



“What’s Growing On...”

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RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION ON THE RADIO

For agriculture news and horticultural tips, listen to me, Pam Burton, on the RCE Agricultural Program on Monday, Wednesday & Thursday on WSNJ AM 1440 & 1240 at **11:30 pm** announcing local workshops, seminars, and horticultural tips.

From The Desk of Pam Burton

As we enter into this chillier time of the year, I always have difficulty with the shorter days and longer nights. I truly believe that if it's dark out, we should be asleep! But winter really is a restorative time for plants and people and despite the cold and snow, I continue to love the change of seasons. In the winter months, I have marveled at the ice on bare branches of trees, and have seen fog on a snow covered garden. I have looked for the first signs of spring as the witch hazels bloom and have watched my Golden Retriever make doggie snow angels. I have poured over seed catalogs in preparation for the spring plantings and I have been happy every year as the winter equinox passes and leads us to longer daylight.

This year in particular I am looking forward to the 2014 class of Master Gardeners. The 2014 program of classes includes some interesting new topics as well as some exciting new speakers. Among the new topics is a class specifically concentrated on explaining the Rutgers' Master Gardener Program with an emphasis on the volunteer requirements both from volunteer and administrative perspectives. Please be sure to all mark your calendars for the first class, which is held January 7, 2014 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. There are full educational hours for this class and it's important to come out and give a warm welcome to our Class of 2014.

Please tune into WSNJ 1240 AM on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 11:30 AM to hear the agricultural report. You will often hear me say "...and so it goes..." as a tribute to my Gram who played such a large role in my love of all things of nature.

Pine Cone Bird Feeder Horticulture Therapy Program

Doris Morgan, Mary Ellen Walker and Dee Shiell, Rutgers Master Gardeners

I have had the pleasure of participating in this class when I was the Director of West Cumberland Senior Center. The Master Gardeners arrived complete with supplies and I wondered if those who were taking the class realized the behind-the-scenes work that goes into preparing for the class. The first thing that needed to be done was to determine how many people would be attending which determined the amount of supplies that would be needed. The next step was to take a walk outside on a bright fall day to gather the pine cones from white pine trees which are overly abundant on the ground at this time of year. Next was a stop to a store or two for plastic plates, plastic knives, ribbon, peanut butter, bird seed and Crisco oil.

The Master Gardeners started their workshop with an explanation of what the Rutgers Master Gardener program is and a reminder to the group that there will be a new class starting in January 2014. They also briefly explained the concept of Horticulture Therapy and then began the in-service by handing out the supplies. Each attendee got one plastic plate, one plastic knife and two pine cones. We were all instructed to choose a length of ribbon for each of our pine cones and to tie this onto the pine cone with a long loop for hanging outside. I chose to tie the ends of the ribbon to each pine cone so they could be looped over a branch of a tree when I was done with my project.

Several jars of peanut butter were put on the table for us to share and we were encouraged to scoop as much as we wanted onto the pine cone with our knife. Of course, part of the fun was getting sticky fingers from the peanut butter. Then, the Master Gardeners poured a generous amount of bird seed onto our plates and we rolled the peanut butter pine cones in the bird seed until it was covered.

Because the sap from the white pine cones was on our hands, the Master Gardeners shared their tip of the day: Crisco oil takes off most of the sap.

It was fun to see everyone's approach to this project as some used a large amount of peanut butter and bird seed and approached the workshop with joyous abandon. Others were more cautious in their approach but certainly enjoyed it equally as well.

I hung my pine cone bird feeder outside my kitchen window so I could enjoy watching the birds feast on it. This certainly is a project that you could do at home and one that children could participate in as well.



Harvesting Cranberries

Cranberries are native to North America and are an important crop for New Jersey growers. In fact, during the 2011 Home Gardeners School at Rutgers, it was reported that New Jersey cranberry growers cultivate about 3,500 acres of the fruit, producing about 550,000 barrels a year. A barrel is the traditional unit of cranberry measurement. It is equal to 100 pounds. That volume is in large part due to the optimum soil conditions found in South Jersey which are highly acidic, sandy on top and mucky below.

It's tradition to think of the cranberry recipes around the holidays and we look forward to them on our Holiday menu. Let's face it, the Holidays would not be the same without cranberry sauce. But do we give any thought as to how the cranberries get from the farm to the market?

