What’s Inside

- The many uses of pumpkin
- Ten quick tips on selecting a Christmas tree at a retail lot
- Master Gardener classes held this fall
- Poinsettia facts
- Gardening tips for December
- Upcoming events

MISSOURI LIVESTOCK SYMPOSIUM
December 3 & 4, 2010
Kirksville Middle School
Doors open at 4 pm, Friday for the Trade Show. At 6 pm there’s a free beef dinner, followed by the evening program at 7 pm.

The Trade Show opens at 8 am Saturday with sessions beginning at 9 am. Topics on beef cattle, horses, sheep, meat goats, forages, general livestock, stock dogs, Chef Dave, eating healthy and around the home. Free Governor’s Style lunch from 12-2. Saturday evening entertainment is Becky Blackaby, a local country singer. www.beckyblackaby.com. Tickets may be purchased for $10 at the Adair County Extension Center.

Get more info at http://missourilivestock.com or by calling 660-665-9866.

MAKING YOUR OWN HOLIDAY WREATH

Wreaths are easy and fun to make and are a traditional Christmas decoration. You can make a wreath by gathering material around or near your home. To get started there are a few things that you will need. These include: a wire wreath frame or a grapevine wreath, floral wire, garden shears or hand pruners, pinecones, scissors, ribbon to make a bow or a pre-made bow, and plant material from in and around your garden, yard or farm.

You will need to gather greenery such as trimmings from a pine tree or some kind of evergreen. Some greenery you could use includes pine, spruce, arborvitae, cedar, holly and juniper. Gather a trash sack full along with some pinecones. I also like to pick small branches of red berries from hawthorn trees, crabapples, bittersweet, or buckbrush this time of the year.

To get started, select several pieces of greenery and place them together in a bunch with the stems at one end. Using floral wire, wire the stems together and attach the bundle to the wreath. Continue making bunches of greenery and attach them all around the wreath frame until it is completely covered and looks full. Place them so that the green needles/foliage overlap the first bunch and cover the stems. Make sure that the stems on the bunches face the same direction. When finished, you should not see any of the brown stems. The foliage should overlap and hide it all.

When finished attaching greenery, add pinecones by twisting a piece of wire around the base of the cone, leaving a tail of 8 to 10 inches. Tie the wired cone's tail to the wreath. Wire the stems of berries together and place in bunches around the wreath. Create a bow or buy one pre-made and place at either the top or bottom of the wreath.

I have been making wreaths for several years now and find them fun to create. I go out and collect greenery, berries, and other materials that I need in various places. A Kirksville Master Gardener and I have made them for nursing homes and it brings enjoyment to the residents to watch us create one from scratch. There is very little cost in making your own, maybe a dollar or two. If you were to buy a fresh wreath from a floral shop, it would cost you between $25-60.
THE MANY USES OF PUMPKIN

This fall I found out many different ways to use pumpkin. I had a couple of pie pumpkins I had received from an Amish grower I make farm visits to during the growing season. I also had some jack-o-lantern size pumpkins I used for decorating. This was my first time baking and using pie pumpkins, and now I will probably never bake and puree jack-o-lanterns again. I coated the pie pumpkins lightly with vegetable oil and put them in the oven to bake at 400 degrees for an hour. I took them out, and cut the top off with no problem. The knife went right in. I then scooped out the pulp and put it in a blender and in seconds I had pumpkin puree. I froze most of it. About two weeks after processing the pie pumpkins, I decided to bake and puree a jack. I had to cut it up into several pieces just to fit it into the oven. This took about 10-15 minutes. Then it took about an hour to bake it, another 30 minutes to cut all of the pulp off of the rind, and then I put it in the blender and froze the puree. The process actually took about six hours, because in between all that I had to make dinner, feed and play with my kids, and get them to bed. So, you can see why it is so much easier to use a pie pumpkin, and after baking them, you have a nice pumpkin shell to decorate with or put dried or silk flowers.

Well, after making all that puree, I tried it out in a few dishes. Our favorite is pumpkin pancakes! I made up pancake batter and added pumpkin to it, enough to make it look orange and have pumpkin flavor. I added a little pumpkin pie spice to it also. The kids now love pumpkin pancakes. My eight month old baby (Jason) just gobbles them right up, and when I ask the three year-old, (Justin) what he wants for breakfast, his response is often “pumpkin pancakes”.

