

# ARAIYS NEWS

WINTER NEWS LETTER 2016



## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Greeting and welcome to our Winter Solstice newsletter for 2016. Land stewardship is a passion we share at Araiys Design. We seek to keep our staff informed of land matters and sustainable strategies so we can better serve our clients and create healthy functioning landscapes. We have dedicated this newsletter to the drought that we have been experiencing and offer tips to assist in assuring that your landscape continues to thrive.

We average approx. 48" of precipitation per year here on the east end of Long Island. We can typically rely upon an even distribution of precipitation throughout the season with some droughty conditions in late summer. However, we are currently in the grips of a multiyear drought. Our total precipitation through November this year is 35" and our total for the entire year of 2015 was 39" of precipitation. Extended droughts affect our landscapes in many ways and require that we steward our land accordingly. The following has been excerpted from a presentation that staff members attended in November hosted by the Cornell Cooperative Extension.

We here at Araiys wish you and your family a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year.

### Current News Topic: Drought

Nearly half of the country is currently affected by this year's droughts and are still hoping for more rain before the ground freezes to make up for the last six months dry spell. While a short-term drought (a drought that lasts for the length of one growing season) can damage plants, the long-term drought (droughts that lasts for more than one growing season that we are presently experiencing) are more harmful to the plants due to the chronic moisture stress and growth reduction it may cause them to be without sufficient water and nutrient supply for an extended period of time.

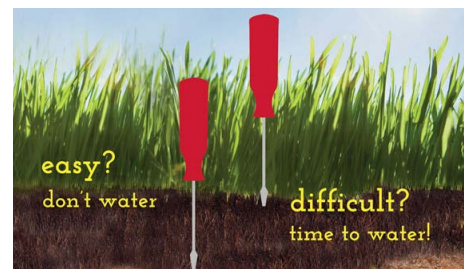
What can we look for in the spring of 2017 to see if our plants were affected by this year's drought? Some giveaways of a long-term drought exposure could be that plants may leaf out and then die later in the growing season due to depleted food reserves, branches become limp and droopy, crown thins, little or no new growth to the plant and roots, stems and twigs die, and the tree canopy may appear thinner. Symptoms of drought that may easily be spotted on leaves could be a reduction of leaf size or leaves turning brown from the outside edges and in between the veins.



What are the effects of an extended drought? Many landscape plants may require several years to recover fully from an extended drought like the one we are experiencing this year. Plants produce additional fine absorbing roots at the beginning of a drought period to help them absorb more water but these will die as drought extends and soil becomes progressively drier. Make sure to give priority to watering newly planted trees and shrubs during periods of drought as young plants have not had sufficient time to establish a deep root systems and depend on surface water for survival.

Although a drought stressed plant may look dreadful, it may be far from dead and will usually benefit greatly from irrigation. A quick and easy way to tell if you have enough water in the ground is the "screwdriver test". Stick an 8" screwdriver in the ground and if it hits hard soil at 2", keep watering! Pruning in the midst of a drought may cause even larger wounds on the plants but once it is over, dead and dying limbs should be removed as insects or diseases can contribute to further die-back and decline of the plant. Avoid pruning of live branches as it may add additional stress to the plant.

It is important to do your research when planting native and non-native plants and to use plants that are drought tolerant. Roots are important for determining whether a plant is drought tolerant or not. Plants with thick fleshy roots are able to store relatively large amounts of water, and those with taproots can find deeper water sources. Thick succulent leaves can store water while hairy leaves are able to collect/trap moisture well. Grouping plants with similar water needs allows them to be watered as required with very little waste. By planting high water use plants separate from low water use/no water use plants, water needs can be regulated more accurately. The last tip is to plant by the direction; south and west for driest, north and east for moister.



Reference : <https://jvwcd.org/guide>

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### PLANTS OF THE SEASON

#### Native Plant Of The Season



Common Name: Switch Grass  
Scientific Name: *Panicum virgatum*

Switchgrass is a hardy North American native deep-rooted tallgrass. It is both a perennial and self-seeding crop, and once established a switchgrass can survive for ten years or longer. It can grow on marginal lands, native grass meadows, along roadsides, and requires relatively low levels of chemical fertilizers. Switchgrass uses C4 carbon fixation, giving it an advantage in conditions of drought and high temperature. Overall it is primarily used for soil conservation, as an ornamental grass, but it is also considered a resource-efficient low-input crop for producing bioenergy from farmland. Switchgrass can grow up to 9 ft. high tall with leaves 10-35 inches long. Its flowers have a well-developed panicle, often up to 25 inches long, and it bears a good crop of seeds. When ripe, the seeds sometimes take on a pink-purple shade, and turn golden brown with the foliage of the plant in the fall.

#### Ornamental Plants Of the Season



Common Name: Wintersweet  
Scientific Name: *Chimonanthus praecox* 'Grandiflorus'

Wintersweet is a deciduous shrub that has been cultivated in China for more than 1,000 years and has later be introduced in Japan, Korea, Europe, Australia and the United States. Wintersweet is commonly used in British gardens where it is grown mainly for its gorgeous scent but also for its beautiful butter-yellow winter flowers. The flowers are borne on short stalks from December-March and leaves appear in late winter-early spring with a dark green color that changes to yellow-green in the fall. The flowers are known to be rich in essential oils and are commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine. Wintersweet can grow up to 10-15 ft. tall, prefers full sun with moist-well drained soils. It is a low maintenance shrub that is very drought tolerant once it has been well established.



Common Name: Arctic Fire Twig Dogwood  
Scientific Name: *Cornus stolonifera* 'Farrow'

The Arctic Fire Red Twig Dogwood has beautiful dark red stems to show off in the dark winter months and it is particularly showy against a white snowy backdrop. It has small white flowers that appear in flat-topped clusters in late spring and give way to clusters of whitish-bluish tinge drupes in summer. The Arctic Fire Red Twig Dogwood is great as a perennial or shrub border plant and grows 3-5 ft. tall. It is best grown in organically rich, fertile, consistently moist soils with full sun to part shade but is tolerant of a wide range of soils such as wet swampy areas, wetland margins or along lakes and rivers. The best and most radiant stem color occurs on young stems. Although pruning is not required, one may choose to remove 20-25% of the oldest stems in early spring each year to stimulate growth of new stems.



Common Name: White Spruce  
Scientific Name: *Picea glauca*

The White Spruce is a hardy evergreen conifer that is found in much of the northern American upland areas and lake/stream borders. The white spruce grows best in moist, well-drained soils with full sun (but tolerates some light shade), and prefers cold winter climates with cool summers. The white spruce has a cone-shaped crown and normally grows to be 60-80 ft tall, but can grow as tall as 130 ft. Its blue-green needles sit on small woody pegs with sharp tips that are covered in white waxy coating. The white spruce has green-reddish cylindrical pale cones with flexible scales, maturing to a pale brown color 4-8 months after pollination.