Hello Master Gardeners,

I almost forgot to do my newsletter article this month! This will be our first month without Elaine Dodd in the editor's seat so I didn't get a reminder email from her when the deadline passed. Elaine is stepping down after serving 10+ years as editor of the Garden Fence. It was a labor of love and much appreciated by all of us during her tenure. Make sure and give her an "Atta Girl" thank you when you see her - or better yet, drop her a line of thanks.

It's kind of nice not to worry about outside chores for a while - I'm sure I'll be itching to get back out there soon, but for now, I'm enjoying the leisure. Bulbs are planted, perennials cut back, and the bees put to bed, so now I can rest and plan for next spring. But first, I'm heading for Italy for a week. I doubt there will be many flowers blooming there, but I'll make sure and report back upon my return in December. I hope that everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving and that you get well-rested for the upcoming holiday season. I'll look forward to seeing you at our Holiday Party on December 4 at Liriodendron!

Joan Parris ‘09
By this time of year most of us are thinking more about poinsettias than daffodils but I foolishly ordered seventy-five bulbs on a warm sunny April day this spring—a day when I was eagerly looking forward to gardening after a long cold winter of abstinence. If the bulbs could have been delivered and planted then, I firmly believe I could have had them in the ground in one afternoon. Just like the plants and shrubs in my garden I was surging with energy. But unfortunately spring bulbs must be ordered in the spring and cannot be delivered and planted until the fall. And that is why I am sitting here in the first week of December checking the weather for a day that might be warm enough to plant the final twenty-five daffodil bulbs that are waiting for me in the shed. I can plant them as long as the ground is not frozen, and the ground will not freeze until several weeks after a killing frost. The editors of “Old House Gardens” catalogue report that they routinely plant until Thanksgiving or even later at their home in Michigan which is in zone 6A. I live in zone 7A. I think I still have a little window for planting, and to insure that the ground did stay warm I covered the areas I want to plant with a layer of mulch.

I realized I was tempting fate with this last batch of bulbs, so I researched catalogues and gardening magazines for good information on planting practices for daffodils. Most of the information was familiar but some cultivation practices have changed since the last time I looked. I was surprised to learn that most sources advised against using bone meal since modern processing methods remove most of the nutrients. And every source called for top dressing with mulch, compost or a general fertilizer (10-10-10) scratched into the surface soil instead of placing fertilizer in the bottom of the hole, a practice which I had faithfully adhered to for the last twenty-five years! Somehow most of my bulbs thrived in spite of my misplaced fertilizer.

There was conflicting advice about watering. Some growers said not to water after planting, but daffodil bulbs need consistent moisture from fall through spring for root development, growth, and flower production. I have usually planted in damp soil and natural rainfall has been sufficient. I only watered if the soil dried out and if the ground was not frozen. As it turned out my watering practices were correct. Most sources contained instructions for watering after planting and throughout the winter as long as the ground was not frozen. Moist soil actually protects...
the roots from frost. I also learned I was wise to choose a site with good drainage to insure that the bulbs do not rot. Another issue that I researched was depth. I had always followed the six inch guideline printed on instruction sheets, but it turns out I could have relaxed that rule somewhat. Daffodils, according to some sources I read, seek the correct depth on their own as their roots develop, but most sources advise planting larger bulbs deeper and the smaller bulbs closer to the surface (three times the height of the bulb is the rule). Sandy soil called for planting them deeper and heavy soil indicated planting them less deep. My soil is heavy so I can err on the shallow side. But because I am planting late I need to plant deeper than usual to reach warmer soil. So much to consider! This brought up an old issue: I always wondered if the depth recommended meant from the top of the bulb or from the bottom of the planting hole. It took some searching to find directions that actually stated to plant to a depth six inches measured from the bottom of the hole.