I love the Dairy Queen pumpkin pie blizzards, but since I have been trying to lose baby weight, I have not had one this year. Instead I make my own using fat-free half and half and other low-fat ingredients in a very fast, no ice, no salt, ice cream maker. Then I added pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice and crushed graham crackers and I had my very own pumpkin pie blizzard.

I wanted to try pumpkin pudding, so someone told me how to make it and it turned out pretty good. Use one box of butterscotch cook and serve pudding mix following the directions on the box. Just before it comes to a boil, I added a half a cup of pumpkin puree and pumpkin pie spice. Then I put it in a bowl and refrigerated it. I crushed graham crackers over the top of it and put some cool whip on top. It turned out pretty good. Justin ate it, but says he likes pumpkin pancakes better.

Another thing I did, was mixed pumpkin in with baby Jason’s cereal and he loved it. He has had it for breakfast several times since Halloween. Justin has been asking me to make a pumpkin pie for a couple of weeks now, but I haven’t got around to making one yet. I have actually never made one, but hope to find the time to make one soon. Now, if I could only make a crust.

10 "QUICK" TIPS ON SELECTING A CHRISTMAS TREE AT A RETAIL LOT

Use these practical tips to be a more informed consumer and to ensure a great experience with your Real Tree:

1. Be sure you know what size (height and width) you need before heading to the retail lot.
2. If you want the same species you know or have always used, great. If you want to try a different species, browse the NCTA website www.realchristmastrees.org to become familiar with species popular in your area before heading to the retail lot.
3. Go to a retail lot that is well-lit and stores trees in a shaded area.
4. Often, a tree obtained soon after its arrival on the retail lot will be very fresh because it was cut recently. Consumers should ask the retailer when they get the trees: Are they delivered once at the beginning of the season, or do they obtain several shipments during the season?
5. Do a freshness test on the trees. Green needles on fresh trees break crisply when bent sharply with the fingers—much like a fresh carrot.
6. Pines have different indicators because of the fibrous nature of their needles compared to firs. Needles on fresh pines do NOT break, unless they are very dry.
7. Look for other indicators of dryness or deterioration: Excessive needle loss, discolored foliage, musty odor, needle pliability, and wrinkled bark. A good rule-of-thumb is, when in doubt about the freshness of a tree, select another one. If none of the trees on the lot look fresh, go to another lot.

(Continued on page 3)
### POINSETTIA FACTS

- Poinsettias are native to Mexico.
- The Aztecs called the poinsettia Cuetlaxochitl. They made a reddish purple dye from the bracts. Chile and Peru called the poinsettia the "Crown of the Andes."
- Poinsettias are part of the Euphorbiaceae family. Many plants in this family ooze a milky sap. Some people may have skin irritation from the milky sap.
- In nature, poinsettias are perennial flowering shrubs that can grow to ten feet tall.
- The showy colored parts of poinsettias that most people think are the flowers are actually colored bracts (modified leaves).
- Poinsettias are priced according to the number of blooms. The more blooms, the more expensive the plant.
- The flowers or cyathia of the poinsettia are in the center of the colorful bracts.
- Poinsettias have been called the lobster flower and flame leaf flower.
- Poinsettias are not poisonous. A study at Ohio State University showed that a 50 pound child who ate 500 bracts might have a slight tummy ache. Poinsettia sap can irritate the skin and cause an upset stomach if consumed in large enough quantities.
- A fresh poinsettia is one on which little or no yellow pollen is showing on the flower clusters in the center of the bracts. Plants that have shed their pollen will soon drop their colorful bracts.
- Poinsettias represent over 85% of potted plant sales during the holiday season.
- Ninety percent of all poinsettias are exported from the United States. Poinsettias are commercially grown in all 50 states. California is the top producing state.
- In the 17th century, Juan Balme, a botanist, mentioned poinsettia plants in his writings.
- Poinsettias were introduced into the U.S. in 1825 by Joel Poinsett.
- December 12 is National Poinsettia Day.
- The Paul Ecke Ranch in California grows over 80 percent of poinsettias in the United States for the wholesale market.
- Ninety percent of all the flowering poinsettias in the world got their start at the Paul Ecke Ranch.
- There are over 100 varieties of poinsettias available. Seventy-four percent of Americans still prefer red poinsettias; 8 percent prefer white and 6 percent pink.
- $220 million worth of poinsettias are sold during the holiday season.
- Eighty percent of poinsettias are purchased by women.
- Eighty percent of people who purchase poinsettias are 40 or older.
- Poinsettias are the best selling flowering potted plant in the United States. In 2004 over 61 million plants were sold.
- An NCAA Bowl game in San Diego is named the Poinsettia Bowl.