There are actually two methods of harvest and the "wet" method is used extensively in New Jersey for those cranberries that are destined to become juice or sauce. The cranberry bogs are flooded about 12 to 18 inches above the vines and then mechanical water reels that look like giant egg beaters are run over the vines to shake the berries loose. The berries float and a cranboom is used to surround them into a tight circle before being pushed up a loader and into a truck by conveyors. From there, the cranberries are trucked to a cleaning station and then on to a processing plant to be heat-processed into sauce or juice which is then canned or bottled and finally shipped to the grocery store. One of the "newest" cranberry products on the market is white cranberry juice which is made from immature (or not yet red) cranberries versus the red color of ripe cranberries.

The wet method of harvesting just spoken about reaps approximately 99% of the yield of the cranberry crop. The dry harvested berries, on the other hand can be sold as fresh fruit but with this method about 30% of the crop is lost when the berries fall to the ground under the vines. Basically the dry method uses machinery with teeth that pull the berries from the vines and conveys them to pallet boxes. Even as far back as our early settlers, it's been recognized that good cranberries bounce. To this day, the harvested berries are subjected to the bounce test using special wooden barriers which separate the good from the bad, before being accepted for packaging.

The next time you are in the grocery store and cranberries are on your list, you will now have a better understanding and appreciation of the process that it takes to get the crop from the farm to the market. I would also urge you to consider making cranberries a year round addition to your menu. Not only are cranberries delicious but they are very high in Vitamin C.

Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station; <http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/stories/Cranberries-in-NJ-Rutgers-Home-Gardeners-School.html>

Union County College (NJ); <http://faculty.ucc.edu/biology-ombrello/POW/cranberry.htm>

UMassAmherst; <http://www.umass.edu/cranberry/cropinfo/howgrow.html>

University of Maine;

<http://umaine.edu/cranberries/cranberry-facts-and-history/>

Burlington County College; <http://staff.bcc.edu/pines/PDF/Intermediate%20level%20Cranberry%20Worksheet%20ANSWER%20KEY.pdf>



Ilex verticillata or Winterberry



Winterberry is one of my favorite winter plants. Winterberry is a medium-sized ornamental shrub that has a slow growth rate. At maturity in an urban setting, it will reach about 8' tall by 8' wide but will reach larger proportions in the wild. It has specific requirements for growing conditions and performs best in full sun with acidic, organically-enriched, moist soils. Winterberry forms colonies through root suckering and you can't miss masses of them in wet naturalized settings and at the very edge of bodies of water. Winterberry is a deciduous holly and the lack of leaves helps show off the bright red berries which persist long into the bleak winter months. The red berries are very dramatic in mass against snow and are beautiful when reflected off of nearby bodies of water. If you consider winterberry for your home landscaping be certain to keep in mind that they like wet conditions.

Winterberries are dioecious which means some plants produce female flowers and some produce male flowers. It's extremely important to have a male plant that is in close proximity to three to five female plants. Not only that, the male and female need to be very carefully matched for bloom times. If bloom times are mismatched by even one week it can result in poor pollination with little or no fruit set in the female plants. In summary, do your research before purchasing a pair of winterberry plants to make certain the male pollinizer blooms at the same time as the female winterberry. The flowers are ornamentally insignificant, but the payoff is the gorgeous fruit at a special time of year. The winterberry fruits tend to last longer into the winter months because they have a relatively low fat content which means they are eaten after the higher fat content food sources are gone.

There are some excellent dwarf cultivars on the market as well as cultivars with gold or orange berries, but I am a traditionalist when it comes to winterberries and like mine to be red berried and a bit wild in habit. I enjoy cutting winterberry every year for long lasting holiday arrangements both inside and outdoors. One simple way of arranging them is to fill a clear cylinder glass container with cranberries and place long winterberry branches in the top so they cascade over the vase. The cranberries will help hold the branches in place. For an additional festive touch, you can add a pack of battery powered lights to the winterberry branches. Guaranteed to look beautiful on your holiday table!

Ohio State University; http://hvp.osu.edu/pocketgardener/source/description/il_llata.html

Penn State University; <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/green-industry/news/2012/shrub-of-the-month-2013-ilex-verticillata-winterberry>





Phoradendron leucarpum American mistletoe

One of the best perks about this job is that I have made many new friends. One of them recently asked me what was on my bucket list and not surprisingly, I have several horticultural related items on it. One of those is to see and to harvest mistletoe growing in the wild.

