



New Year Gardening Plans and Goals

by Marilyn Loser

2015 December 30

Once again it's time to think of what to do in the garden next year. It's easy to sit at my computer in a warm house and make a list for my future self to act upon! 2015 was a good year in our garden. We've had 9.42" of precipitation to date this year compared to 5.54" last year. The average is 7.27". Of course, we irrigate – mostly with low pressure drip and emitters.

Most of what I need to do in the garden can wait a few more months. However, I have a goal of scattering certain flower seeds around the garden while the ground is mostly bare and frozen. I'll try to cover them with a bit of soil and lightly top with mulch from last season's cuttings in the hope the seeds won't blow away.

This can be a tricky. Some seeds require a period of moist cold (cold stratification) before they will germinate and some, such as Cranesbill Geranium, require alternating freezes and thaws. But how cold, for how long? We're much colder than most places in the country. To get an idea of what would be considered an ideal temperature for freezing seeds, I looked up the internationally recommended standard temperature at which seeds are stored at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in northern Norway. It is -18 deg. C (-0.4 deg. F). Seeds from around the world are stored in the vault "in an attempt to insure against the loss of seeds in other gene banks during large-scale regional or global crises," according to the Wikipedia website.

Alamosa's typical winter temperatures are a good deal lower than this. However, I have consistent good luck with sowing some seeds at this time of the year. They include ones I harvest in the fall from our garden (Missouri Primrose, Shirley Poppy, Gloriosa Daisies, California Poppies, and annual Larkspur) and those I buy in bulk (Toadflax, Catchfly, Painted Daisy, California Bluebells).

I do have some pruning to do, which I plan to do in January or February. I prune in winter for two reasons: 1) it's easier to see the structure of the tree, and 2) during winter dormancy there is little, if any, sap bleed. Meanwhile, I need to cut up some of the branches I pruned during the past year so we can use them as fuel in the wood burning stove.

Indoor tasks include getting flower seeds ready for the "Seed to Seed Community Seed Exchange" at Nielsen Library on the Adams State campus starting at noon, Saturday, January 30. The listing on the website says there will be a potluck and asks folks to bring seeds and plan to share. For more information visit the website (<http://libguides.adams.edu/seedtoseed>) or contact Librarian Mary Walsh at mwalsh@adams.edu, 719-597-7174.

During the dark, cold months, I update the AlamosaFlowers.net and AlamosaTrees.net websites. This includes the databases that promote plants for our unique environment. Alamosa Flowers lists about 250 flowers that we've grown in our garden and all of the photos are of our garden -- not nicked from glossy catalogues. I have a few specimens to add and I need to update photos and comments.

I hope to keep writing articles about Alamosa and our environment. I started writing tree columns in April of 2009 after I joined the Alamosa Tree Board. Folks wondered how many columns a person could write about trees in Alamosa! I started the flower column in 2012. As we end 2015, there are 155 columns and you can access them online: AlamosaTrees.net and AlamosaFlowers.net.

I'm considering registering our yard as a wildlife habitat through the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). I wrote about this in the 2015 January 21 Alamosa Flowers column. There is a bit of an annual fee, but I've learned so much from the NWF website regarding creating habitat for (desired!) wildlife that it will be worth it.

During the spring I plan to actually buy some new perennials that are on my list of plants to try – I missed last year! I'll continue to plant more xeric shrubs and keep the garden well mulched with mulch doesn't blow away (I hope). We'll chip/shred garden waste that's piled up over the last couple of years to create mulch.

As I read over this, some of the plans sound like drudgery -- but 'it ain't necessarily so'! I love being in the garden and I love thinking about it when I'm not. I love living in an environment where I can be outside and see mountains on the horizon, blue sky, and vegetation; hear the sounds of birds; and enjoy quiet when the birds aren't around.

Happy New Year to you and your garden!

"The garden is a love song, a duet between a human being and Mother Nature." Jeff Cox