

HORTICULTURE NEWS

A FEW MORE FALL & WINTER TASKS

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Contact University of Maryland Extension at 301-334-6960 or email abachtel@umd.edu with questions.

Vision: The Maryland Master Gardener vision is a healthier world through environmental stewardship.

Our Mission is to support the University of Maryland Extension mission by educating residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.

Even though most gardeners have already finished up last minute garden chores and are getting ready for a short break from all the hustle and bustle of the past growing season, here are a few more tasks to consider.

After a killing frost, gather seeds from (only) open pollinated or heirloom plants. Seeds from hybrid varieties do not carry on the same characteristics of the parent plant. For example, Wave Petunia seeds will not produce a Wave Petunia next year. Do not collect trademarked products, such as Proven Winner varieties because these plants are often hybridized and protected under trademark laws. Consider Zinnias, French Marigolds, Hollyhocks, Daisies, Black Eyed Susans, Columbines or Snapdragons. You can collect these types of seeds and store them in a cool, dry location. Usually seeds that can be direct sown into the garden make the best

candidates. Collect seeds in a paper envelope, label with a permanent marker, and store in a cool, dark, dry location until Spring. A filing cabinet works great. Be sure to keep seeds in something paper, which will allow moisture to escape and will eliminate molding.

Clean garden tools before storage. Scrub debris away and sanitize with a 1 part Chlorine Bleach to 9 parts water solution. This will eliminate the spread of diseases, molds, and other pathogens that could be present on the implements.

If you haven't done so already, start making notes about the vegetable and flowers that you grew this year. Think about what varieties did well and which ones did not. While canning and preserving your garden's bounty this summer, were you missing any ingredients? Did you have to purchase a

certain herb in order to complete a favorite recipe? Winter is a great time to research new seed varieties and hybrids or learn the details on something new that you might want to grow next year. By Springtime, you might have a case of Spring fever and may forget details of the previous growing season because you are anxious to start planting and working in the soil. Thus, it is nice to have a written record to look back in to see if there is anything you don't want to forget to plant or avoid planting again

Lastly, when was the last time you had your vegetable or flower garden soil tested? Fall or early winter is the ideal time to collect these samples and make any amendments to pH. Soil sampling is not required if you use a peat based, soilless growing media.



January 2012

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
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| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

January 21– Mt. Top Fruit & Vegetable Conference (Garrett College– See Email for Details)

February 23- “Planning Your Vegetable or Flower Garden” - Presenters: Maggi Coene & Kathy Tucker

March 15-“Seedlings and Transplants” - Presenter: Lois Stienfort

March 2– Youth Gardening Training

April 5 -“Grow It Eat It” “Growing Vegetables in Containers” Presenter: Jerry Crabtree

May 23– Annual State Master Gardener Training Day

YOUTH GARDENING TRAINING MARCH 2, 2012

The University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener (MG) program and Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE) are partnering to conduct three youth gardening trainings in 2012. Trainings are intended for MGs and any Extension personnel seeking to work with youth in school gardens.

All-Day Trainings (9:30am-3:30pm) will be offered in 3 locations:

Saturday 2/25/12 - Baltimore Co. Extension (Hunt Valley) (Snow date 3/17)

Friday 3/2/12 - Washington Co. Extension (Boonsboro) (Snow date 3/5)

Saturday 3/3/12 - Sheridan St. Garden

(PG County- Riverdale) (Snow date 3/10)

Reasons for this training:

- Many extension personnel are seeking to enhance their collaborative efforts with schools and youth other Extension personnel, programs and volunteers
- Nutrition, youth education, and school gardens are very hot topics right now
- Chance to learn about starting a garden, how to engage, handle and work with different youth populations, some basic gardening techniques targeted for schools, and lots of excellent resources.

Syllabus summary:

In addition to some introductory information and a summary/wrap up session we plan:

1. Morning presentation (10:30-12)
 - Starting a Garden (panel)
 - Safety Issues
 - Resources
2. Afternoon presentation (12:30-1:30) (panel)
 - How to Manage Kids in the Garden
 - How to Engage Different Age Groups
3. Breakout sessions (1:30-3pm) You can choose three of these.
 - Cooking
 - Growing Healthy Habits
 - Grow-Lights
 - Container Gardening

- Raised beds

Volunteer commitment:

Each Master Gardener taking the class will be asked to volunteer at least 5 hours in the area of youth gardening. We hope that FSNE or other educators will have worthy projects ready that the MGs could help out with. Hopefully this would lead to further involvement and collaboration.

Registration:

Registration fee for participants is \$30; however, anyone interested in attending should contact Ashley to discuss registration fee and carpooling arrangements. Let's try to have at least one master gardener to attend this training!

