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"Message from Mariah"

The holiday season can bring joys and stresses. Everyone has different ways of celebrating and their own traditions. The St. Mary's County Master Gardeners share some of their holiday cheer in this newsletter. Hope you enjoy! Below is a screen snip of the YouTube video I played in the background at our Holiday quarterly meeting. Here is the link to it if you'd like to play it at one of your gatherings:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_LUpnjgPso



Thank you,

Mariah Dean, Master Gardener Coordinator

St. Mary's County



Beautiful Christmas Tree ***By: Kim Dean***



Kim Dean has a beautiful Christmas tree that she decorated with roses! For those of you who do not know, she is a rosarian and has a group called the Rose Geek. You can follow her on YouTube or Facebook where she posts informational. Excerpted from Herbs of the Twelfth Night, *The Herbalist*, Issue 86, 2021

Herbs of The Twelfth Night ***By: Karen Doherty***

*“Wassail, Wassail! All over town,
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
With the wassailing bowl, we’ll drink to thee.”*

On Twelfth Night, known to Christians as the Epiphany, wassailing is a time to engage in a bit of revelry and celebration before the Christmas tree comes down. Twelfth Night festivities were usually overseen by a designated “Lord of Misrule.” This appointed Lord presided over what was known as the “feast of fools”, traditionally a night of drinking, caroling, and partying.

Twelfth Night was also a time to “Wassail” the orchards. The purpose of wassailing the orchards was to feed, protect, and honor the fruit trees to help ensure a fine autumn harvest. Historically, the ceremonies used for wassailing varied from one village to the next but were similar in intent. The wassail was carried from house to house in a traditional bowl carved of white maple.

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In addition to the Lord of Misrule, a Wassail King and Queen led the revelry from one orchard to the next. The villagers formed a circle around the largest apple tree. They lifted the Wassail Queen up into the boughs of the chosen tree to hang pieces of toast or fruitcake soaked in the wassail in the branches as a gift to the trees, the robins, and other sprites that frolicked among them.

The earliest versions of wassail were warmed mead or ale into which roasted clove-studded crab apples were dropped. After they were heated for a bit, the apples burst into the pot, creating a glorious, delicious, and frothy mixture known as “fuzzy lamb’s wool”. In later years, the drink evolved to become mulled cider, ale, and claret whisked with sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg, and then topped with slices of toasted fruitcake to sop up all the liquid.

videos and articles about rose care!

State House of Historic St. Mary’s City
By: Macy Hovland

Macy Hovland submitted some beautiful pictures of the State House at Historic St. Mary’s City decorated for Christmas! She said “My favorite decoration for the State House. We decided to do minimum to the tobacco stick so the tobacco gets the attention. Dried hydrangeas between each stalk. Thank you. Ben, this is just what we wanted.”



Tree Garden
By: Macy Hovland

Macy Hovland also submitted some pictures of a tree in her garden that she decorated for Christmas! It looks like the birds appreciated her gifts and holiday cheer J Thank you for all you do, Macy!



Hoping you will Plan for a Bay-Wise New Year
By: Linda Crandall

In 2023 we would like to expand our Bay-Wise effort in St. Mary's County, and certify as many properties as we can. We are creating a map of the county that will show where all our certified residents live, and we would like to put you on the map! Please talk to us about setting up a time for us to visit your yard and garden. Remember this is not a hard test to take, it is our goal to help you spread the message of safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that will build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities throughout the county.

Solstice Sowing

By: Written by CCMG/SMMG Marlene Smith

For the past two years I have used the winter sowing method to sow seeds in protective, vented containers. The winter sowing method, as defined by the USDA, was introduced By Trudi Davidoff in a GardenWeb.com blog post in August 2000. In that post, Trudi described her experience the previous winter of 2019/2020 in which her addiction for trading and collecting seeds, coupled with her small apartment in New York, led her to experiment with sowing seeds in a recycled aluminum pan with a plastic cover, and placing them outside exposed to the winter elements. And to her joy, the method had a very successful germination rate, including seeds that required cold moist stratification. Although others may have sown seeds directly in the soil or in open containers, Trudi's method was unique in that her intent was to use recycled containers to protect the seeds from washing away or being eaten by critters. According to Trudi, she quit her job to start a nonprofit organization focused on teaching the method to others, worked with the USDA to develop the definition, and obtained a patent for the method. Brief summary of Trudi's story: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/winter-sowers/how-to-winter-sow-seeds-outdoors/10151269604480506/>

Since then, winter sowing has become wildly popular as more and more people have discovered this fabulous way to grow plants and has been a game-changer for me. I have successfully germinated a wide variety of seed types: native annuals, perennials, biennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees; vegetables, including warm and cool season crops, herbs, and ornamental flowers (annuals, perennials, biennials). This year I will take a break from the hustle and bustle of holiday baking to start a new tradition; I will solstice sow seeds on December 21. Solstice sowing celebrates the beginning of the winter sowing season by sowing four sets of seeds: of Remembrance, Life, Trees, and Faith. My selections for solstice sowing include spiderwort in remembrance of my mother, cardinal flower to invite hummingbirds to my garden, and paw paw in honor of Mother Nature.

“Solstice Sow ~ WinterSown's Solstice Sowing Ceremony

The Winter Solstice marks the return of lengthening daylight hours. It typically falls on December 21st of each calendar year. On that calendar date the night is at its greatest length in hours. The Winter Solstice is celebrated in many nations around the globe with feasting and ceremonies which often include candles and bonfires to guide and illuminate the way for the sun to return. Traditional foods served on the holiday often contain seeds; in ancient times the Solstice was also associated with both fertility and harvest. Cooked grains, legumes and seeded cakes should be part of your Winter Solstice holiday meal. Our Winter Sowing season starts on the Winter Solstice. Winter Sowers can celebrate the day by sowing four sets of seeds. Each set will honor Remembrance, Life, Mother Nature, and Faith.

