

The Twelve Days of Christmas for the Northern Arizona Gardener

By Cindy Murray



On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me a Steller's jay in a spruce tree.

On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me 2 twigs of mistletoe.

On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me 3 Ponderosa pines.
On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 4 amaryllis.



On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 5 gold twig dogwoods.
On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 6 pinyon pines.
On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me 7 Christmas roses.
On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 8 Norfolk Island Pines.
On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 9 Christmas cacti.



On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 10 dwarf Alberta spruce.
On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me 11 paperwhite bulbs.
And on the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me 12 bags of compost.

And in case you didn't know: Colorado blue spruce grace the mountains of Arizona's highest elevations, and Ponderosa pines dominate the forests of the San Francisco Peaks and surrounding areas. Juniper mistletoe, native to the Southwest, often parasitizes our juniper trees between elevations of 4,000 to 7,000 feet.

While gold-twigg dogwoods are deciduous gold-stemmed shrubs that can withstand our harsh winters, red-twigg dogwood, an attractive element in many Flagstaff landscapes, also grows wild in moist sites. Pinyon pines are somewhat drought-tolerant, short-needed trees that slowly grow to twenty feet or more in our high desert.

Lovely amaryllis flowers may be grown from bulbs in your northern Arizona home in December. Christmas roses, or hellebores, can be grown indoors and display two-inch, five petaled sprightly flowers December through April. Norfolk Island pines are conifers that serve well as indoor container trees during the holidays: their pyramidal-shape, wide-spaced branches are perfect for displaying ornaments. And Christmas cacti are the darling indoor bloomers of the holidays. (Start preparing yours in June for a timely Christmas bloom by following directions on the internet.)

If you dread the work required to string lights on your outdoor conifer trees, plant dwarf Alberta spruces. They rarely grow above seven feet tall. Our own little spruce lights up beautifully one holiday season after another.

If you have young children or grandchildren, gift them with some winter-blooming paperwhite bulbs and make a simple project out of planting them in a bed of gravel or soil. The bulbs will sprout, grow tall, and award your little ones with trumpet-shaped white flowers in about four to six weeks.

We hope all of our readers, gardeners and non-gardeners alike, have been enjoying these last few 12 days of Christmas. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah, and have a Happy Kwanzaa filled with family and community!

I'd like to thank Lisa Miller for the many hours she has generously devoted to editing my articles these past few years.