Care of Amaryllis (a.k.a. Hippeastrum) Plants

Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus

University of Maryland

This beautiful plant is an all time favorite holiday season plant. The bloom is a spectacular flower six inches across with two to four blossoms produced on tall sturdy stems. Each flower can last two weeks, sometimes longer. Blossom colors can range from red, yellow, pink and white. The amaryllis commonly sold is correctly called Hippeastrum. Hippeastrum is native to South America; the true Amaryllis is from South Africa and is not commonly sold. Both are in the plant family, Amaryllidaceae.

Getting Started:

Hippeastrums are usually sold in a dormant state ready to grow in a gift box kit complete with peat moss and a pot. All one needs to do is plant it and place it in a sunny window. Keep it watered according to the instructions on the package and in about three weeks enjoy the gorgeous blossoms that emerge. The bulb should be watered sparingly until the flower stalk emerges. After the flower stalk is up more frequent watering is needed. Hippeastrum will grow to about 24 inches tall and when properly cared for may live for several years. There are many hybrids bred for larger more colorful blossoms. Just like the bulbs grown in gardens outdoors these tropical bulbs also have a rest period when the leaves will dry up and are shed.

Light and Watering Requirement:

Hippeastrums require bright light during the active growth period indoors. A symptom that the light is too weak is spindly floppy leaves which will weaken the bulb and reduce or stop its ability to bloom the following year. Growing in bright sunlight is the single most important factor for repeat bloom year after year. After the active growth period is over, reduce the frequency of watering. This will prompt dormancy to begin and the leaves will turn yellow and wither. After the leaves have completely died,



trim them off and keep the bulb completely dry. Light is not required while the bulb is in dormancy. After a couple of months of dormancy new growth, which is a new flower bud, will emerge.

Fertilization:

To help keep the bulb strong and vigorous, fertilization is recommended after flowering. Select a fertilizer labeled for houseplants and follow the instructions.

Propagation:

A healthy vigorously growing bulb will produce young bulbs around the base (where the roots originate from the bulb). These can be detached and planted to grow into new plants. They will require a few years to reach minimum flowering size of 3-4 inches.

SOIL SAMPLING: WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT?

ASHLEY BODKINS, FACULTY EXTENSION ASSISTANT
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

The management of soil nutrients has never been more important than it is right now, especially in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. New regulations are being enforced regularly to help ensure that less Nitrogen and/or Phosphorus leaches into the local waterways. With lowered incomes across the state, stricter environmental laws, and more people looking to their rural roots to learn how to grow the most food that they can, on the smallest amount of area, soil sampling is a critical assessment tool in determining the success of your garden.

Liebig's Law of Minimum further illustrates the importance of soil sampling. His law is based on the fact that the maximum growth and production of a plant will only be met if the plant has all required nutrients present. Thus, Liebig's Law says that the plant will only be as productive as the nutrient present in the least amount. For example, if you give your plant a fertilizer that only contains nitrogen and there is no Phosphorus present in the soil, it doesn't matter how much Nitrogen fertilizer you give the plant, it won't reach its full potential.

Liebig used a barrel to illustrate his point. Filling a 50 gallon barrel is impossible to do if there is a hole in the side, no matter how much water you put into the container, it will never get full. Similarly the illustration below shows the lost yield potential if a plant is lacking a nutrient.



So how do you know what nutrients are present in your soil? Why apply fertilizer if there are already enough nutrients in the soil? Soil sampling is the only way to get an idea of what nutrients are present.

Normally, soil testing facilities determine pH, Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, and Sulfur content. Nitrogen is never tested due to its volatility. Micronutrients can be tested for an additional fee. Usually, if you are not having problems in your garden and are using some type of compost or

animal manure for fertilizer, your micronutrients are probably in the correct range.

Soil nutrients are positively charged cations or negatively charged anions. Soil acidity is due to hydrogen (H⁺) ion concentrations in the soil. The higher the H⁺ concentration, the lower the pH. It is also important to note that a one unit change in pH equals a ten-fold change in acidity, therefore, small changes in pH can dramatically effect the lime requirement of that soil and the availability of nutrients. Many nutrients are only available to the plant at certain pH ranges because Hydrogen can bind to nutrients or soil particles. If the nutrient is too tightly bound to the soil particle, the plant cannot utilize it. Thus, even if plenty of phosphorus is available in the soil, the plant cannot access it, causing the plant not to reach its full potential. It is also important to note that all vegetables prefer a specific pH range. A more in depth discussion on pH will be in a future article.

Soil sample collection is the most vital step of the sampling process because the results can only be as good as the sample. A poorly taken

sample will yield an improper picture of your soil's health and can be a waste of time and money. A proper soil sample is composed of several small core samples that are taken from individual areas around the garden. Mentally divide your garden space into a grid of vertical and horizontal lines. At every spot that the grid lines cross, take a sample. A soil sample should consist of 10 –15 sub soil samples, depending on how large your garden area is. The depth of each sample will depend on how you cultivate your garden. If your garden is plowed, you will want to take a 5-6 inch sample, and if you till your garden each year, only take a 2-4 inch deep sample. Avoid getting organic matter (grass, weeds, compost) in the samples and put each core into a plastic container and mix well. Use your fingers to break up soil clumps and take out any rocks. Let the sample air dry in an unsealed paper bag. Once the sample is dry, place into a soil bag from a laboratory or bring into the Extension office. The current soil sample fee is \$13 to test for basic soil nutrients. Soil sample analyses will be returned to the Extension office in 2-3 weeks when specific recommendations for each crop in your garden can be printed and planning can begin for the 2012 growing season.



