



THE GARDEN SPADE



A monthly Gardening Publication of the University of Missouri Extension -- Southeast and East Central Regions

Poinsettia Care

By Katie Kammler

Poinsettias are a sure sign of the holiday season. With a variety of colors available, there is a poinsettia to please everyone. They are native to Mexico and were introduced in the United States in 1825 by Joel Poinsett.

The showy colored part of the poinsettia is actually colored bracts (modified leaves) rather than flowers.

The flowers are the yellow found in the center of the bracts. Poinsettias are the best selling potted plant in the US even though they are just sold for a six-week period.

Poinsettias use a lot of water. Check them daily for moisture but remember to make sure they are not sitting in water inside a wrapper. Poke holes in the wrapper and put a saucer under the plant so water can drain. Too much water will cause root rot and the plant to deteriorate. Too little water will cause wilt and leaves to drop as the plant's defense to cut down on water loss.

Since poinsettias are semi-tropical plants, they like temperatures of above 60 degrees, with 65 to 70 degrees being ideal. They also need good light

but not direct sun. They do not like drafts of hot or cold air. Remember to keep them wrapped on the trip from the store to home and keep them away from air vents in the house.

Most people buy a poinsettia, enjoy it for the Christmas season, and then

discard it. This is the case because they are one of the most difficult potted plants to get to rebloom in the home. So if you want a challenge, here are some tricks to get them to bloom again. After flowering, allow to dry out with the

leaves yellowing and falling off. Store the dried-off plant in temps of 50-60 degrees only watering enough to keep the roots from drying out. In the spring place the plant in a warm room and prune the stems back to 6 inches. Place plants in a bright, sunny south window until after frost then put outside where it gets sun most of the day. As new shoots develop, cut them back to allow two nodes or pairs of leaves to remain. Discontinue pinching back shoots after mid-August. Water and feed



December 2011

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regularly throughout the summer and watch for insect or disease problems and control any that arise.

Before cool temps come in the fall, bring the poinsettia back indoors to the south window. Night temps need to be between 60-62 degrees for flower development. Higher temperatures will cause poor flower development. Day temperatures of 70 to 75 are ideal. Poinsettias are a short day (long night) plant. Make sure they receive no additional light at night while flowers are forming. This critical period begins October 1 until colored bracts and flower buds are visible. Even short periods of dim light can prevent flowering. They can be covered during the night to provide the dark period. If you follow these

Poinsettia Trivia

Red is the most popular color, having roughly 3/4 of sales followed by white and pink.

Poinsettias come in a variety of colors: red, salmon, burgundy, yellow, cream, white, speckled and mottled varieties.

More than 65 million poinsettias are sold nation-wide each year.

In the wild, poinsettias grow up to 12 feet tall.

December 12th is National Poinsettia Day.

If eaten, Poinsettias cause stomach irritation.



Integrated Pest Management: Frost Heaving

By Donna Aufdenberg

Frost Heaving is caused by soil contracting and expanding as it freezes and thaws. It is common during winter and early spring when there is much rainfall and varying above and below freezing temperatures.

Frost heaving can cause problems for plants. Soils that are moist or wet expand when they freeze and create an upward pressure that lifts and cracks the soil. Heaving may break off some of the plant's roots. It exposes the plant's crown and roots to drying cold winds and injury. This injury to a plant's roots and crown may cause serious damage and even cause death.

When heaving happens, you can add soil around the plants base and cover any exposed roots before drying and damage occurs. Several perennial plants are prone to heaving. These are generally shallow rooted and usually take several

years to establish a root system that is resistant to heaving. These include Coral Bells, Shasta Daisy, Gaillardia, Coreopsis, and Garden Mums. Strawberry plants are also bad about this.



To prevent frost heaving or to minimize it, improve soil drainage by adding compost or organic matter to landscape beds. Cover beds with 2-4 inches of mulch in late fall after the ground has frozen to stabilize soil temperatures. Fall transplanting needs to be completed early enough for plants to establish strong root systems before fluctuating temperatures.

Keep in mind that soils which are mulched tend to warm much slower in spring and plants may be delayed. These might benefit from removing thick layers of mulch in early spring until growth has slowed.

December Gardening Calendar

By Donna Aufdenberg

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.
- If an ice storm damages your trees, prune the broken branches. If left alone, in most cases the wood fiber will not grow back and the branch will die.
- To avoid harming near-dormant plants during the winter, do not fertilize, and reduce watering until growth resumes in the spring.
- Mulch roses by mounding soil 6 to 8 inches deep over the plants to protect the graft.



Lawns

- 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.
- Be careful when using deicing salts around driveways and walks this winter; salt is toxic to lawn grasses. Sand, sawdust, or a combination of these work well for deicing walks and will not injure plants.
- During periods of heavy frost and freezes, grasses can experience much damage. Staying off frozen grass blades can help prevent damage.
- Pick up fallen leaves, limbs, and other debris from lawn to prevent suffocation of the turf during winter.

Vegetables

- A diary or record book can help the home gardener keep track of the factors affecting the garden — planting dates, weather, pest problems, and size of harvest.
- Store leftover vegetable seed in cool, dry storage.

Fruits

- Leave a bare circle, one foot wide, around fruit tree trunks when spreading mulch so the mice won't nest there. Also wrap the trunks to prevent rabbit damage.
- The aim of tree wrapping is to keep the trunk from heating unevenly on bright sunny, winter days. Barks tends to split at it cools rapidly after the winter sun has warmed the south and west sides.
- Mulch strawberries for winter protection.

