January 2014 Newsletter

From the Director...

Happy New Year fellow gardeners! Seed catalogues have been arriving since November but many more will be stuffed into mailboxes in the coming weeks. There are so many choices and beautiful pictures to tempt us. And trying out new plants makes gardening more fun and interesting. But many wise gardeners tend to rely heavily on those tried and true crops and cultivars. If you are a new gardener check out our recommended cultivars factsheet and talk to the experienced gardeners in your neighborhood to learn what they are growing.

Is this the year you try growing some flower and vegetable transplants under fluorescent bulbs? We've got lots of good practical seed starting tips and plans for a simple and inexpensive PVC pipe light stand that will enable you to grow dozens of healthy transplants.

And if you’re feeling restless and cooped up after perusing seed catalogs and planning your 2014 garden why not gain some inspiration with a visit to a public garden. You’ll feel like you’re in the tropics at Baltimore’s own Rawlings Conservatory, recently renovated and expanded. Bask in the Mediterranean House, the Palm House, Orchid Room, and more. There is even a Desert House full of Dr. Seuss-worthy cacti. This historic conservatory and botanic garden is the second oldest municipal glass conservatory in the U.S. And while you’re in the area stop by the beautiful grounds and trails of Cylburn Arboretum. There is an aquaponics project on site run by Johns Hopkins U. that I found particularly fascinating during a late summer tour with HGIC staff. You can also see the new D.I.G. (Demonstration Intern Garden) next to the greenhouse that features an edible landscape and rain gardens by UME Master Gardeners.

The HGIC newsletter and website will be bringing you lots of fresh information and videos with an emphasis on sustainable gardening practices. We look forward to exploring the world of gardening with you in 2014.

- Jon Traunfeld
HGIC Center Director

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**FEATURED PLANTS**

**Hydrangea**
Stunning winter interest can be achieved by juxtaposing dry hydrangea flowers against a dark background.

**Bird’s Nest Spruce**
Useful in a foundation planting, rock garden, border, or as a specimen.

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**GROW IT EAT IT UPDATE**

By Jon Traunfeld
Grow It Eat It Growing Strong

2013 was a big year for the Grow It Eat It program and the vegetable and fruit loving Master Gardeners who power this program with support from HGIC faculty and staff.

GIEI has helped thousands of residents to start and improve food gardens. The UME Calvert Co. Master Gardener's Children's Garden project began in the spring of 2013 at the Anne Marie Sculpture Garden. Over 300 pounds of produce including tomatoes, squash, eggplant, lettuce, cauliflower, peppers, cucumbers, beans, and radishes was donated to SMILE, an ecumenical food pantry in the area.

In 2014, it's the “Year of Cucurbits.” We'll be covering a wide range of some well-known and novel members of this vegetable family in the blog, in MG classes, and on the GIEI website.

Read a detailed recap of 2013 and preview for 2014

Rosemary Care Indoors
By Ria Malloy

Rosemary topiaries shaped like a Christmas tree are great gifts to give and receive. If you are the lucky recipient, you should know a few things about how to care for rosemary indoors.

Read the full article and watch video about caring for rosemary indoors

Fruit

Now is a good time to select and order fruit plants from mail order companies. Read more

Wildlife

Compiled by Debra Ricigliano
Help! We seem to be overrun with mice lately. The problem seems worse in the basement but I have also noticed droppings in our garage. What can I do to eliminate this problem? I hate the thought of trapping them. Do those ultrasonic devices they sell to deter rodents and other pests work?

Mice tend to enter homes in the fall when colder weather drives them indoors and then they can become a real problem. Mice readily adapt to a variety of habitats, feed on most human and pet food and reproduce at a remarkable rate. Do not waste your money on ultrasonic devices because there is no scientific proof that they deter pests. Conventional snap-type mousetraps are the most effective means of control. They should be used as part of a three part approach: sealing up, cleaning up and trapping.

Seal up holes, cracks or crevices larger than ¼”. Plug holes around the foundation or other areas with steel wool. Store any potential food source in metal or other rodent proof containers. Look for and clean up any possible nesting sites and nesting material such as paper or fabrics. Place the traps in both the basement and garage in the areas where you notice the most mice activity. Bait them with peanut butter, bacon or a cotton ball tied to the trigger (female mice like to use these for nesting). The trap should be placed against the wall so it forms a ‘T’ with the trigger facing the wall. Wear disposable gloves when handling used traps. After several weeks of trapping, and habitat modification, you should be able to eliminate the problem of mice in your home.