Home & Garden Information Center
 University of Maryland Extension
 Mimeo # HG 30

Holiday Plant Care: Poinsettia

Poinsettias at the holiday season add color and beauty to the interiorscape. Poinsettias last longer today than ever before since the introduction of new hybrid varieties. These newer varieties include not only the traditional red, but also white, pink and marbled colors. Plants that are properly cared for will give colorful displays lasting up to 6 to 8 weeks. In the interiorscape, proper care helps poinsettias maintain their appearance and increases their longevity. The following procedures will help consumers get the most from their displays:

- Plants will last longer at room temperatures between 65 to 75 degrees. Leaf and flower drop may occur if plants are placed in areas prone to drafts such as near heat vents or doors and windows.
- To prevent leaf yellowing and flower drop place plants in an area with bright natural light, but avoid direct sunlight.
- For best color display under artificial light use cool white fluorescent bulbs. The light intensity should be a minimum of 100-foot candles.
- Check the soil moisture daily and water plants only when the potting media becomes dry.

After the holiday season is over, poinsettias can be kept and grown for a second season of bloom. Although it is unlikely that the size and quality will equal that of greenhouse grown plants the following procedures will result in re-flowering:

- Cut plants back in early May to 3 to 4 inches above the soil line and repot into fresh commercially available soilless growing media. Place the plant outdoors in full sun after all danger of frost has past.
- When new growth has reached 1 to 2 inches begin fertilizing monthly with a soluble fertilizer having a nutrient analysis of 20-10-20.
- To prevent excessive height it will be necessary to pinch or prune out the tips of the branches when new growth reaches 4 to 5 inches and once again after additional new growth reaches 2 to 3 inches. Avoid pinching after early September or flowers may not form in time for the holidays.
- Bring plants inside by late September before night temperatures go below 60 degrees and reduce fertilizer applications. Place plants in areas that will receive as much natural light as possible.

Since poinsettias initiate flowers as the days get shorter any additional light from artificial sources will prevent flower development. To get bract color for the holidays it is necessary to give the plants no more than 10 hours of daylight and then place them in at least 14 hours of darkness each day. This can be done by placing plants under a box or in a closet each evening from 5:00 PM to 7:00 AM through Thanksgiving. Even a small light leak will prevent flowering. The plants are not as light sensitive once color has developed in the bracts. The most common problem of delayed flower development is caused by light pollution during the darkness period.

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Cranberry Salad

1 Cup Orange Juice

1 Cup Pineapple Juice

¼ Cup Sugar

1 Package of Knox Unflavored Gelatin

1 Pound Fresh Cranberries (chopped in blender)

4 Oranges (chopped)

1 Cup Pineapple Chunks (chopped)

½ Cup mixed Nuts (in chunks)

Directions: Heat orange juice & pineapple juice, sugar and gelatin. Let cool. Then add remainder of ingredients. Chill 6-8 hours. Garnish with whipped cream & enjoy! For extra festivity put the mixture in a holiday mold.

Don't you have enough bugs in your house, especially the Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs? Keep the firewood outside until you need it!

Mary Kay Malinoski, University of Maryland Extension Specialist, Entomology

There are plenty of beetles that can emerge from firewood and fly around your house making you crazy! Firewood that is stored indoors warms up and the beetles think it's spring and time to emerge and get on to bigger and better things. Bark beetles are little guys, 1/4 inch or less, cylindrical in shape and red, black or brown in color. They may be found around windows, lamps or woodpiles near the fireplace, especially during the winter. Check fire wood logs for small, round holes in the bark.

The larger beetles can be a bit unnerving just because they are a lot bigger than the harmless looking little bark beetles. They also think it's spring if the logs are stored in the house. They may be metallic wood borers (two-lined chestnut borer, approximately 1/2 inch long, narrow, variously colored, with short antennae) or long-horned beetles (redheaded ash borer, 1/2 inch or longer, narrow, variously colored, long antennae and legs, not metallic). Sawdust may be found under the firewood and oval or D-shaped exit holes may be present in the bark of logs. Any of these beetles may emerge from firewood that has been stored indoors for several days or more. As the wood warms, beetles emerge to fly around the house or congregate in windows. Vacuum and dispose of the beetles outdoors. Unless you want some extra company on those cold nights, only store enough firewood for a day or two to prevent emergence of the beetles.



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Pictured above is the Two-lined Chestnut borer. USDA Forest Service - NE Area Archive, Bugwood.org



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Pictured above is the Redheaded ash borer. Howard Ensign Evans, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org