic they're just shedding old growth and getting ready to set new growth for next spring. Evergreen trees and shrubs can lose as much as one-third of their foliage each year. It's like us losing hair.

Speaking of rhodies and evergreen shrubs, rake up and dispose of all the dropped leaves. Our weather is ideal for molds and mildews on plants. If you clean up and dispose of these leaves in the garbage you can alleviate or control this condition in the future. You can also compost this debris if you have very hot compost, but it's wisest to send it to the landfill or burn it (before the 2000 burn ban takes effect).

October is also the perfect month to trim shrubs and trees. All of which are going into dormancy or slow growth for the fall and winter. Buddleias and lavatera are woody plants that we wonder how and when to prune. A complication is that half the literature out there says prune in the spring and half the literature says prune in the fall. Confusing? You bet!

Buddleias and lavatera are quite forgiving of our pruning efforts so get out there and whack them down to the ground almost. They'll happily bounce back next year and reward you with abundant flowers. If you forget to prune them back this fall and have a driving urge to prune them in the spring go ahead, they'll probably still reward you with lots of blooms. Be sure to use sharp clean pruners and cut the branches at an angle. Rodale's has a book out called "Rodale's Successful Organic Gardening Pruning." Cass Turnbull's excellent pruning book is out of print but if you join Plant Amnesty I've been told she still has books available for members. Kitsap County Master Gardeners at the Extension Office are also happy to offer pruning advice and demonstrations. Call 337-7157 for more information.

Another great thing to do for yourselves and your gardens is composting. In January 2000 we will no longer be able to burn yard debris in most of Kitsap County. Dave Peters is the guru of composting for Kitsap County. He and Patt Kasa from the Master Gardeners have trained Master Composters to teach all of us the nuances of composting. If you have a group of ten or more people who'd like to learn about composting please call 337-5777 or 800-825-4940 and Dave will send you a speaker. You can also visit Kitsap County Public Works and pick up a wealth of pamphlets and booklets to learn about composting.

Remember all the topped trees we inherited? All summer we've been removing them. We've supplied our neighbors, friends and family with firewood but have been burning some of the leftover trimmings. Luckily we've discovered Chipper Bob. Bob Griffiths will come to your yard with his helper and his huge van and chipper. Chipper Bob chips up all your debris and hauls it away. And he cleans up the area when he's done. Call 360-277-3301 and Bob will give you a free estimate. His specialty is tree removal, limbing and thinning plus a whole lot more. Best of all he won't top trees. Call Chipper Bob, you'll be glad you did.

You can email comments to Peg at gardenmentor@yahoo.com or in care of this newspaper.