



November-December

Volume 1, Issue 2

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Holiday Plant Care

We use a variety of decorative plants to dress up our homes during the holidays. Poinsettias, holiday cactuses and living Christmas trees, in particular, play an important part in decking the halls. How well you care for them once you get them home has a lot to do with how long they will stay attractive.

After purchasing a holiday plant, be sure to protect it while bringing it home. Sudden exposure to low temperatures and wind will damage the plant. Also, make sure your plant doesn't get crushed or tipped over on the way home. Poinsettias are particularly fragile, so handle them with care. It's best to have them sleeved before you take them out of the store.

Holiday plants are often sold wrapped in colorful foil or placed in a pot cover. When you get your plant home, punch holes in the foil where the drainage holes of the pot are located. This allows the soil to drain properly and prevents the roots from becoming waterlogged. Make sure the furniture or floor you set your plant on is protected by a plastic saucer. If the pot has a decorative pot cover, lift the pot out of the cover, water the plant at the sink, let it drain and place it back in its pot cover.

Light and water are two key points to consider in caring for

your plants when you get them home. The plants should, of course, be located for attractive display, but a spot where they will receive some natural light will give best results. If you are interested in continuing to grow a decorative plant after the holiday season, it is especially important to move it to a spot where it will receive ample light as soon as you are finished displaying it.

The water needs of your plants should be checked every day by feeling the soil with your finger. Water thoroughly whenever the soil begins to feel somewhat dry. This may be easier if you take the plant to a sink, water it, let it drain and then place it back on display. Never let a holiday plant wilt.

Allowing a plant to dry out, low light, low humidity, drafts and placing them near sources of heat can all shorten the attractive life of your holiday plant. With a little care and attention, you can make sure that your holiday plant will provide a beautiful display throughout the season.

Poinsettia

The poinsettia is the most popular and decorative plant for the Christmas season. The brightly colored red, pink, salmon or creamy white "petals" are actu-



ally modified leaves called bracts. The true flowers are small and clustered in the center of the bracts. When selecting your poinsettia, make sure the true flowers haven't all fallen off so your plants will remain attractive longer.

Poinsettias have long been considered poisonous, but extensive research has shown they are not. Still, prevent children and pets from chewing on them as they could choke on pieces of the leaves.

Today's poinsettias should hold their leaves and bracts well through the season given proper care. After the holidays, most people simply discard the plants much as you would a bouquet of flowers (chop them up and put them in your compost pile). This is fine since the plant is unlikely to ever look as good as it did when first purchased.

Holiday Cactus

Thanksgiving and Christmas cactuses have been hybridized with each other to the point that

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Have an idea for a workshop or program you would like for us to schedule? Or maybe you have a favorite gardening or craft project you would like to teach others? We want to hear from you!

Questions, comments, or suggestions?

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Bring the Beauty Inside this Winter

If your idea of winter beauty is bright berries against a snowy backdrop, or the soft colors of seedpods and dried flowers, here are some ideas for bringing the beauty in this holiday season.



Wreaths, Swags and Arrangements

For boughs, fans or other arrangements, combine things such as:

Evergreens – Scotch or Austrian pine, eastern red cedar, blue spruce, concolor fir, Canada hemlock, Douglas fir or Japanese yew.

Holly, bayberry or other foliage will last longer outdoors or with stems in

water. Osage orange or hedge apples have wonderful, decorative seed patterns. They can be cut into 1/2 inch thick slices and dried. Whole osage oranges, tucked into a wire egg basket, add an old-fashioned feel to the home.

Pomanders are wonderfully fragrant, natural room fresheners. Oranges, kumquats, limes and lemons can be covered with clove studs and rolled in cinnamon or left in a bowl with spices like bay leaves or lavender.

Strawberry ears of corn can be hung in clusters on the tree with a cup hook in the back and a bow to brighten them up.

Small gourds in a variety of colors and sizes.

