Hello Master Gardeners,

What a wild winter we've had so far - from zero to 60 in a week! I'm sure the plants are confused - and I have no idea what the drastic temperature changes are doing to my bees. I guess we will just have to wait and see in the spring what the damage has been. One thing I've heard about the severe cold that may be good news - scientists are hoping that invasive insects like the Emerald Ash Borer and Pine Bark Beetle (I think) may not survive the deep freeze that they have experienced in the Mid West - even if only some of them died off, that would be a start. Haven't heard anything about its effect on stink bugs....I have seen many of them crawling around lately - hopefully their numbers will suffer as well.

It is amazing how much there is to do in the winter that is related to gardening. I've been looking over my notes from last summer and making plans for this year. I have also been reminding myself NOT to start vegetable seeds in February - it's hard to resist! But I can order seeds, plan out new beds, and decide on which crops to grow this year. It's exciting!

We also have a lot to do as Master Gardeners. The Garden Series 2014 is kicking off on January 18. Our Grow It Eat It classes with the popular Seed Starting classes begin in February. A lot of planning and work go into getting ready for the spring series of classes. Contact Mary Driver and Lisa Rainey if you want to help with any of those classes. We are also participating in the STEM program for middle school children in January and February. In terms of education, we are offering a Bay-Wise advanced training session on March 11, 18, and 25 - register by calling the office. And then there's Horticulture Day at Longwood on Feb 7 and Garden Wise MG Day in York on March 8. Whew! We are a busy bunch! Watch out for a new Committee Chair list - there have been a couple of changes. And remember to fill out your annual volunteer form and submit it with your $15 contribution to further our MG work here in Harford County. Happy Gardening!!

Joan Parris, 2009

"Keep your faith in beautiful things; in the sun when it is hidden, in the spring when it is gone."
Roy R. Gibson
DAYTIME STUDY GROUP

The daytime study group is scheduled to meet on the third Wednesday of each month at 1:00 PM. There may be an occasional change in this due to holidays, availability of a speaker or the room. We will try to give you as much notice as possible. Feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions for future meetings.

The next Daytime Study Group will meet in the Extension Classroom at 1:00 PM on February 19, 2014.

NEWSLETTER

Hi Master Gardeners, THERE ARE OFFICIALLY “0” ARTICLES in the article bank. Winter is a good time to write something for the newsletter. So, get out our pen and pencils and start writing. This can be about a plant you love, what you did in 2013 that you would do again, or not, what you plan to do in the garden come spring, gardens you want to visit, or have visited, recipes you and your family enjoy, quotes, photos, etc. The article does not have to be long, just something of interest and you would like to share with the MG. Your help is needed to make this a good year for the Harford County Garden Fence newsletter. Remember that if you use quotes, pictures, poems, etc. directly from a source you must provide information about where it came from. There is information on the internet to help you with “citing” something that is copied.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEW YEAR

Bay Area Fruit School

Date: February 26, 2014
Time: 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM
Location: Queen Anne’s County at the UMD Wye Research and Education Center

Topics include but not limited to:
- Managing Bacterial Diseases on Tree Fruit; Updates on Invasive Insect Pests
- Research report on Size Controlling Apple Rootstocks; Beach Plum Production
- Hop Yard; Meadow Orchards; Frost Protection Options

For program questions, please contact Mike Newell, mnewell@umd.edu; 410-827-7388

Maryland Nurseryman’s 2014 Chesapeake Green Conference

Date: February 20 & 21
Location: The Maritime Institute and Conference Center, Linthicum, MD

Keynote speaker: Maria Zampini, President of Upshoot LLC (February 20)
Maria is a columnist for several industry journals and an international horticulture speaker. She lives and breathes Upshoot’s mission, “Living, supporting, and sharing horticulture.”

http://www.mnlaonline.org/content.asp?pl=78&contentid=78
Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education

**Date:** February 6-9, 2014  
**Location:** Ocean City, MD

Registration is now open for the 29th Annual MAEOE Environmental Education Conference.  
This excellent conference attracts nearly 600 participants from the Chesapeake Bay region! You are sure to connect with extraordinary ideas, lessons and actions to incorporate into your work with Prek-12 students and the community.

