

Overwintering Zonal Geraniums – submitted by Darlene Cross

Last Saturday my friend **Marion** and I visited **Jean Dangerfield's** Garden Shed plant sale. Besides a lovely fall garden tour, we also got to enjoy a hot cup of tea and a visit with Jean and **Dorothy Robison**; needless to say we discussed all things plants and I left with a beautiful zonal geranium (not the one pictured). Jean loves to share her knowledge of plant care and as such she made up hand-outs on how to overwinter geraniums. She has graciously agreed to let me post them on our garden club website - thank you Jean (she stresses though that these are not 'book' instructions, they are how she over winters her geraniums- in particular, the ones she was selling that day).

These geraniums are ready to be over-wintered. They are planted in a mixture of potting soil and peat moss, so do not expect vigorous growth. They should be allowed to go semi-dormant. Keep them in a cool place (not dark) and allow them to become dry. Water sparingly only once a month from November through to March. They can handle up to two degrees of frost. If you take cuttings, dip them in hormone rooting powder and pot them in a light potting or starting soil. They cannot handle frost. Water them twice a month and do not let them dry out totally. In April start to water your geraniums twice a month, and if possible bring them to a brighter location. Trim them well and remove any obviously dead arms. By April you can gradually bring them outdoors, but avoid bright direct sunlight. Harden them slowly, and by mid-May you should be able to put them in pots, using good potting soil, or in the ground in a sunny location. They will bloom from May to October (or later depending on outside temperatures). During the dormant period, check your geraniums for any sign of bugs and if necessary, gently mist them with your [approved] preferred insecticide (soapy water, etc.). Good luck.



photo courtesy Darlene Cross – taken 2012.