Catkins from hazelnut and alder; alder also has clusters of small, pinecone-like "nutlets" that can be used in decorating.

Bark from a white birch tree can be cut in decorative shapes and used in arrangements. Or make a tiny birdhouse out of cardboard and glue the salmon-colored bark or a river birch tree to the sides.

Christmas Tree Decorations

For a natural Christmas tree, try using these ornaments, either as they are or spray-painted:

Empty bird nests, possibly adding eggs or small bird ornaments.

Pinecones, alone or in clusters, with a small hook or paper clip for hanging.

Seedpods from black-eyed susan, wild beebalm, Chinese lantern, prairie bushclover, Siberian iris, penstemon, poppies, love-in-the-mist, milkweed or okra.

Acorns, singly for a small tree or clustered together with glue (you may want to spray them with a sealant for more gloss). Or consider stringing them with popcorn, black walnuts or other nuts or berries you've collected.

Dried flowers gathered in small bouquets or glued to small styrofoam balls: artemisia, white statice, sweet annie, feathery dried grasses,

goldenrod, etc. For large, single flowers, try hydrangea or yarrow. Rose hips, particularly from Rugosas.

Dried fruit gives the appearance of homemade stained glass windows. Simply slice oranges, apples, pears, lemons or grapefruit 1/8 inch thick, dip in a solution of one part lemon concentrate and one part water, making sure the fruit is well-covered. Line several cookie sheets with brown paper bags and heat at 175 degrees for two hours, then turn fruit over and leave in oven another 1 1/2 hours.

Berries : black chokeberry, viburnums, coralberry, snowberry, eastern wahoo, bittersweet, wax myrtle, etc.

For those winter days when the "weather outside is frightful," do some gathering in advance to enjoy winter's beauty close-at-hand indoors.

Don't Wait to Start Veggie Garden

Winter is just getting started, and the garden spot looks brown right now. It's time to start thinking about your springtime vegetable crop.

What? Why all the rush? The groundhog hasn't even determined how long winter will last. Well, the early bird gets the worm, they say.

It's primetime to look through seed catalogs and pick out varieties. If you haven't ordered your seed catalogs, by all means, get the request in the mail.

Many companies send catalogs to regular customers. Some have online catalogs and ordering to make selecting and getting your seeds easier. Order now to make sure you get the varieties you want. Popular varieties may sell out before spring. You may get left out and miss your favorite bean, zucchini or sweet corn.

If you grow your own transplants, spring is closer than you think. You'll want to start growing them indoors in a few weeks. Transplanting instead of direct seeding gives you a head start on spring because you can start plants indoors before the weather is suitable for planting outside. It also results in better stands and takes fewer seeds.

Crops like tomatoes, pepper, eggplant, watermelons and cantaloupes are more suited to transplant-

ing than direct seeding. It takes about five to six weeks to grow most transplants. If you're in an area where you can plant outdoors in mid-March, plant transplant seeds in early February.

Crops such as broccoli, cabbage, collards, cauliflower and kale will do well when started as transplants, too. These crops can be planted outdoors even earlier than the ones mentioned above. Plant these seed in mid-January to transplant later.

Growing transplants in the winter isn't for everyone. You can wait and buy them at the local garden center in spring if you like.

Many people know which varieties that they want to plant from year to year because they have favorites that have worked for generations. However, there are always new varieties hitting the market, and you should never be afraid to try something new. It may be better than the one you've used for years. But don't plant the whole crop in a new variety. Try it sparingly at first to see if you like it and if it performs well in your area.

Some newer varieties can make life easier in the garden. Selecting a variety with a good disease resistance package will always give you a leg up in the garden. For example, if tomato spotted wilt virus has been your nemesis in recent years, there



are several tomato and pepper varieties on the market with resistance to that disease.

Buying seed at the local garden center is convenient, and they usually have at least some of the most

popular varieties. However, if you want something unique or new, you may have to order it from a catalog or the Internet.