Be sure to check out the Thursday Professional Development Institute, Friday Workshops, and all Conference details in the Conference Registration Guide: [www.maeoe.org/conference/2014](http://www.maeoe.org/conference/2014)

Education Seminar offered by two Baltimore County wholesale suppliers

**Manor View Farm & The Perennial Farm**

**Date:** February 21, 2014,  
**Time:** 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM (Check-in begins at 8:30 AM) Fee: $85 lunch included  
**Location:** The Valley Mansion; 594 Cranbrook Road; Cockeysville, MD 21030.

**Speakers:** Dr. Allan Armitage, Wendy Brister, Steve Gable & Dr. Bob Lyons.

Topics include: Going Native by Dr. Alan Armitage; The Beauty of Ornamental Grasses by Steve Gable from Merrifield Garden Center.

Reconciling Ornamental Plant Choices for the Cultivated Landscape by Bob Lyons, who is the director of Longwood Gardens Graduate Program.

**Note:** Joyce will be attending if you want to sit with MG friends.

For details go to Manor View Farms and click events or this link: [http://www.manorview.com/gallery/Education%20Seminar%202014%20pages%202%20thru%204.pdf](http://www.manorview.com/gallery/Education%20Seminar%202014%20pages%202%20thru%204.pdf)

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home." - Edith Sitwell

"The word February is believed to have derived from the name 'Februa' taken from the Roman 'Festival of Purification'. The root 'februo' meaning to 'purify by sacrifice'. As part of the seasonal calendar February is the time of the 'Ice Moon' according to Pagan beliefs, and the period described as the 'Moon of the Dark Red Calf' by Black Elk. February has also been known as 'Sprout-kale' by the Anglo-Saxons in relation to the time the kale and cabbage was edible." - MysticalWWW
"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens: the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye."  Katherine S. White

ARTEMISIA, HERB OF 2014

Since 1995, The International Herb Association has selected an “herb of the year”. To be chosen, the plant must be outstanding in two out of three areas: Medicinal, Decorative and Culinary. This year, a whole range of species has been chosen, not just one herb. The genus Artemesia has been selected as the 2014 Herb of the Year.

Throughout the world, Artemisia species have been used for the treatment of such things as malaria, hepatitis, cancer, inflammations, and upper airway diseases and as tonics for the digestive system, stimulation of the immune system, and as an insect repellent. Many Artemisia can be dried and used in herbal crafts such as the creation of long-lasting, aromatic wreaths and flower arrangements. A familiar culinary Artemisia in this large family is French Tarragon (A. dracunculus) used for making flavored vinegars and infused oils, and delicious with chicken, fish and many vegetables. At one time, the aperitif vermouth was flavored with Artemisia but that is no longer the modern practice.

Artemisia, an extraordinary genus of aromatic plants, claims as members between 200 and 400 species belonging to the daisy family Asteraceae. Included in this collection are annual, biennial and perennial herbs and woody shrubs that grow in the temperate climates of the Northern Hemisphere, western South America and South Africa. Consisting of many strikingly different plants from the highly decorative tall, lacy-leafed A. ludoviciana 'Silver King' to the anise flavored French tarragon A. dracunculus 'Sativa', the group also includes such noteworthy, familiar varieties as A. vulgaris (common mugwort), A. tridentata (big sagebrush), A. absinthum (wormwood), A. abrotanum (southernwood) and A. annua (sweet wormwood). Hardy in a wide range of zones, the species vary widely in shape and size, ranging in height from small ground cover plants in the arctic A. borealis (boreal sagebrush) to 9-foot sage brush shrubs (A. tridentate) along desert rivers. Their growth spread can be from 1 to 6 feet wide.

The aromatic grayish-to-silvery foliage produced by Artemisia hold the primary appeal of the genus as the flowers are not significantly ornamental. Blooms are usually small, yellow to white and appear in mid-to-late summer. An exception to this statement is the White mugwort (A. lactiflora) since it is the only Artemisia cultivated as much for its flowers as for its dark green foliage. This particular species is mostly grown for its large plumes of creamy-white flowers. Many species are frequently used in horticultural plantings to create contrast or to smooth the transition between intense colors. All good companions for colorful flowers, Artemisia look lovely among pastel shades but also heighten the vibrancy of brighter colored flowers. In addition to the wide range of leaf colors in the Artemisia genus, the countless leaf shapes (strap-shaped, lobed, ferny and lacey) and textures (smooth, hairy, woolly or felted) provide a gentle foil and useful contrast in landscape designs and are commonly employed as versatile accents and fillers in the garden.

