

## DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 12-27-06) Wintertime Gardening

Gardeners often get itchy to get out and plant things in January. Our local nurseries actually begin getting in plants that love chilly weather and enjoy being planted in winter. Hopefully this January and February won't be quite as horrid as November and December were and we can run outdoors to plant things in between the rain showers.

It's the perfect time of year to find bare root plants, often available January through March. Make sure you get them planted immediately. The roots of these plants can dry out very rapidly so it's very important to get them planted right away. If you find some good buys on bare root plants and are not sure where to put them in your garden, at least plant them up right away in containers that you can water regularly, until you can get them in the ground.

The second weekend in January marks the Kitsap Conservation District Plant Sale. This sale features native plants (perfect for Kitsap gardens). Plant orders arrive the first weekend in March every year at the Fairgrounds. You don't need to pay for the plants until you pick them up. The Kitsap Conservation District offers a free native plant class the second Saturday in January and you can place your orders then or even before that date by contacting the Conservation District at 360-337-7171 or <http://www.kitsapcd.org>. Their office is at 1388 SE Lund Avenue in Port Orchard.

What do you do if you forgot to plant all those bulbs you bought at a great deal last fall? Get out and plant them right now!! Do not delay! Bulbs grow best when they've had six or more weeks of chilling weather. Most of our fall planted bulbs are hyacinth, scilla, daffodil and tulips. If you waited until now to plant these bulbs, optimally planted in October or November, your late-planted bulbs may grow slowly or not have as much foliage and bloom. Sometimes they'll catch up the second year. If not, don't worry, just consider them annuals. Then go out the next fall in October and November and purchase and plant up more.

Every year at the Extension Office we get questions about tulips. Species tulips rebloom every year. But the large tulip bulbs often bloom one year and then underground the large bulb fades quickly away making "daughter" bulbs for several years before blooming resplendently again. Many gardeners consider tulips an annual. Some of the hybrids do bloom for several years though, but they'll get sparser and sparser over a period of two to three years. Give yourself permission to purchase and plant new bulbs each year if you'd like.

This is also a great time of year to bring in sprigs of deciduous magnolia, forsythia, willow, flowering quince and many other woody shrubs. Stick the sprigs in a vase with several inches of water. Place in a sunny window and you'll soon enjoy springtime blossoms indoors.