Remember, there is a world of new and different varieties out there. You may find a sweet corn you like better than "Silver Queen" or a tomato you like better than "Better Boy." Go ahead and explore, but now is the time to do it before the crocuses start to bloom, and it's time to get to the garden.

Forcing Spring Flowering Bulbs

You can add a touch of spring to your house in the middle of the winter with this indoor gardening activity. Many spring bulbs such as daffodils, tulips, and hyacinths can be forced to bloom indoors during the winter. You will be able to watch as a small dry bulb, which may look like an onion, grows into a plant and then produces beautiful flowers. Bright blooms in red, blue, yellow, pink, or white can provide a cheerful spot of color on a gray winter's day. Many of the blossoms have a delightful scent which will add to your enjoyment. This might be a good idea for a Christmas or winter birthday gift.

Facts about Bulbs

A bulb is a kind of stem which grows underground.



Commonly the term bulb refers to true bulbs, corms, fleshy rhizomes, and tubers—all of which are underground stems with slightly

different structure.

Some bulbs are called hardy bulbs because they need to be exposed to cool temperatures (40 degrees) during the winter in order to grow and bloom in the spring. Other bulbs known as tender bulbs may be hurt or killed by low temperatures. They do not require any period of cold temperature to make them bloom. Some bulbs may bloom for many years; others only bloom once. Bulbs which normally bloom outdoors can be forced to bloom indoors during winter months. *Forcing* means hurrying the plants into flowering by placing them in an environment in which they flower. Some bulbs need to be planted in the soil to bloom. Others will grow and flower in just water.

Forcing Tender Bulbs

The best time to begin this project is during October or November. Paper white or tender narcissus bulbs are very easy to bring into bloom. They can be grown in water. These bulbs do not withstand frost,

do not grow outdoors, and are worthless after flowering. Three varieties are suggested:

Paper White—white flowers
Chinese Sacred Lily—white flowers with yellow centers
Grand Soleil d'Or—yellow flowers with orange yellow cups

What you will need:

1-5 bulbs of selected variety—plump ones
Shallow (2 to 3 inch) container large enough to hold bulbs without crowding—may be glass, glazed pottery or metal (an aluminum pie or cake pan, small coffee cans or nut cans could be used)
Gravel, pebbles or sand
Water
Labels (ice cream sticks)

Fill the container with gravel or sand up to 1/2 inch from the top. Plant bulbs so that old roots are covered about 1/2 inch. Add water until it is even with the top of the gravel or sand. Write the variety name and date of planting on a label and place it near the back of the container. Keep water at that level until bulbs have bloomed. Put container in a sunny window. Bulbs will bloom in 3 to 5 weeks. You can plan when to plant your bulbs by when you would like them to bloom.

Forcing Hardy Bulbs:

Hyacinths, daffodils, or tulips will bloom indoors in January or February if potted in October and given proper cold treatment. The cold treatment permits root formation and initial bud formation on which forcing depends. There are several recommended varieties for forcing:

Hyacinths

Bismarck—light blue flowers
La Victorie—rose flowers

Daffodils

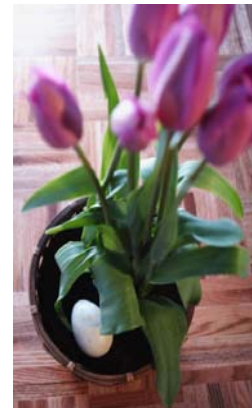
Cheerfulness—white flowers
King Alfred—yellow flowers

Tulips

Prince of Austria—orange/red
William Pitt—red flowers

What you will need:

Clay flower pots with drainage holes
Plump bulbs of selected variety
Soil—a ready prepared plant potting mixture, or mix equal amounts of sand, good garden soil and organic matter
Gravel
Water
Labels or ice cream sticks



For hyacinths, plant 3-4 bulbs in a 5" diameter pot. Daffodils should be planted with 3-4 bulbs in a 7-8" diameter pot. Plant no more than 3 tulip bulbs in a 5" diameter pot

Put a small amount of gravel over the drainage hole of the pot. Add soil. Allow bulbs to rest with the flat side toward the bottom of the pot. Hyacinth and tulip bulbs should be planted with the top showing just above the soil line. For daffodils, the bulb tops should be even with the top of the pot.