Easy-to-care-for, most Artemisia share similar cultural requirements requiring little attention. Woody types of Artemisia’s benefit from a hard pruning in summer. Most prefer full sun but will tolerate partial shade. Many can survive in hot, dry weather and once established, are drought tolerant. They prefer well-drained locations because heavy wet soils can result in poor performance of the plant. Tolerant of a wide range of soil pH values, Artemisia don’t need much in the way of fertilization. When excessive humidity occurs, leaf rust diseases can be a problem. Other problems seen in some varieties of Artemisia include white rust, downy mildew, powdery mildew, and a variety of leaf and stem fungal diseases.
Some Artemisia may interfere with the growth of plants in their vicinity through botanical poisons in their root systems. Most species sold as garden ornamentals do not have this chemical, but it may be wise to be aware of this possible characteristic. If you have concerns, give Artemisia its own special place as they make excellent specimen plants. It has been suggested that – except for tarragons - they not be planted in areas where other edible plants are located. It is also suggested that homemade insect repellents containing Artemisia not be used on food crops. Also, allergic reactions have been experienced when working with Artemisia either in the garden or in craftwork. Artemisia pollen, especially that of mugwort (A. vulgaris), has been known to cause “hay fever”-like symptoms.

Artemisia are known to attract beneficial bugs (lady beetles) and repel harmful ones. Wormwoods, mugworts and sage brushes are used as food plants by a number of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). The larvae eat certain Artemisia species, ingesting chemical protection against their predators. Most of the Artemisia species contain terpenoids and lactones that give the plants strong aromas and a bitter taste discouraging animals from eating them, but attracting pollinators. A tea made from wormwood will repel cabbage moths, slugs, snails, black flea beetles and fleas effectively.

A few of the many Artemisia species that herbalists and gardeners use are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![A. Powis Castle (Wormwood)](davesgarden.com) | A. Powis Castle (Wormwood): | - Fast-growing woody perennial shrub of soft mounds of finely-cut leaves  
- Makes a great border accent and container plant  
- Stands up well in heat  
- Grows to 3 ft. tall, 6 ft. wide  
- Leaves have fruity fragrance  
- Grows best in dry to medium moisture, very well-drained soil in full sun  
- Unspectacular flowers are best cut off to keep the foliage at its best |
| ![A. annua (Sweet Annie, qing hao)](www.iron-clay.com) | A. annua (Sweet Annie, qing hao): | - Fern-like leaf with bright yellow flowers  
- Averages a height of 3-4 feet  
- Sweet Camphor-like scent  
- Commonly used for wreath making |
| ![A. abrotanum (southernwood)](Wikipedia.com) | A. abrotanum (southernwood): | - Sturdy shrub-let that can grow 3 feet and taller, 1-1/2 wide  
- Hardy in zones 5 to 9  
- Leaves are divided into threadlike segments, creating a feathery texture useful in bouquets and dried arrangements  
- Foliage is aromatic when rubbed or crushed, prompting its use as a moth repellent  
- Hard pruning in the spring will help it keep its shapeliness  
- Easily propagated by layering  
- Favorite food of spittlebugs |

All clip art from: [http://www.clipartguide.com/_search_terms/february_4.htm](http://www.clipartguide.com/_search_terms/february_4.htm)  
All quotes from: [http://www.egreenway.com/months/monfeb.htm#Quotes](http://www.egreenway.com/months/monfeb.htm#Quotes)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A. schmidtiana (silver mound):</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Popular ornamental selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grows just 12 to 18 inches tall, forming forms a classic cushion-habit of a rounded mound of foliage 18 inches in diameter</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Most common problem is tendency for the clump to open in the middle. This occurs where soils are too fertile and moist. For best performance of this variety, do not fertilize and grow in full sun. Plants can also be trimmed back prior to flowering to prevent opening up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hardy for zones 3 to 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Choice plant for a rockery or to tumble over wall edges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Can be toxic to pets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Best known for its bug repelling abilities</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A. tridentata (sagebrush; three-toothed sagebrush):</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- One of the most widespread shrubs in North America</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Important browse for wildlife and food for birds, sometimes making up 100% of a species’ diet during winter</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Valuable for its cover and thermal properties for many birds</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Bark is used by Native Americans for ropes and baskets, as a smudge herb (burnt as incense), leaves powdered for rashes, and other medicinal uses</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Can grow to 10 feet</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A. ludoviciana 'Silver King'</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Spreads rapidly by rhizomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Plant on a slope in poor soil to prevent erosion</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Grows 4 feet tall and is hardy in Zones 4-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lower leaves have 3-5 lobes; Upper leaves are narrow, unlobed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Foliage is useful in arrangements</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A. lactiflora (ghost plant, white mugwort):</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Coarsest foliage of the ornamental artemisias</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Has attractive creamy white flowers in late summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Can grow 4 to 6 feet tall with a spread of 2 to 3 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Effectively used as a background plant with other fall blooming plants</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Flowers can be used in fresh and dried arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hardy in zones 4 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Useful in tubs or mixed containers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Deer like this herb</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Susceptible to mildew and rust</td>
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</table>
### A. vulgaris (mugwort):
- Hardy perennial with a tough reddish stem
- Large segmental leaves that appear white and furry underneath, dark green above
- Aggressive, invasive plant, often inhibiting the growth of nearby plants by means of root secretions
- Roman soldiers were known to put mugwort in their sandals to keep their feet from getting tired
- Said to have flavored beer before the wide use of hops
- Artemisia pollen, especially mugwort, may result in hay fever allergy symptoms