**Source:** University of Illinois Extension, [http://urbanext.illinois.edu/poinsettia/facts.cfm](http://urbanext.illinois.edu/poinsettia/facts.cfm)

---

**MASTER GARDENER CLASSES HELD THIS FALL**

Eight individuals from Adair and Sullivan counties completed Master Gardener training this fall in Kirksville. Classes consisted of field trips to see gardens, flower beds, an orchard, vineyard, and hands-on activities. Each individual is now required to complete 30 hours of volunteer service their first year, and 20 hours each year thereafter. We welcome our new Master Gardener interns into the Kirksville Area and the Sullivan County Master Gardener clubs.

Another training class will be held in Kirksville, August – November 2011, probably from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays. Evening classes will be held in Kirksville in the fall of 2012. Master Gardeners classes are being offered in Columbia on Tuesdays, Feb. 8-April 26, 2011, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. For more information and to register call the Boone County Extension Center at 573-445-9792.
GARDENING TIPS FOR DECEMBER

HOUSEPLANTS
- On cold nights, move houseplants back from icy windows to prevent chilling injury.
- Over-wintering geraniums like bright light and cool temperatures. Keep soils on the dry side.
- Be sure newly purchased indoor plants are well protected for the trip home. Exposure to icy temperatures for even a few moments may cause injury.
- Water houseplants with tepid water. Cold tap water may shock plants.
- Holiday Poinsettia basics: - sun for at least half the day. - keep away from drafts, registers and radiators. - night temperatures in 50's or low 60's, days at 70 degrees. - the soil should dry only slightly between thorough waterings. Discard the drainage. - be sure to punch holes in decorative foil wraps to prevent soggy soil conditions.

ORNAMENTALS
- Be sure the root zones of azaleas and rhododendrons are thoroughly mulched. Any organic material will do, but mulches made from oak leaves, shredded oak bark, or pine needles are preferred.
- Living Christmas tree basics: - dig the planting hole before the ground freezes. - mulch and cover the backfill soil and the planting hole to keep them dry and unfrozen. - don't allow the tree's roots to become dry. - spray with an anti-transpirant to reduce needle moisture loss. - store the tree outdoors in a cool, shady, windless area until the last minute. Mulch the roots to prevent cold injury. - set the tree up in your coolest room. - don't keep the tree indoors for more than one week. Plant outdoors promptly.
- Hairspray works well to keep seed heads and dried flowers intact on wreaths and arrangements.
- Hollies may be trimmed now and the prunings used in holiday decorations.
- Only female holly trees bear the colorful berries. There must be a male tree growing nearby for pollination, if fruits are desired.
- Christmas trees hold needles longer if you make a clean, fresh cut at the base and always keep the trunk standing in water.

MISCELLANEOUS
- If you feed rabbits corn or alfalfa, they may leave fruit tree bark unharmed.
- Clean and oil all garden hand tools before storing for winter.
- All power equipment should be winterized before storage. Change the oil and lubricate moving parts. Either drain fuel systems or mix a gas stabilizing additive into the tank.
- Apply mulches to bulbs, perennials and other small plants once the ground freezes.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 3-4: Missouri Livestock Symposium, Kirksville Middle School. There will be a flower arranging class at 3 pm on the 4th. For more information go to http://www.missourilivestock.com/mls410.htm.

December 6: Fabius Master Gardener club meeting, 6:30 pm, Christmas carry-in dinner. Program - Show & Tell. Presbyterian Church, Memphis.

December 7: Salt River Master Gardener meeting, 7:00 pm, Palmyra Sesquicentennial Bldg.; installation of new officers, annual carry-in dinner.

December: No meeting this month for Heartland Master Gardeners.

December: No meeting this month for Magic City Master Gardeners.

December 14: Kirksville Area Master Gardeners meeting, 6:30 pm. Christmas carry-in.

December: No meeting this month for Macon-Shelby Master Gardeners.

January 5-8: Great Plains Vegetable Growers Conference, Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, MO.

September 23-25, 2011: State Master Gardener Conference, Hannibal. Theme: Gardening in America’s Hometown

GARDEN TALK!

Jennifer Schutter, University of Missouri Extension Horticulture Specialist
503 E. Northtown Road, Kirksville, MO 63501-1999
schutterjl@missouri.edu 660-665-9866