Most of us are familiar with mistletoe as the sprig of small, leathery green leaves and white berries tied with a red ribbon. American mistletoe, is a semi-parasitic plant that can be found growing in the tops of hardwood trees in the eastern United States. It lives off the tree it attaches itself to and has fingerlike projection called hasatorium that grows into the host plant and combines with the living tree. Some energy is supplied to the mistletoe by its green leaves but mostly it relies on the host tree for the water and mineral supply and can actually divert water from the tree to itself when conditions are dry. Eventually this can lead to stress and can cause the branches of the host tree to become weak and decline over a period of years.

Mistletoe grows into thick masses of branching misshapen stems within the canopy of the host tree and the clumps are easily observed in fall and winter when the host tree has shed its leaves. Birds and squirrels often nest within this clump. The birds will feed on the berries and spread the seeds which are sticky and will glue themselves to the surfaces of the tree. It's been suggested that clumps of mistletoe can make a deciduous tree appear to be an evergreen in it's uppermost branches, so I'm going to take a walk on the family farm with a mission to hunt for mistletoe by looking up!

When looking for mistletoe in a retail store, you might note that some companies have replaced the berries with artificial, plastic berries. There is a reason for that and it's because mistletoe is toxic and should not be ingested. Keep mistletoe out of the reach of children and pets at all times.

It's interesting to note that the ancient Druids used mistletoe to celebrate the coming of winter. It was considered so sacred to the Druids that if two enemies met beneath a tree on which mistletoe was growing, they would stop their battle and claim a temporary truce.

It's become a modern holiday tradition to kiss under the mistletoe and is considered a sign of goodwill, friendship or love. So one of my holiday wishes for all of you is you get a chance to stand under a sprig of mistletoe!

University of Nebraska; <http://byf.unl.edu/mistletoe>

University of Illinois; <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/state/newsdetail.cfm?NewsID=16171>

Iowa State University; <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/2006/dec/071806.htm>

Iowa State University; <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/article/yard-and-garden-holly-mistletoe-and-poinsettia>



Why Leaves Change Color in the Fall



There is a wonderful Rutgers Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet (FS182) entitled "Why Leaves Change Color" that explains the process in detail. The Fact Sheet offers up some interesting folklore as well as possible projects with fall leaves other than raking them & using them for mulch!

The color change is a result of chemical processes that take place as the seasons change when the tree responds to shorter days and lower temperatures. It turns out that leaves are the factories that make the foods that are necessary for the tree's growth through spring and summer. The process of food-making occurs in the leaf cells that contain chlorophyll. It's chlorophyll that is responsible for giving leaves their green color. Chlorophyll also lets the leaves absorb energy from the sun so carbon dioxide and water can be transformed into carbohydrates which provide food for the plant. Four leaf pigments are responsible for leaf color and its changes in the autumn: chlorophylls, carotenoids, tannins, and anthocyanins.

During the growing season, chlorophyll is continually being produced and destroyed and leaves appear green. When the daylight grows shorter and the temperatures drop, the leaves stop the food-making process. The chlorophyll breaks down, the green disappears and the fall colors appear. The carotenoids are responsible for yellows and oranges, the tannins for brown hues and the anthocyanins give us the reds and purples.

Why do leaves drop? Many a homeowner has asked that question including myself after hours of raking, but the answer is that a layer of cells develop called an abscission layer which gradually severs tissues that support the leaf.

Why are some years showier than others? It turns out that temperature, light, and water supply all have an influence on the degree and the duration of fall color.

A succession of warm, sunny days and cool (below 45°F), but not freezing nights brings about the most spectacular color displays. During these days, lots of sugars are produced in the leaf but then are prevented from moving out due to the cool nights and the gradual closing of veins going into the leaf. Early frost kills or injures the leaves before the pigments reach their maximum development and decreases the optimum display of fall color. Rainy and/or overcast days tend to decrease the intensity of autumn colors as the reduced light intensity limits the photosynthesis process and the sugar production. In short, pick a clear, dry, and cool (not freezing) day to enjoy the autumn color but do it quickly as perfect time for viewing comes and goes in a hurry.

I'll close by mentioning that leaf mulch can be used for your home composting and we have several Fact Sheets that provide detailed information on that topic. They are Fact Sheet numbers 74, 117 and 811.