### A. absinthium (wormwood):
- Grows 2-1/2 feet tall and spreads 2 feet
- Pruning during the summer will promote branching and prevent the plant from flopping
- Hardy for zones 4 to 9
- Utilized in the perennial border and herb gardens, it is excellent for wreath making
- Leaves have been used in medicines and beverages such as absinthe and vermouth
- Leaves, bitter as they are, seem irresistible to slugs. Locating the plant away from moist turf and mulching with sharp sand or gravel may make the plant less inviting

### A. stellerana (old woman, dusty miller):
- Has a creeping to mounded habit
- Grows 1 to 2 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide
- Foliage resembles chrysanthemum leaves or the annual dusty miller
- Can be used effectively as a specimen plant or in massed plantings; especially suitable for seaside rock gardens.
- Hardy in zones 3 to 8

### Winning Herbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Herb</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Fennel</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Scented geranium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Monarda</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Lemon Balm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Calendula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Mint</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Bay Laurel AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Dill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Rosemary</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Horseradish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Sage</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Echinacea</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Elderberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Artemisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Savory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Oregano &amp; Marjoram</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Identifying trees in winter is a task for the dedicated tree hugger. Hugging is almost a requirement since you need to move in close enough to view winter buds, leaf scars, bark patterns and odors. During our recent training class we studied trees along an Oregon Ridge Nature Trail. It was fascinating how many times our leader, Steve Allgeier from Carroll Co. Extension, snipped a twig specifically for us to sniff the distinguishing bark odor! Do you use smell as a tree identification characteristic? Here are five common trees which you probably already know but never stopped to enjoy the twiggy fragrance.

Hikers who frequent moist areas along streams and rivers know our common Spicebush – *Lindera benzoin*. This slow growing, full shade, much-branched shrub grows from New Jersey to Florida. The simple leaf is so plain that it can be hard to identify until you crush the leaf or stem and smell the lemony-spicy fragrance of which there are no duplicates. Spicebush is so named for the berries which were used as an allspice substitute. For helpful winter identification, apart from odor, there are the branch freckles called lenticels. Lenticels are soft bark tissues (raised freckles) that permit gas to be exchanged between the corky bark and living cambium layer. Since the Spicebush bark is a smooth gray to black in color the lenticels are prominent. These shrubs are beautiful in the fall woodland filling the understory with yellow. The female plants provide red berries quickly harvested by wildlife. Another interesting note is that the Spicebush Swallowtail uses this shrub as its host larvae plant. This is a shrub worthy of use as a garden ornamental.

In the same Laurel family, along with the Spicebush, is another aromatic small tree we all know for its mitten-like leaves. But in winter we can’t use that for help with identification. The Sassafras- *Sassafras albidum* has easily distinguished twigs which remain green all winter. The green twig color is easily visible among gray woodland and there are few trees with this same characteristic. The branching habit is also distinctive, curving upward, similar to the
native dogwoods (called sympodial branching). Sassafras is abundant in woods, old fields and fence rows from Maine to Florida. Colonists dug the root bark for use as a tea and later developed the drink into a large beverage industry as the root extract was used to flavor root beer. The root beer smell is more prominent in the roots than the twigs. This partial shade tree has many ornamental characteristics. The berries on the female plants are prized by squirrels and birds. Also prized is the consistently beautiful orange/yellow fall color. The Sassafras tree is another garden worthy native.

