Welcome to our 10th Volume of In the Garden newsletter! And an additional welcome to the new year. As usual, I look forward to the upcoming year and the new challenges to be faced.

Learning more with every year, we look forward to a couple of new changes—our Master Gardener Basic Training program will take place in February-April, utilizing a new schedule to accommodate working schedules. We also look forward to our Cabin Fever Reliever lecture series, to begin in February at Brooklett’s Senior Center. Please take a look at our announcements and events for more information about our winter and spring activities.

Thank you for being a dedicated reader and participant of the program—we hope to continue to deliver valuable, and pertinent, horticulture information. As usual, we always look to the public for feedback and topics of interest—please share your thoughts and needs regarding home horticulture and sustainable landscapes.

Cheers!
Mikaela Boley

“When snow falls, Nature listens.”
-Antionette van Kleeff

Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana)- Look out this winter for the fragrant and vibrant blooms.
Picture courtesy of Wikipedia
It's the part of winter we are all waiting for; Christmas has come and gone, the cold has settled in, and you start dreaming of green again. Ambitions run high as you eagerly pour over the glossy colored pages of vegetables and flowers, each one perfect in presentation. It is very easy to get carried away. Here are some good reminders, since there is plenty of time to do some appropriate planning that you will be too busy to do later:

- **Reference Notes**: Whether you are used to planting the same variety and vegetable every year, or whether you like to mix things up, consult last year’s notes. Think about what worked, what didn’t work, and what you would like to do differently this year. Encourage crop rotation, and try planting in different locations.

- **Consider something new**: Try a cut flower garden, or even just a new variety. If you’re ready to advance your gardening, look for heirloom variety seeds for unique plants. Why not try a medicinal herb garden, full of flowers and old world plants?

- **Resistance**: Look for varieties and types that are resistant to common problems. It will offer you additional resistance, in addition to proper horticulture practices.

- **Time and effort input**: don’t pick complicated plants that will require a lot of attention if you are jet-setter all summer long. Not unless you have a plant-sitter

- **Growing up**: Some people eschew sprawling vegetable for popular bush-varieties. However, if space is an issue, think about climbing vegetables in tough spaces. Use a trellis or support to grow up, instead of out.

- **Make friends**: Gardening friends are the best. Especially when you are placing a large seed order. Think about saving shipping costs by combining orders. You may also want to order large packets of seeds to share instead of buying individuals for everyone.

- **Look to local**: Think about saving seeds this year—start with something easy, or if you have a reliable gardening friend, share seeds. There are also seed saver programs, such as Seed Savers Exchange. Depending on where they come from they may be adapted better to local conditions. The more local the seed source, the better.

- **Order Early**: Some bulbs need to be ordered early, or are sold out quickly. If you would like to plant garlic in the fall, you’ll need to order earlier than fall. There are also plenty of bulbs and other plants that are not shipped until a certain time of year, even though it was ordered at a different time. Be sure to read the fine print!
Recycle
Your Christmas Tree
By: Mikaela Boley, Master Gardener Coordinator

Christmas is over, and it’s the time of year everyone dreads—deconstructing the Christmas tree. For those of you who use a real tree for the holidays, it feels particularly sad to set your tree out on the curb in the cold. Even if you use a fake tree, perhaps you have garland, wreaths, or swags of evergreen boughs that you will need to throw out. Instead of kicking them to the curb, there are some great alternatives available for recycling your once-festive trees. Just be sure to remove the ornaments!

- Create a brush pile for habitat: Birds and other wildlife need protection in the cold months, and a Christmas tree offers great cover from both elements and predators.

- Put it to use in the garden: Pine needs and pine boughs can be used as a cover to protect your garden beds from frost and winter burn. Use heavy boughs to cover tender plants. You may need to break down the tree by cutting off branches, but it adds some nice insulation in the garden. In bare spaces, it acts as a dense mulch to beat back weeds. And they are easy to remove or rake together at the beginning of spring.

- Decorate the tree again— for the birds: Make decorations with peanut butter pine cones dipped in bird seed, or use suit blocks hanging in the branches. You can also make garland with fruits and seeds, and loop it around the tree. If you can set the tree upright in the yard outside a window, you will enjoy the bird watching all winter long.

- Use it for a restoration project: In Louisiana, the state uses Christmas trees to help prevent wetland loss. In ponds or private water (and only with permission), you can submerge the trees in the water to provide fish habitat. In some coastal areas, Christmas trees have been used to help restore sand dunes by catching particles blown around by the wind.

- Feed it to the goats: Christmas trees provide a source of Vitamin C to our cloven-footed friends.

- Burn it in the fireplace: The trunk can be sawed into logs and burned in a fireplace or wood stove. Watch out for the branches though—they should not be burned since they can cause sparks.

- Aromatherapy: Make sachets or aromatic potpourris from the needles or branch tips. If kept in in a brown paper bag, they will retain their aroma.

Master Gardener Training 2015

Interested in improving the environment?
Avid gardener or wishing you had a greener thumb?
Dedicated Volunteer?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, you should certainly consider becoming a Master Gardener and joining the next class of enthusiastic horticulturalist! This rigorous 40+ hour course is designed to give you basic information in preparation for volunteering as a Master Gardener representative of the University of Maryland Extension. Topics will include: ecology, botany, soils, propagation, diseases, insect pests and control measures, among others. This program emphasizes community involvement and outreach as well as environmental stewardship. A fee of $200 is charged to cover all costs including the Maryland Master Gardener Handbook.