SOURCES:

Butler University (Indiana); <http://www.butler.edu/herbarium/fallcolor/leaveschange.htm>

University Of Illinois; <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/fallcolor/about.cfm>

Texas A & M Forest Service; <http://txforestservation.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=209>



Flat Pods on Pole Limas

There was a homeowner who came into the Extension Center with beautiful pods from his pole limas but they had no beans. He reported that he had poles that were 7 feet tall with plenty of foliage and noted that there were a lot of bees during the warm season. But why no beans? Understandably, with all of the hard work that goes into growing pole limas, this was disappointing. I asked Dr. Wesley Kline, County Ag Agent, who said he has had reports of this occurring with quite a number of pole lima crops this season.

Pole limas are a warm season crop native to Central America and they are self-pollinators, which means the transfer of pollen takes place within the individual flowers. They contain a powerhouse of nutrients including iron, protein, thiamine, and riboflavin. Lima beans have very specific cultural and growing requirements.

Heat is one of the major factors in reducing yields in pole lima beans. This growing season we had very high temperatures followed by a rainy spell and it's known that hot days and especially hot nights will cause flower and small pods to drop. It will additionally cause flat pods, or pods with underdeveloped seeds, like the pods that the disappointed homeowner brought with him to the Extension Center.

It's been suggested that one way that might help this is by planting as early as practical in May. But if you consider that, remember that you will need to plan for using covers over the plants to provide protection as well as plastic mulches to warm the soil. Another point to remember is that it is critical to avoid water stress to the plants during hot weather. Therefore, a misting system with low volume sprinklers during the middle of the day may help but could also lead straight to conditions for downy mildew. In other words, these are not foolproof solutions and are potentially time consuming and costly.

Although there are several other problems that can occur with pole lima beans, I will mention only one more and that is the stink bug, which has grown in population in our area in recent years. The stink bug uses their needle-like stylets to pierce young pods and suck the sap out of the pods and young seeds. The result is misshapen seeds or pod drop. More details about the stink bug can be found in 2 Rutgers Cooperative Extension Fact sheets (FS002 and FS245).

Lima Beans are serious business to those that grow them and I know of one local family who has passed their seed down from generation to generation since 1946. For myself I have fond memories of my Gram's succotash with baby limas, sweet white corn and lots of butter and salt.

University of Delaware; <http://agdev.anr.udel.edu/weeklycropupdate/?p=310>

Texas A&M; <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/vegetables/bean.html>

Iowa State University; <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2001/5-11-2001/limabeans.html>



Indoor Care of your Christmas Tree

Every family seems to have a tradition regarding the putting up of the annual Christmas Tree. If your tradition involves cutting a Christmas tree, there are certain tips on how to care for it indoors. We have an information sheet available at the County Extension office edited by Jim Johnson, Agricultural Agent, on how to care for your indoor tree.

The key to the care of a cut tree is maintaining moisture content. After you decide on the perfect tree and bring it home, you will remove about a one inch section diagonally from the butt of the tree and get it immediately into water. If you are keeping the tree outside before bringing it in to deck the halls, be sure to store it in a cool, shady place that is sheltered from wind and sprinkle the foliage with water on a daily basis. Keep in mind you will need to saw another section squaring off the diagonal from the butt of the tree before moving it inside.

Once inside, it's recommended to keep the tree in a tree stand that provides for a reservoir of water and check the water level often. A tree can absorb as much as 1 to 4 pints of water per day, so moisture content is the key to a happy Christmas Tree! Check your tree often and never let it run dry. The information we can provide on indoor care of Christmas trees specifically addresses possible additives to the water as well as recommendations for spraying trees.

If your choice is a balled live Christmas tree, again there are several tips you can follow to assure survival after the holidays. The first step is to condition the tree before moving it indoors by keeping it in an unheated protected building. It would be helpful to wrap the ball with plastic to keep the root ball moist. Be proactive by having the planting site pre-selected and the hole pre-dug and kept open by filling it with mulch.

It is recommended to limit the live tree's inside stay to no longer than ten days. Re-acclimation to the outdoors will be helpful in the survival of your live tree. Then, plant in your pre-dug hole and enjoy for years to come!

Whether yours is a cut tree or a live tree, be certain to follow the manufacturers recommended instructions when adding lights to your tree.