Add soil around or over the bulbs and press the soil until it is 1/2 inch (soil line) below the pot rim. Water the soil until water begins to seep out of the drainage hole. Write the flower name and date of planting on a label and stick it in the soil near the edge of the pot.

Cold Storage:

Bulbs should kept at 35—40 degrees for 2 months or until roots are produced. You can use one of several methods for cold treatment. Use the one easiest for you.

1. Bulbs can be potted and stored in a cool, dark cellar. They should be watered occasionally so that they are always moist.
2. The pots may be buried outdoors. Pots of bulbs should be set in a 12 inch deep trench and covered with at least 4 inches of leaves or straw. A few inches of soil should be placed on top of the straw.
3. Bulbs may be placed in a

wooden apple box outdoors. Place 2 to 3 inches of gravel in the bottom. Pack pots into the box and surround with moist leaves or peat moss. Place box in a cool spot outdoors. After the ground freezes, cover the box with straw, leaves or similar material.

Forcing the Bloom:

After 2 months, bring the bulbs indoors and put in a cool place (40-50 degrees) with a lot of light—perhaps on a sun porch. Keep out of direct sunlight for two weeks. When bulb tips have grown a few inches, place them in full sunlight where the temperature is 65-70 degrees. Be sure the plant gets plenty of light but is not too hot. Keep the plant moist, but not soggy, at all times. Bulbs can be planted outdoors after forced blooming where they will bloom again after two years.

(Article by Madge Balden Adams, special assignment writer for Horticulture)

Private Pesticide Applicator Training Information & Schedule



Private applicator means a person certified to use restricted use pesticides for purposes of producing any agricultural commodity

on property owned or rented by him (her) or an employer, or to the lands of a farmer-neighbor, if applied without compensation other than trading of personal services between producers of agricultural commodities.

Minimum standards for Certified Private Applicators (Taken from Code of Federal Regulations Part 40 Protection of Environment):

A practical knowledge of common pests to be controlled and the damage caused by them.

Read and understand the label and labeling information including- common

name of the pesticide applied, pests to be controlled, timing and methods of application, safety precautions, any pre-harvest or re-entry restrictions and any specific disposal procedures.

Apply pesticides in accordance with the label instructions and warnings, be able to prepare proper concentrations and calibrate application equipment.

Recognize local environmental situations that must be considered during application to avoid contamination.

Be able to recognize poisoning symptoms and procedure to follow in case of a pesticide accident.

The Cooperative Extension Service is responsible for the training of private pesticide applicators in each of Kentucky's 120 counties.

The certification is valid for 3 years. At that time, you must attend another training session.

Private Applicator Training will be offered at the Laurel County Extension Office on the following dates:

January 12—6:00 p.m.

February 9—6:00 p.m.

March 16—6:00 p.m.

Pre-registration is recommended. Please contact the Laurel County Extension Office at 864-4167 Extension 105 to register.

Note: This training is for **private** applicator licensing. For information about **commercial** applicator licensing procedures, contact the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at 866-289-0001 or visit their Web site at:

www.kyagr.com/consumer/envsvs/testing

Master Gardener Upcoming Events

Calling all Master Gardeners! We have several exciting events coming up soon. Be sure to put these on your calendar so you won't miss out on the fun:

November 3, 2009 – 1:00 p.m.