Seeds of Remembrance should be seeds of flowers that remind us of someone we knew and loved but is now gone from our lives forever.

Seeds of Life should be seeds of plants that make fruit or nectar and invite birds, butterflies and other pollinators to our gardens.

Seeds of Trees should be sown to honor Mother Nature. Trees will help clean the air we breathe, reduce excess sun on the soil surface, and provide shade for our heads on any hot summery day.

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Seeds of Faith are from plants that are a zone beyond ours in warmth; they thrive where winter is milder. Sowing them reminds us to take a 'Leap of Faith' in our hearts and trust that Mother Nature is capable of miracles.

Remember that Solstice Sowing is like Winter Sowing, you can do it when you can and if you can. I do hope that some will give this sow a go and ask you all to keep the faith! Trudi”

The Leonardtown Library now has a winter sowing demo area set up in the Front Yard Native Gardens. It’s easy to find; just look for the winter sowing sign and milk jugs sleeping in their brick crib for the winter. Master Gardeners from St. Mary’s and Charles counties joined volunteers from the Friends of St. Clements Bay to prepare the jugs and demo area on December 14. And for more information on winter sowing, I highly recommend you follow and join the Winter Sowers Facebook group. They have compiled years of experience from Trudi and others into guides to help the beginner and the experienced winter sower (https://www.facebook.com/groups/wintersown/learning_content).

Happy solstice! And Happy sowing!!



Supplies you will need.



Optional supplies



Getting cold moist stratification from a January snowfall.



Natives, natives, and more natives!

A Fast and Easy Way to Find Your Continuing Education Hours...
By: Linda Crandall

Several years back, around the beginning of the pandemic, I developed several rare and serious autoimmune disorders. They resulted in me spending a lot of time in my house and for almost a year, often in bed. The beginning of the pandemic was, I think for most people, a strange and uncomfortable time, with the fear, the lockdowns and closures that came with it. I did not experience any that. For me, probably because of several months of heavy medication, it was almost as if the world 'closed' for me and my situation. Because my sleep~wake schedule was way off, I was often up in the middle of the night, and sleeping in the daytime and because of this TV and social media (what was working for others at home) were not a good fit for me. At that time, my niece turned me on to podcasts and I have been listening to hours of podcasts a week ever since then.

I listen to podcasts on many subjects. Earlier today I was listening to a couple of British comedians doing a 'long form' interview with a prominent British comedian, and before that I listened to a history podcast. What is good news for me, is that over the last few years I have also discovered a constantly growing number of 'garden' podcasts that have really expanded the information (and mental stimulation) that was available to me – especially during the second year of the pandemic when it felt like much of the world was shut down. I have not mentioned podcasts to Mariah, but I would think that many of them qualify as continuing education, since they are often really dense with very specific information based on the host of the podcast and the topic or theme covered. They often feature experts on the different subjects. I got started on the gardening podcast path by watching an online workshop that was done by Margaret Roach, one of my favorite speakers. The workshop was done for the Dutchess Land Conservancy and in it she mentioned signing up for her regular emails and listening to her podcasts. Up until then, I hadn't even thought gardening podcasts were an option, but quickly discovered there were dozens, perhaps even hundreds (?) of them.

Podcasts are different than virtual symposiums or workshops (which I also enjoy) because although they might have a video component, many do not. They can be one person sharing their knowledge or information or several people having a conversation. It is sort of like listening to a chatty, educational radio talk show, but one that seems formatted differently than what you hear on talk radio. For me, I look for podcasts that cover a topic I want to learn more about or one that has an interesting speaker. I can put on my earphones and work around the house, or in the yard and listen as I go.

Although I can get a lot of things done as I listen and learn, I often find myself sitting still and listening or even searching for paper to make notes. I have learned that I love to weed, while listening to a 'weeding' podcast, and prune while listening to a pruning podcast. :) In the last week I have learned to pay more attention to the type of bird feeders that are out there if you are planning to feed the birds, since diseases can easily spread among flocks of wild birds if you are using the standard purchased feeders. I also listened to a wonderful podcast on landscaping using native plants, that spent some time talking about the different methods of design that work best if you are primarily planting natives in your beds or garden. I also learned about garden cleanup and maintenance, and using your experiences this year to help you as you are planning for next years vegetable garden.

While listening to some podcasts I often think of the many Master Gardeners I know and the special interests they have shared with me. The other day while listening to a podcast about feeding the birds

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("Safer Bird Feeding with Julie Zickefoose") thought of Stephanie. When I listen to podcasts that focus on native plants I think about Gerri, Marlene, and a retired MG Fran.

Some of my favorite gardening podcasts are:

- "A Way to Garden", by Margaret Roach
- "The Beginner's Garden", by Jill McSheehy
- "Native Plants, Healthy Plants", by Pinelands Nursery
- "The Simple Garden Life", Jim & Mary Competti
- "Gardening Simplified", (Proven Winners) hosted by Rick Vuyst and Stacey Hirvela
- "Cultivating Place", by Jennifer Jewell
- "The Joe Gardener Show", by Joe Lamp'l
- "The Daily Gardener", by Jennifer Ebeling
- "Growing Greener"

Although there are LOTS more!!!

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