By following these simple guidelines you can help your indoor Christmas tree maintain tree color, reduce needle drop and keep it more resistant to fire which will let you "Have yourself a very Merry Christmas..." (go ahead and sing along...)!



Ornamental or Flowering Cabbage and Kale

In an informal survey of my friends and family I have found that there seem to be two very distinct groups and I have concluded that either you really like ornamental cabbage and kale or you really don't like them – Not many seem to be on the fence about their opinion. Ornamental cabbage and kale are also known as flowering cabbage and kale, but in reality the part of the plants that are considered showy are actually the leaves that resemble petals of flowers. In fact, I have seen flowering cabbage and kale used in floral bouquets where the lower leaves are removed and the stem has been allowed to bolt.

For those who are of the group that really like ornamental or flowering cabbage and kale, you are well aware that they are grown primarily for adding beautiful colors of white, pink, purple or red in their rosettes of leaves at a time of year when finding those colors might prove otherwise challenging. They can provide a striking addition to your landscape when used as mass plantings, as part of a container planted with pansies or as a border plant combined with fall perennials.

When choosing your ornamental cabbage or kale look for large compact plants that are showing color and make sure you buy the right size plant for your landscaping needs. The plants will not likely get much bigger after planting, so it's worth it to spend a little more money for a larger plant. Typically, ornamental cabbage and kale grow approximately one foot wide and 15 inches tall and there are many cultivars in a variety of colors that are available on the market. In the horticultural industry ornamental kale is considered the plants with curly, frilly edges on the leaves while ornamental cabbage has broader flatter leaves that are edged in a contrasting color.

They are happiest planted in a sunny location with a moderately moist and rich soil, spaced about 12 inches apart. Bury the stem so the lowest leaves of the plants are flush with the surface of the soil and keep the plants well watered. As the weather turns cooler, you will be rewarded with more vivid white, pink and purple colors that will last well into the winter months.

Ornamental cabbage and kale can be plagued with many of the same insects as the tight headed cabbage crop, however, because they are typically grown late in the growing season the pest problems are somewhat minimized. There are several Facts Sheets on pests that deal with commonly known problems with cabbages and related plants and these Fact Sheets are numbers 287, 286, 277 and 231.

The popularity of ornamental cabbage and kale has been increasing in recent years and the market has responded to the consumer demand by offering this colorful, unusual and long-lasting addition to their fall products, along with the more traditional mums.

University of Wisconsin; <http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/ornamental-cabbage-and-kale>

North Carolina Extension Service; <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/hil/pdf/hil-507.pdf>

University of Florida; <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fp071>

Union County College (Cranford NJ); <http://faculty.ucc.edu/biology-ombrello/POW/cabbage.htm>

University of Massachusetts, Amherst; <http://extension.umass.edu/floriculture/fact-sheets/flowering-cabbage-and-kale>

University of Tennessee; <http://utgardens.tennessee.edu/pom/cabbage.html>





Your Harvest Table...

Today I'm wishing all of you a very Happy Holiday season. I hope as you sit down at your Harvest Table you take a moment to give thanks that the harvest you have before you is all agricultural-related....from appetizers all the way through dessert and even including many decorations.

I was looking through the Master Gardeners' Cookbook, which is available for sale at the Rutgers Extension Center for \$5.00, and found many recipes that I'd enjoy on my Holiday plate. For an appetizer I was enjoying the thought of the artichoke dip – that harvest, of course, highlighting artichokes, garlic and lemon among other ingredients.

For the soup entrée I chose the Cream of Cauliflower soup, offering onions and cauliflower straight from the garden. I paired this with Toasted Mushroom Rolls featuring mushrooms and chives.

Our next menu item is Greens with Cranberry Vinaigrette which is loaded with nature's bounty and includes cranberries, garlic, pecans, mixed greens and a red onion. Yum!

It's at this point that I start thinking how am I possibly going to eat any more – but wait, here comes the main course and sides. The Master Gardeners' Cookbook highlights a Turkey glazed with cranberries and rosemary. In my family Broccoli Casserole is a tradition and happily there is a recipe for it in my Holiday Dinner wishbook. Sweet Potatoes are also a given and along with the sweet potatoes the recipe in this cookbook calls for oranges, pineapples, raisins and coconut. You can't get through any holiday without refrigerator pickles and a recipe offered in the cookbook keeps it simple with ingredients of cucumbers, onions and peppers. I'm sure your family has its' own traditions for a heavily-laden table including sides of cranberry sauce, stuffing, cornbread, mashed potatoes and so much more!