Some trees have distinctive bark patterns which make identification easy and the twig aroma may be overlooked. Such is the case with the cherry trees. Horizontal bark lines are common on the trunks of many cherries and it makes them easy to identify at a distance. An additional help comes from the Black Knot fungus. This disease primarily attacks cherries (Prunus species) creating large black galls on the twigs that are a dead giveaway when you see them on a cherry tree. But if none of these characteristics secure the trees' identification you can always get up close, at hugging distance and scratch off some fresh bark and sniff. Yucky is likely to be your response! That stinky odor comes from the bitter, prussic acid found in the twigs and leaves of cherries. The smell is distinctive of most Prunus species.

An important note to farmers: Wilted leaves from cherries, and especially the Wild Cherry, become extremely poisonous when eaten by livestock. Therefore cherry trees are not recommended in hedgerows along pasture fences containing horses, cows, goats or other livestock. But invariably the trees crop up at these very places, thanks to the many bird species who love to eat the abundant fruits that are borne August –September. The kind little birdies eat and then make friendly seed deposits while resting on the fences.

Sweet Gum- *Liquidambar styraciflua* is another tree with aromatic twigs when crushed. The Turpentine aroma comes from the high tannin content. These trees prefer the loose soils of the coastal plain area not native to the Piedmont region. We did not view any on our tour. Since the Sweet gums have distinctive leaves, and often have corky wing growths on their twigs, you may never stop to crush a twig. I am eager to smell this one myself!

The most common forest tree we observed on our Oregon Ridge hike was the tall, limbless- trunk, Tulip Tree- *Liriodendron tulipifera*. The Tulip tree has a sweet and spicy aroma when stems or twigs crushed. Native from Canada to Florida the Tulip Tree serves as one of our most important trees for honey bee nectar. They are easy to identify on a winter hike- just look at the very top of the tree canopy! Hundreds of persistent fruits, called cones, stand upright on the uppermost branches of the Tulip tree. If you have the opportunity for close observation of the terminal bud, on the Tulip Tree, it is described as having the appearance of a ‘duck bill’. The bud has two reddish brown scales, a waxy coat, and an oblong shape that is flattened like a duck’s bill. Once you see the terminal bud you will always remember its cute description!
Eastern Black Walnut, *Juglans nigra*, was one of many specimens available for the indoor lab portion of the tree identification class. Library books were available for us to winter key our mystery samples using their buds, bud scales and pith characteristics. Teams of MG’s worked to identify their mystery twig. The team with which I worked had a twig that was thick; light brown in color with round, fuzzy buds. Using our winter key we paged through many horticulture terms and finally came to pith identification. Once we viewed the dark chambered pith we knew this was a sure identification tip for the Eastern Black Walnut. In addition we learned that you can always try smelling for the sharp walnut odor!

As a note to Master Gardeners: During our class Steve expressed concern for the future of our native, Eastern Black Walnut trees. The MD Dep. of Agriculture and local forestry board has been predicting the invasion of the Walnut Twig beetle. The insect’s entrance into MD was recently confirmed although at this time no significant damage has occurred. The very tiny beetle carries with it a killer fungus called Thousand Canker Disease. Master Gardeners can serve as early detectors of the Thousand Cankers Disease. Symptoms first appear on the foliage as midsummer yellowing and branch dieback high up in the canopy. Branches die from the top down. Brown dying leaves will persist on the infected limbs. It is very unlikely that a person will ever see the tiny beetle because it is only the size of the letter “i” in the word “liberty” on a dime. The beetle drill holes are not much bigger than the end of a pin. On very close inspection the beetles can be located immediately under the bark in a infected canker. Typically the disease kills the tree in about 8 years.

Using scent characteristics to aid winter tree identification is a great tool. Want some winter fun? Take a walk among your trees, grab a branch, scratch the twig bark and sniff. Explore the scents of winter!

### REMINDERS

1. The February meeting is on February 6, at 7:00 PM at the Extension Office.
2. Planning Meeting is February 27, 2014 at the Extension Office.
3. Daytime Study Group will meet at the Extension Office, February 19, 1:00 PM
4. Newsletter due date is FEBRUARY 5, 2014.

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**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.