Have you seen this? 

Girdling Holiday Lights

Holiday lights so decoratively and laboriously hung on outdoor trees or shrubs can be left to enjoy throughout the year, but there are pitfalls. Each spring, plants will put out a spurt of growth and often continue growing slowly all summer. Trunks swell as they put on their annual growth ring. Strings of lights originally wound loosely around bark get tighter and tighter. Bark (as pictured) may be able to grow over wiring with no immediate ill effects. But wires entirely circling stems eventually constrict growth. Called *girdling*, this cuts off the trees' transport of water and nutrients within the cambium layer immediately inside the bark. Death ensues. Monitor lights and wiring closely and loosen periodically, so decorated trees stay decorative.

February Tips

- Order fruit plants from mail order companies in January and February for early spring planting. For help with selecting fruit varieties refer to our fact sheets: HG 68 “Getting Started with Small Fruits” and HG 69 “Getting Started with Tree Fruits”.
- Late February through the end of March is the second best time (the optimum time is late August
Tomatoes

Montgomery County
Feb 20 | Avoid Common Gardening Mythstakes

Talbot County
2nd and 4th Tuesdays Feb and March | Cabin Fever Reliever

→ All GIEI Classes
→ All Ask a MG Plant Clinics

→ More seasonal tips

Grow It Eat It: 2016 - Year of the Tomato!

2016 is the “Year of Tomatoes” for UME’s Grow It Eat It program! Let’s celebrate this popular crop, so easy to grow in Maryland, by learning about and trying new cultivars and techniques. We have lots of resources to help out beginners and old pros alike.

We've created a [central page for all 2016 Tomato information](#) featuring:

- Our YouTube tomato playlist
- Information on selecting varieties to grow
- A compilation of GIEI blog posts related to tomatoes
- Common tomato problems

Featured Video

Houseplants - Caring for Orchids
Dave Clement details how to effectively care for your orchid houseplants. Orchids are a great Valentine's Day gift!

→ Watch on Youtube

Q&A

This is a silverbell tree and the bark is being stripped off. Can you tell who is doing this, and is it dangerous to the tree?

The damage to the tree looks like squirrel damage. Squirrels can strip bark from tree trunks for nest building or other activities. No treatment is recommended. The tree will seal off the wounds on its own since this damage is typically superficial.

→ Read more on squirrels

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension’s experts have answers! Send in your questions and photos here.