- **5:00 p.m.** Here's a great opportunity to complete some of your Master Gardener volunteer hours! Join us as we celebrate the end of a successful growing season at the Community Garden. We need all available hands to help winterize the garden, equipment, and materials so we can look forward to using them again in the spring. Wear your boots, old clothes, gloves, and hats. . . there won't be many more chances to play in the dirt this year. We will finish up at 5:00 p.m. with homemade chili and all the trimmings.

November 10, 2009 – 10:00

a.m. The decorating committee

for the Holiday Cooking School will meet at the Extension Office to prepare decorations for the event. If you would like to help with the decorations but cannot attend the meeting on November 10, you are welcome to join us on Thursday morning, November 12, at 8:30 a.m. at the Laurel-London Optimist Club to help put the decorations in place. We can also use any pine cones, nuts, greenery, berries, or other decorative items that you can donate. Remember, the theme of this year's event is "Going Green for the Holidays."

November 23, 2009 – 6:00

p.m. There will be a planning meeting and pot luck dinner at the Laurel County Extension Office. We will be discussing workshops and events that the Master Gardeners will host in the upcoming year. Jot down a

few program ideas and bring them to share with the group. . . along with your favorite covered dish!

December 17, 2009 – 6:00

p.m. The Master Gardener holiday celebration is sure to be a hit! Since we have so many talented cooks in our group, we have decided that the dinner will be pot luck. Join us at the Extension Office for an evening of good food, great fellowship, and plenty of fun. Those who wish to participate in the gift exchange should bring a garden-themed gift valued at \$15.

Check out the Horticulture page on our Web site for updates about other programs that will be scheduled in the near future:

www.ca.uky.edu/laurel

Poinsettia Fundraiser

The Laurel County Extension Homemakers will be taking orders for poinsettias through November 13. Orders can be picked up at the Extension Office on November 24 or November 25.

Plants are available in 6 1/2" pots for \$9 or 8" pots for \$14. Color choices are red, white, marble (pink & white bi-color blooms), and jingle bells (random red & light pink flecks).

All proceeds from the fundraiser will benefit the Emma Lou Cissell Memorial Homemaker Scholarship fund.

Pruning and Grafting Workshops Coming Soon

Registration is now being accepted for our annual pruning and grafting workshop.

Join us on Thursday, February 25, as Dr. John Strang of the University of Kentucky's Horticulture Department demonstrates the proper procedure for pruning fruit trees to make sure your trees stay healthy. The pruning demonstration will begin at 1:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.

At 6:00 p.m., we will return to the Laurel County Extension Office where Dr. Strang will demonstrate methods for fruit tree

graftage.

Snacks and light refreshments will be served prior to the evening session of the workshop. For planning purposes, pre-registration for dinner and the workshop is required.

This is one of our most popular spring workshops and it's expected to fill up fast. Call and register today!

Don't forget to place your apple or pear rootstock order when you call.



Dr. Strang demonstrates proper pruning procedures for fruit trees.

Time to Care for and Store Garden Tools

Home gardeners who don't plan to plant fall crops should pack away their tools for the winter, says a University of Georgia gardening expert.

"Gardening tools and supplies are expensive," said Tony Johnson, horticulturist at the UGA Research and Education Garden in Griffin, Ga. "With a little care and forethought, you can help your tools last from season to season."

Garden hoses

Irrigation is essential to growing the greenest grass or the biggest squash. To make sure your garden hoses are ready for next spring, Johnson says to drain all the water from hoses and sprinklers. Allow the hoses to thoroughly dry before storing them for the winter.

"It's better not to leave your hoses outside on the ground over the winter," he said.

"If you live in an area where the temperatures drop to freezing and below, any water left in the hoses can turn to ice, expand and crack or slit inexpensive hoses."

To keep insects from hibernating in hoses, Johnson recommends connecting the hose ends to close any openings.

You can buy hose hangers, but eco-friendly Johnson believes in recycling whenever he can.