Finally, since I planned to plant bulbs between existing plants, I looked again at the recommended spacing between bulbs. It was usually the same as the depth: six inches apart. But over the years I found that I had been squeezing them closer and closer together. One reason for this was I like my daffodils in casual clumps, which meant digging one large planting area and grouping multiple plants together. But if I am totally honest, another reason I gradually had the bulbs snuggling closer and closer together was to finish up the job faster. At the end of the day, it was so tempting to just tuck an extra bulb or two into the planting hole. But it seems I no longer have to feel guilty! The “lush” look of closely planted bulbs is promoted in most, if not all, of the catalogues and magazines I read this season.

The sad part is that I cannot use this shortcut for my last twenty-five bulbs. I have put off planting them to the last minute because this is the hardest part of my fall planting: the part when each bulb has to be carefully planted one by one (or by two’s if I am lucky) to fill those spots that look like they are missing a plant. I marked the places with small rocks in the spring so I could avoid digging up or damaging the bulbs that are already there. But it is still a slow and tedious chore, and my window of opportunity—after the soil temperatures dropped to 60 degrees, but before the soil freezes down to the bulbs—is rapidly shrinking. I have counted on the 50 degree day the weatherman promised this week. That is when I will take my hand trowel with the six inch measure drawn in black magic marker, dig a hole, place a daffodil bulb root side down, and cover it with soil. I will scratch in a small amount of slow release fertilizer, tamp the soil lightly to eliminate air pockets, and water if soil is dry or if there is no rain in the immediate forecast. Then I will cover the planted area with 2-3 inches of shredded wood mulch. Ever the optimistic gardener, I am counting on the polar vortex remaining in the arctic area where it belongs this winter, giving these bulbs a chance to establish and grow into robust plants whose golden blooms will light up my garden in early spring, inspiring me to order at least a few more.

Mary Trotta 2008
**PUMPKIN PUREE**

Save money by making your own pumpkin puree in the fall when pumpkin prices are at their lowest.

- **Prep Time:** 15 minutes
- **Cook Time:** 60 minutes
- **Total Time:** 75 minutes

**PREPARATION**

1. Wash and dry the outside of the pumpkins.
2. Cut off the stems; then, cut the pumpkins in half from top to bottom.
3. Scoop out all the seeds and strings.
4. Cut the pumpkin pieces in half once more to create quarters.
5. Place the pieces on a baking sheet, face down and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes to an hour (or until the flesh is soft and scoopable).
6. Allow the pumpkins to cool 10 minutes. Then, scoop out the cooked pulp and discard the skins.
7. Puree the pulp in a food processor or blender until smooth (an immersion blender works great for this).
8. Put the puree in a cheesecloth-lined colander over a bowl, and refrigerate overnight (This will allow excess water to drain from the pumpkin, so that the puree isn’t overly watery).
9. Use your pumpkin puree right away, store it in the refrigerator for use within the next week or freeze it for use within the next year.

**Tips:**

1. Save the seeds from your pumpkins, and toast them for a tasty snack
2. Snatch up reduced-price pumpkins after Halloween, and make a year’s worth of pumpkin puree
3. If you decide to freeze your puree, consider freezing it in pint freezer jars, so you’ll have the perfect replacement for those store-bought cans.

**ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS**

Don’t toss those pumpkin seeds! Toast or roast pumpkin seeds in no time at all. The shells are edible and are a good source of fiber. Use this method with other seeds such as acorn and butternut squash.

If you like your toasted pumpkin seeds extra-salty, soak overnight in a solution of 1/4 cup salt to 2 cups of water. Dry an additional day, then proceed as below.

**OVEN ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS**

**INGREDIENTS:** Pumpkin seeds and cooking spray, olive oil, or butter

Optional: Salt, garlic powder, onion powder, seasoned salt, or other seasoning of choice

- **Prep Time:** 10 minutes;  
- **Cook Time:** 60 minutes;  
- **Total Time:** 70 minutes

**PREPARATION:** Rinse pumpkin seeds. Use your fingers to remove all the pulp. Drain pumpkin seeds and discard pulp. Spread out on a cookie sheet to dry overnight.
OVEN ROASTED PUMPKIN SEEDS CONTINUED

Preheat oven to 250 F. Line a baking sheet with non-stick foil.