While we think we cannot possibly eat another bite, out comes the desserts with perhaps the most traditional being the pumpkin pie. While the Master Gardeners' Cookbook doesn't have a recipe for pumpkin pie it does offer 2 very yummy sounding options and they are a Pumpkin Cake using pumpkins and walnuts, along with a sweet potato pie with sweet potatoes, vanilla, cinnamon and nutmeg as the harvest offerings.

As we gather together this Holiday season take this opportunity to give thanks for the bounty before you and don't forget to thank the hostess! Again, the Master Gardeners' Cookbook is available at the Extension Center for \$5.00 and it would make a lovely hostess gift!



Winter Skin Care

As outdoor enthusiasts, we often find it's easy to forget to take care of our skin in winter, until it's too late, and you are suffering from painful cracks to the skin around your fingers, along with chapped lips and winter burn (happens to us too, just like our plants!). What's the answer? Be proactive by applying a thicker moisturizer to your face and hands during the winter months to combat the drier climate and continue to apply a facial sunscreen of at least a SPF 30 and wear lip balm. It will also help to apply moisturizer after you wash your hands and after a bath which gives you a chance to trap some of the moisture already on the skin. It is recommended to apply a thicker layer of moisturizer at night to your hands and wear cotton gloves to help the product stay on the skin. That method can be messy and bothersome but it can beat the alternative of many band-aids on your fingers.

Another recommendation is to take shorter showers in warm (not hot) water and to use a cleanser that incorporates various skin conditioners and has a lower concentration of harsh cleansers. A moisturizing shampoo followed by a moisturizing leave-in conditioner can help keep your hair from getting too dry and frizzy.

Lastly, keep in mind that as you turn up the thermostats in your home, you may need to also turn on a room vaporizer or room humidifier to help with the air being too dry. Enjoy the winter!

Wake Forest Baptist Health; <http://www.wakehealth.edu/Health-Central/Winter-Skin-Care/>

Wake Forest Baptist Health; <http://www.wakehealth.edu/Health-Central/Winter-Skin-Q-A/>

MASTER GARDENER OVERVIEW

I. Introduction

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Master Gardener program is a volunteer program offered in New Jersey through Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agriculture Experiment Station (NJAES), and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, in cooperation with the individual county government. The program is designed to increase the availability of University-based information to local communities and individuals through trained adult volunteers known as Rutgers Master Gardeners.

II. Program Objectives

- Expand the research and educational capacity of RCE in order to provide research-based home grounds information through a network of trained volunteers.
- Develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture and environmental stewardship. These programs are educational in nature and may involve environmental improvements, horticultural therapy projects, community and school gardening projects, or other programs as determined by local need.
- The Rutgers Master Gardener Program is a volunteer network designed to assist RCE faculty and staff in managing local Master Gardener activities and programs.

III. Who is a Rutgers Master Gardener?

A Master Gardener is an adult 18 and older who has a sincere desire to help others and a strong interest in home grounds, including gardening, horticulture, and the environment. He or she is a member of the local community interested in expanding his or her personal knowledge with a willingness and dedication to then serve as a volunteer for Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Garden Checklist for December

- Select a live or cut Christmas tree while the selection is good. Keep the tree outdoors until time to decorate.
- Keep poinsettias out of cold drafts and away from heat sources. Place them where they will get as much light as possible.
- Popcorn and cranberry garlands are easy to make.
- Cover or move indoors any stone statuary to prevent frost cracks.
- Protect furniture from the sap of fresh, needled evergreen boughs when decorating for the holidays.
- Don't let dried evergreen decorations become a fire hazard.
- Trim an outdoor evergreen tree with treats for wildlife.
- If you're considering the native American holly for your landscape, please be advised that it will grow 40-50 feet in height with a spread of 18-40 feet.
- Salt used to melt ice on sidewalks and driveways can damage plants and lawns.
- Begin planning your garden as the seed catalogs arrive in the mail. Try a few new plants next year.
- Evaluate your landscape. Plan to fill in gaps with appropriate plants in the spring.
- Gather holiday greens from your landscape but prune carefully. Spray the greens with an antidesiccant to retard water loss.
- After the ground freezes, mulch shrubs and perennials with straw, pine needles or branches of the discarded Christmas tree to prevent heaving of the plants during periods of freezing and thawing.
- Rake up any leaves remaining on the lawn.
- Avoid walking on the lawn once the ground has frozen.
- Begin bringing in some bulbs potted for forcing. Put them in a cool location with bright light.
- Plant your live Christmas tree as soon as possible after Christmas.
- Feed the birds.
- Rotate houseplants to achieve even growth.
- Keep succulents and cacti on the dry side.
- Do not feed houseplants during the winter months and reduce the watering.
- Raise the humidity for your houseplants by grouping them together.
- Water houseplants with warm water. Keep your Christmas tree stand filled with water.
- Relax with a good gardening book.
- Plants make nice holiday gifts.
- Have a wonderful December!