"Just nail an old tire rim or a coffee can to the wall of your shed and wrap the hose

around the form," he said. "You don't want to just hang the hose on a nail. The weight of the hose will cause the nail to create a permanent kink."

A fertilizer or pesticide sprayer should be cleaned before being stored. Triple-rinse the sprayer with water or a little ammonia and check the hose tip for debris before storing the sprayer for the season.

Mower and tiller

When your mower has cut its last grass blade for the summer, it should be cleaned and drained of any remaining fuel.

"It's best not to store gas in your mower over the winter," Johnson said. "You can add a gasoline stabilizer, but I just turn on the gas shutoff valve and run the mower until it quits." Use a siphon pump to remove as much of the fuel as possible.

"Next, take the spark plug out, add a little oil and replace the spark plug," Johnson said. "Some people recommend replacing the spark plug every season, but I just clean mine. Why fix what isn't broken."

Before storing your mower, clean the underside of the deck with a pressure washer and scrap off any old grass or debris, he said.

"If you don't plan to use your tiller plow until the spring, drain the fuel from it and clean it, too," Johnson said. "I tend to use mine in flower beds all year round."



Simple gardening tools

Shovels, hoes, shears and rakes should be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water before being stored.

Use steel wool to clean the metal portion of your tools, wipe dry and coat with linseed oil, he said.

"Run a little sandpaper over the rough edges of the wooden handles to smooth down any splintered spots," Johnson said. "Cover the handles with a light coating of WD-40 or all-purpose machine oil to keep them from drying and splitting." To save time in the spring, sharpen tool edges before storing.

Inventory

The end of the summer gardening season is also the perfect time to make an inventory of any tools you need to replace or wish you had. "Then you have a head start on your Christmas list," said Johnson, who bares a striking physical resemblance to St. Nick.

As a last reminder, Johnson says be sure to store all rakes with the teeth pointing down. "I always say 'teeth up or teeth out.' But all joking aside, stepping on an exposed rake can be very dangerous, especially for children."

Return Service Requested

Holiday Plant Care

(Continued from page 1)

we now group today's varieties together under the catchall name holiday cactus. They bloom from November through January.

It is common for them to drop flower buds when you get them home. These plants resent being moved at all while blooming, much less being packaged, shipped, unwrapped, displayed, purchased and taken home. But many blooms and buds will hold on, and their great beauty in shades of magenta, red, pink, orange, gold or white make their purchase worth it.

When they finish blooming, these plants should not be discarded. The holiday cactus will reward you with blooms every year for many years if grown correctly. After all the flowers have dropped off, allow the soil to become somewhat dry between watering and keep the plant in a well-lit window. An east or west window will provide plenty of light. They

also will thrive on a porch or patio in a semi-shaded position during the summer.

Living Christmas Trees

Various conifers, such as Norfolk Island pines, stone pines and junipers, are sold decorated as living Christmas trees. Make sure you keep them watered while they are on display. After Christmas, remove the decorations and place the tree in good growing conditions. Most of these trees should be put in a sunny spot outside, since they do not like being indoors and the cold of winter will not bother them. The exception is the Norfolk Island pine, which is not hardy and will freeze. Place it in a sunny window indoors, but you can move it outside during summer.

(Reprinted from "Get It Growing: Holiday Plant Care" available online at www.extension.org)

Trimming of the Greens

Join us at the Laurel County Public Library as Master Gardener Fredi Angel leads a hands-on workshop to show you how to decorate your home for the holidays using greenery, berries, and other materials collected from your own back yard. Participants should bring pine, holly, magnolia, and other cuttings suitable for holiday decorations.

The workshop will be held on November 30 at 2:00 p.m. and will be repeated at 6:00 p.m. that evening. There is a \$10 registration fee to cover the cost of materials.

Pre-registration is required, and space is very limited. To reserve your spot in the class, contact the Laurel County Extension Office at 864-4167, or call the Laurel County Library at 864-5759.