February 12th - April 4th 2015
Thursday evenings 5:30pm to 8:30pm
Saturday mornings 9:00am to 12:00pm

Location: Eastern Shore Higher Education Center, Wye Mills

For more information contact:
QAC Master Gardener Coordinator
Molly Garrett
mgarretl@umd.edu
(410) 758-0166

Talbot Master Gardener Coordinator
Mikaela Boley
mboley@umd.edu
(410) 822-1244 ext 12

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Dear Mikaela,

I’m interested in ginseng, and wondering what it might take to grow it here. I have a decent sized property, with a mix of woods and open areas. I am not necessarily looking to profit or build a business, but I would like to grow it for personal and environmental reasons. Do you have any information to point me in the right direction?

-Ginseng-ed

Dear Ginseng-ed,

Although it is an unusual request for the Eastern Shore, there is some information available through Extension in regards to growing this native plant. The Woodland Stewardship program has some information about ginseng enterprise and operations, which would be useful: check out their website at http://extension.umd.edu/woodland in their publication library.

However, ginseng is not adapted for growing on the coastal plain, and is more suited for the Western regions of the piedmont. It grows in hardwood forests in well-draining soil. Consider forests with 75% shade.

This is difficult to find in Talbot County, with heavy clays and loam soils. However, it might be possible to amend soils or find pockets of forest that will work. There are native plants that should indicate whether an area is suitable for ginseng or not: look for May apple (Podophyllum peltatum), jack-in-the-pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum), and wild ginger (Asarum canadense). Ginseng is very slow growing, maturing in an average of 8 years. It is also a favored food for deer populations!

Just remember to buy from reputable source– ginseng has been over harvested in some regions by poaching. You might also want to consult Maryland DNR about any restrictions, or to make sure it is not on an endangered flora species list.

-Mikaela

Mikaela Boley is the Horticulturist and Master Gardener Coordinator for University of Maryland Extension in Talbot County. The Extension Office often has questions from homeowners and members of the public regarding home gardening, soil testing, plant and insect identification, plus much more.

Do you have a question that needs answering? Want to talk gardening or get advice for environmentally friendly practices in the residential landscape?

Please contact Mikaela Boley, Home Horticulturist and Master Gardener Coordinator at (410) 822-1244 ext. 12, or by email mboley@umd.edu.
Upcoming Events
and Dates 2015

Cabin Fever Reliever Series
Stay tuned for more information regarding our Cabin Fever Reliever series—held at the Brooklett’s Senior Center, we will cover a variety of topics relating to horticulture, complete with hands-on demonstration and activities. Keep the winter blues at bay!

Come join us February-March to get your green fix and help pass winter. Spring will be here soon enough—will you be ready for it?

Horticulture Therapy
We are continuing to do horticulture therapy at The Pines in Easton.

Visits are every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month—visits are 30-45 minutes. Gatherings are at 2:30pm. Grab a partner and sign up for the following dates:
- January 8th and 27th
- February 12th and 26th
- March 12th and 26th

Contact Mikaela at mboley@umd.edu to sign up.

Talbot County Master Gardener
Monthly Meetings

January 28th—St. Michaels Public Library
Guest speaker Sylvan Kaufman will talk about Ecology Basics for Gardeners—help understand the principles of ecology, and make decisions for a more sustainable landscape. Whether you are a beginner or life-long practitioner, there are lessons we can learn.
Time: 1:00PM

February 18th—Location TBD
Guest speaker Jess Murphy will talk about his work as a Landscape Architect, and the exciting new program he is heading at Chesapeake College for a degree in landscaping.
Time: 9:30AM

March 18th—Easton Public Library
Dorothy Williams will come join us to talk more about floating wetlands: what they are, what they can do, and why we are interested.
Time: 9:30AM

DID YOU KNOW...

Master Gardeners have a Facebook page? You can find us online at by clicking here. Or, search “Talbot County Master Gardeners” and follow our page! We include photos from recent activities, advice, and recent news items.

Remember to “Like” us!

Please contact Mikaela Boley, Master Gardener Coordinator with any question or to volunteer to help with a program at mboley@umd.edu or 410-822-1244.
Home and Garden Information Center Phone Line

As of December 19th, 2014, the Home and Garden Information Center no longer has a phone line for homeowners. Because of several years of declining phone calls, HGIC has made an executive decision to end this service.

However, consultants can still be reached by using the “Ask an Expert” feature on HGIC’s website. They will also be expanding their web content and social media outreach. Click here to visit HGIC’s homepage, or type “http://extension.umd.edu/hgic”. You may also use a search engine by typing “Maryland Home and Garden Information Center.”

- You can send questions to experts by clicking “Ask Maryland’s Gardening Experts” on the home page. An email answer from a horticulture consultant is delivered within 48 hours.
- You can also send photos through this feature, which is very helpful as a visual aid.
- Bookmark the HGIC website, and sign up for the free monthly e-newsletter.
- Consider consulting your local Master Gardener program—often, there are neighbors or community members that are Master Gardeners who can help answer your questions.

Calling all Bay-Wise!

The need to provide homeowners with Bay-Wise gardening practices is still great. Let us come together and re-energize the program. Send ideas, thoughts, and suggestions to the coordinators Mikaela Boley, Lynn Freeburger, or Lisa Ghezzi today.

A gathering will be arranged come Spring 2015. Be there. You are needed.

Need to Unsubscribe?

You may unsubscribe from the newsletter at any time, by contacting Mikaela Boley by email at mboleymboley@umd.edu, calling 410-822-1244, or a written request sent to: 28577 Mary’s Court– Suite 1, Easton, MD 21601. Want to receive this newsletter by email? That’s easy! Simply email mboley
Current Resident Or:

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, call our University of Maryland Extension Office at 410-822-1244. You can also visit the Maryland Master Gardeners website at: http://extension.umd.edu/mg and the Talbot County Extension website at: http://extension.umd.edu/talbot-county

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