Gardening Tips for January

- Cut up your Christmas tree and use branches as mulch over perennials and around shrubs.
- Feed birds regularly and see they have water. Birds like suet, fruit, nuts and bread crumbs as well as bird seed. They won't even complain if the food is stale.
- Move the most tender plants away from windows on cold nights.
- Your live Christmas tree should be in a cool location for no more than a week before planting.
- Get caught up on your garden reading list.
- Inspect stored bulbs and discard those that are rotting.
- Salt on sidewalks and driveways can injure nearby lawns and plants. Try sawdust or sand instead. Cat litter works well if you haven't obtained the less expensive materials.
- Make plans for your spring and summer gardens.
- Check out the new offerings from mail order companies. Make sure plants are hardy for this area before ordering.
- Mealy bugs on house plants can be killed by touching them with cotton dipped in alcohol.
- Economical "sticky stakes" for trapping whiteflies and aphids can be made by cutting bright yellow cardboard or plastic, such as recycled detergent bottles or margarine tubs, into strips. Coat them with petroleum jelly. Insert into pots or hang near problem areas.
- Inspect perennial beds for heaved plants during warm periods. Mulch around heaved plants. Don't push them into the soil! Dig and replant them in the spring.
- To keep pests at bay, red and green cabbages, greens and root crops can be grown under floating, lightweight row cover fabric for the entire season without detriment to plants. Row cover fabric will need to be replaced for plants that stand in the garden as long as cabbages when it becomes torn or brittle. Row cover fabric will also keep neighborhood cats off the newly planted garden.
- Your local delicatessen or fast food restaurant often has surplus 5-gallon pickle buckets. This is a good size for growing containerized plants and for general use in the garden.
- Start forcing shrubs indoors.
- Limit traffic over dormant lawns. Grass is easily broken now and the crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.
- Check germination of leftover seeds.
- As you look through seed catalogs, choose disease-resistant varieties. They make gardening easier and they reduce the expenses of pesticides.
- Some mail order seed companies offer pelletized seeds of lettuce, carrot and a few other small seeded crops. Pelletized seeds have special coatings so they are larger and easier to handle.
- One way to file seeds as they come in the mail is to use index card tabs to divide a cardboard file box into categories for each vegetable or flower. As new seeds arrive, place them alphabetically into the proper slot. Drop notes into the file to remind yourself what is on order to avoid duplication.
- Remove bagworms from evergreens.
- Buy yourself a new house plant. The *Hedera helix*, English Ivy, is the only ivy that will survive indoors. Its' leaves will grow in fair light (50' candles and up) or a north or east window. Provide constant moisture to prevent leaf drop. Ivy tolerates drafts near doors.
- Consider using ferns in shady areas of your landscape this year.
- How energy efficient is your landscape? Do you have evergreen trees or shrubs blocking a window where the sun's warmth would be welcome now? Consider replacing them with a deciduous plant that would let sun in during the winter but cast cooling shade in the summer.
- When dusting the furniture, consider washing the dust from your houseplants.
- Paint the handles of garden tools red or orange. This will preserve the wood and make the tools easier to locate in the garden.
- Happy a Happy and Healthy New Year!