Toss pumpkin seeds in olive oil, butter, or spray with cooking spray. Sprinkle with salt, garlic powder, onion powder, seasoned salt, cayenne pepper, or your choice of seasonings. Toss to coat.

Bake about 1 hour, tossing every 15 to 20 minutes, until golden brown. Cool before eating or storing.

MICROWAVED PUMPKIN SEEDS

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil or butter
- Optional: Salt, garlic powder, onion powder, seasoned salt, or other seasoning of choice

Prep Time: 10 minutes; Cook Time: 8 minutes; Total Time: 18 minutes

PREPARATION: Rinse pumpkin seeds. Use your fingers to remove all the pulp. Drain pumpkin seeds and discard pulp. Spread out on a cookie sheet to dry overnight.

Place butter or olive oil in a microwave-safe, rectangular baking dish. Heat in microwave on high for 30 seconds. Add pumpkin seeds and toss to coat. Spread seeds out evenly in the bottom of the dish.

Microwave on high about 7 to 8 minutes or until seeds are toasted a light golden color. Be sure to stir every 2 minutes as they are cooking. (Microwave temperatures vary, so keep an eye and stir often.)

When done, sprinkle with salt, garlic powder, onion powder, seasoned salt, cayenne pepper, or your choice of seasonings. Toss to coat. Cool before eating or storing.

GOLDEN PUMPKIN BREAD

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 cup pumpkin *
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

15 servings

Directions: Heat oven to 350°F. Grease bottom only of 3 (5 3/4x3-inch) mini loaf pans; set aside. Combine all ingredients in large bowl. Beat at medium speed, scraping bowl often, until well mixed. Spoon batter into prepared pans. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes; remove from pan. Cool completely. Store refrigerated.

*Substitute 1 cup mashed cooked pumpkin.

** Tip: Bread can be baked in 1 greased (9x5-inch) loaf pan. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

Women in Ag "Supper Seminars"

After offering the Annie’s Project and Managing for Today and Tomorrow classes in Harford County for the past three years, Harford County coordinators Sara Bhaduri-Hauck and Nicole Fiorellino are switching gears in 2015 to a more flexible format. Join us for a series of Supper Seminars for women in agriculture on Wednesdays this winter. Each seminar will begin at 6:00pm with a hot meal, followed by a guest speaker and concluding with a round table discussion that will wrap up at 8:30 pm. All sessions will be held at the Harford County Extension Office in Forest Hill. Register for all or just those which interest you! Registration is open to all women with a passion for agriculture, but each session is limited to the first 20 participants. The registration fee of $10 includes dinner. Register at 410-638-3255 at least 7 days prior to each session. For questions, contact Sara at sbh@umd.edu.

February 4, 2015 – “Speaking to the Public on ‘Hot Topics’ in Ag”

Jennie Schmidt, MS, Registered Dietician, and farmer (thefoodiefarmer.blogspot.com)

Public perception of agriculture is shaping consumer preference, spending and even legislation. When customers ask you about hot topics like GMOs, organic versus conventional, or pollution from farms, how will you respond? Jennie will prepare you with the tools to effectively and professionally communicate with and relate to customers searching for answers.

March 4, 2015 – “Legal Documents Every Farmers Should Have”

Rajiv Goel, Esquire, Offit Kurman Attorneys at Law

Farm businesses are built from a foundation of hard work and dedication and farmers should protect what they’ve established by having certain legal documents on file. If you were injured or killed unexpectedly, what would happen to your business, your land, and your children? Raj will explain what legal documents every farmer should have and will help you make decisions and gather information you will need before you visit with your lawyer. Come ready with your questions!