Gardening Tips for February

- Have your lawn mower and rototiller serviced.
- Take stock of leftover seeds. Get them organized and sow seed for germination testing if they're more than a few years old or if storage conditions have not been cool and dry. Even under ideal storage conditions, some vegetable seeds have a fairly short life and probably will not be good one or two years after purchase.
- Purchase new cool-white fluorescent bulbs for your indoor grow lights.
- If the soil dries out against a house under the eaves where rain rarely reaches, water well during a thaw to prevent loss of plants. Remember that plants require water during the winter to replace water lost due to wind desiccation and lack of rain or snow.
- Make final plans for the annual and vegetable gardens and get the seeds ordered soon. A frequently overlooked factor in vegetable garden planning is the date of the family vacation. Choose planting dates and varieties carefully, so your garden won't be ready for a full harvest when you are out of town.
- Look for sales on fertilizer, seed starting supplies, tools and organic mulches.
- Get your hand tools organized and sharpened. Check the handles on shovels and hoes to make sure they're firmly attached.
- Branches of forsythia, pussy willow, spirea and dogwood can be forced for indoor bloom. Make long, slanted cuts when collecting the branches and place the stems in a vase of water. Change the water every four days. They should bloom in about three weeks. For something unique to force for winter flower arrangements, consider red maple, buckeye, birch, hickory, larch or oak branches.
- Repot your houseplants. Check them closely for insects.
- Plan a perennial border. Particularly good choices for a cutting garden are daisy, dahlia, aster, gladiolus and lily.
- Mulch perennials that have been heaved from the soil. Replant them in the spring.
- Miniature roses can be a colorful addition to your landscape. They range from pure white to golden yellow to dark red. They grow well in containers and planters or they can be used as a low-growing border or mixed in beds/borders with other perennials.
- Make labels for your spring garden. Plastic milk jugs or bleach bottles cut into strips 1" by 6-7" work well. Use permanent ink markers to write on them.
- Continue to feed the birds.
- Have you had a soil sample analyzed with the past few years? Soil sampling packets are available at your local Extension office.
- Give a living plant as a present for Valentine's Day.
- If you're anxious to get some seeds started, plant onion and leek seeds indoors anytime this month.
- The flower of the month is the violet.
- Get ready for spring! It will be here next month.



OPTIMARA "Yellowstone (new)"

Rutgers Cooperative Extensions Fact Sheets

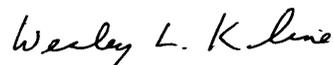
FS #	Fact Sheet Name
Fact Sheet 02	Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs
Fact Sheet 19	How to Hire a Tree Care Professional
Fact Sheet 34	Build Bird nest Boxes
Fact Sheet 35	Build Brush Piles for Wildlife
Fact Sheet E60	Indoor Care of Christmas Trees
Fact Sheet 74	Backyard Leaf Composting
Fact Sheet 117	Using Leaf Compost
Fact Sheet 128	Forcing hardy bulbs indoors
Fact Sheet 182	Why Leaves Change Color
Fact Sheet 231	Cabbage Looper
Fact Sheet 245	Stink Bugs
Fact Sheet E271	Landscape Plants Rated by Deer Resistance
Fact Sheet E272	Weed Management in Ornamental Plantings (\$1.50)
Fact Sheet 277	Cabbage Maggot
Fact Sheet 286	Imported Cabbageworm
Fact Sheet 287	Cross Striped Cabbageworm
Fact Sheet 389	Minimizing Waste Disposal: Grass Clippings
Fact Sheet 449	Caring for Your Poinsettia
Fact Sheet 797	Soil Testing for Home Lawns and Gardens
Fact Sheet 805	Vermicomposting
Fact Sheet 811	Home Composting
Fact Sheet 849	Cover Crops and Green Manure Crops: Benefits, Selection and Use
Fact Sheet 930	Natural Pest Control
Fact Sheet 944	Roses and Their Care
Fact Sheet 1022	Backyard Birdfeeders
Fact Sheet 1118	Rain Barrels Part 2: Installation and Use
Fact Sheet 1150	African Violet Care
Fact Sheet 1151	Hollies for New Jersey
Fact Sheet 1154	Orchids on the Windowsill
Fact Sheet 1156	Keeping Geraniums over Winter
Fact Sheet 1163	Mail Order Vegetable Seed Sources for the New Jersey Gardener

Call 856/451-2800 x4 ask for Pam Burton. When calling to request a fact sheet refer to the Fact Sheet by FS# or by name. All fact sheets are free unless otherwise noted.

What's Growing On is prepared by Pam Burton, Horticultural Assistant, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cumberland County.



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For important announcements concerning the Cumberland County Extension Center visit:
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Visit the newly activated website to see what activities are happening in the
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If you have any questions concerning the website, please call our office at
856-451-2800 x1 for agriculture and
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