Catering will be provided by Broom’s Bloom

March 25 – “Tools that Work for Family Communication”

Jim Kilgalen, Director and Senior Clinician, Kilgalen and Associates

Farming family face unique challenges when it comes to communication: speaking freely about business issues is difficult when your boss is your parent or your hired help is your child. Do you have thoughts about the farm that you keep to yourself because you’re afraid how your family will react? Jim will dissect the complex
The Garden Fence, Dec. 2014

relationship of the farm family and provide you with practical strategies to successfully discuss business while preserving the family dynamic.

April 22 – “Farming Liability and YOU”
Ashley Newhall, Agriculture Legal Specialist, University of Maryland Extension

Farmers face liability risk at every step along the production and marketing cycle; being educated about these risks is the first step toward reducing them. If your produce makes someone sick, if a car traveling down your road hits an escaped cow, or if your neighbor reports pesticides from your farm killed her flowers – are you protected? Ashley will discuss some common areas of liability on the farm and steps you can take to reduce your risk of liability.

*Catering will be provided by the Laurrapin Grille*

Winter Tree
ID Field Trip + Plant ID Labs
Baltimore County Ag Center
in partnership with the Natural History Society of Maryland

**Winter Tree ID and Plant Collection** at the Baltimore County Ag Center on Saturday January 3 from 1 to 4 PM (snow date on Saturday February 7): Join us for a winter tree ID workshop. We'll look closely at trees collecting specimens along the way for a plant inventory. Plan to walk outside for 1 ½ hours and then head inside to press the plants.

**Plant Identification** 7 PM - 9:00 PM every second and fourth Mondays of the month at the Natural History Society of Maryland: Learn to identify plants in an informal setting with other inquisitive people while consulting with an experienced botanist. You can bring an ID specimen or work identifying plants collected for the inventory of the Baltimore Co.Ag Center. The next sessions are scheduled for December 8 and 22, and January 12 and 26. You can choose to come to any or all of these sessions.

Find full descriptions and sign up on Meetup by clicking on the listed calendar events at www.meetup.com/marylandnature/events/

*These activities are sponsored by the BC Master Gardeners in conjunction with the Natural History Society of Maryland. They are partnering to create a plant species inventory of the Baltimore County Ag Center. The sessions are facilitated by Charlie Davis and Judy Fulton. Charlie is a professional field ecologist who has completed many plant inventories in the Mid-Atlantic. Judy is a Master Gardener who loves natives and is conducting the plant inventory.*
THREE WINTER USES OF TOMATO CAGES

**Plant Stand** – Turn the cage upside down and bend the wires to hold a pot or bowl.

**Make A Pine Cone Tree** - Use the cage as a form to fill with pine cones and make a cool looking “tree” to welcome visitors.

**Make a topiary tree** - Your tree can be any color in which garland is available, and you can add ornaments, decorations and lights.

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**DATES TO REMEMBER**

**December 4** – Holiday Party 6:00 pm – Liriodendron Mansion; Bring a dish!

**December 13**  **Garden Series** - How to Build a Cold Frame

Bel Air Library 10 am - noon; Pre-register Bel Air Library at 410-638-3151.

**January 8, 2015** – MG Monthly Meeting 10 AM

**January 24, 2015** - Pruning Class

Abingdon library 10:15 to 12:15 Taught by Master Gardener Maxine Rising

Call the library 2 weeks prior to register.  410-638-3990

**January 29, 2015** – MG Planning Meeting 10 AM

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Joyce Browning
Urban Horticulturist
Master Gardener Coordinator
Harford County Office

The University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources programs are open to all and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.

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**THE MARYLAND MASTER GARDENER MISSION STATEMENT**

The Maryland Master Gardener mission is to support the University of Maryland Extension by educating Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.
Dahlia dig at the Harford County Extension Office on a cold day in November.