Indoor Plants

- 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.

Seed Ordering for Spring

Seed catalogs will start arriving anytime now. Take inventory of your seeds to see what you need to order!

Test germination on seeds more than a year old.

It is always wise to pursue a variety of seed catalogs to compare selection and prices.

Decide between hybrids and open-pollinated varieties.

Watch out for seeds that have been treated with a fungicide or have been pelleted for better germination.

They are more costly.

Look for disease resistant varieties. Zinnia's are a good example.

Look for All-America Selections because these tend to grow and produce well in a variety of conditions.

Plant of Merit — *Viburnum burkwoodi* x 'Conoy'

Burkwood viburnum by Sarah Denkler

This deciduous shrub may surprise you as it is a compact and wider version of its parent. At 5 feet high and twice as wide the landscape benefits from eye level blooms which appear in April. These blooms are fragrant when they open to a creamy white from pink buds. The two colors together will provide added interest until the flower fully opens. Although it prefers a well drained soil this plant is drought tolerant once established. It will attract birds with its red berry-like clusters in August but is deer resistant. The berries will eventually turn black. The glossy foliage of this wide shrub gives it a classier look than many viburnum and will turn maroon. In zone 7 leaves may persist into winter. This shrub grows best in full sun and tolerates partial shade. If you are pruning do so immediately after flowering. This will eliminate fruit for that fall but provide better bloom next spring.



Photo courtesy of Missouri Botanical Gardens.

Useful Christmas Plants

By Katie Kammler

There are many plants that make our winter season brighter and these are some that you may not think about that are used in holiday baking and candy. Cinnamon is probably the oldest and most sought after spice. It comes from the bark of a small, bushy tree that is native to Sri Lanka and India. Nutmeg is another often used spice. It is the seed of a tropical evergreen tree from Indonesia that is ground up to add to holiday recipes. Cloves are a different spice that comes from the dried flower bud of two species of trees native to Malaysia. Ginger is an important component of pumpkin pie and gingerbread. It originated in India and Southeast Asia. Ginger comes from the rhizome of the plant. Allspice is yet another popular holiday spice. It is derived from the dried, unripened fruit of a tropical evergreen tree. It is native to Central and South America. Also what

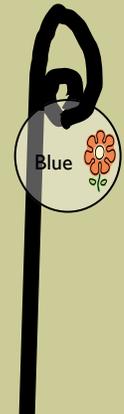


Christmas would be complete without candy canes flavored with peppermint, a product distilled from the leaves of a native mint hybrid (wintermint and spearmint cross) to Europe. These are just a small portion of the plants used in holiday baking. They all have interesting histories.

Repurpose, Reuse, Recycle - Pass It On

By Barb Gray

Cut milk cartons into several 2 inch round, flat circles. Use permanent marker to add a plant name and oil based paint or colored markers to decorate. Punch a hole in the top. Take an easily bendable 1/8 inch metal rod and create a curly cue at one end. Place the plastic label on the curly cue and stick the other end in the ground. Instant plant marker.



Persimmons

By Katie Kammler

Whether you love them or hate them, persimmons are a fruit native to Missouri and they are gaining in popularity. The American persimmon is a tough, medium-sized, native tree in the Ebony family that produces one of the hardest woods known. They are sometimes considered weedy because they like to grow in groups and animals readily spread the seeds.

Individual trees are usually either male or female, but many trees will produce both types of flowers. The fruit is sweet, unique, and delicious, and relished by both man and animal. That is **IF** they are ripe. They have to be very soft and usually need a frost to be ripe. If you have ever eaten an unripe persimmon, you will never forget it as they have tremendous pucker power from the astringency.

Improved American persimmon cultivars produce significantly larger fruits that are more colorful, flavorful, and sweeter compared to wild trees. Most wild persimmon fruits contain 8 to 10 large seeds while improved cultivars contain few or none. Folklore tells us that upon



cracking the seed open, you will find any one of the three pieces of "silverware" shapes.

KNIFE: means you'll have a cold icy winter (where wind will slice through you like a knife winter)...

SPOON: means you'll need to shovel out of snow...

FORK: means you'll have mild winter...

So...whichever you find the most shape of in the seeds, is the winter weather prediction. Just remember that persimmon seed are very hard to cut (I always let someone else do it!)

Persimmons are difficult to market fresh because they are very soft and perishable when ripe. But large fruits with few seeds can easily be pulped and preserved for making delicious persimmon breads, cakes, pudding, and cookies. Some varieties produce fruit with little or no astringency, even before ripening, which can be important for processing because a single "bad" persimmon can spoil the whole bunch.



Master Gardener Hours Are Due!

By Donna Aufdenberg

It is time to turn in your **Master Gardener Volunteer Hours!** If you have already completed your volunteer hours for the year, please send them to your local Master Gardener Coordinator. Addresses for coordinators are located on the last page of this newsletter.

You can also report directly to the Master Gardener program assistant. <http://report.missourimastergardener.com/>

We are also updating the Master Gardener Directory. If you have not turned in Master Gardener Hours for 3 years, you will be moved to the inactive list. If you have not turned in hours in previous years however, you still want to be involved, please let us know!

If you have problems reporting hours, let one us know...we are here to help!

Essential Gardening Gifts

by Sarah Denkler

"The best thing that can come out of a garden are gifts for other people."

- Jamie Jobb

The act of sharing a love of gardening is perhaps one of the biggest reasons we do it. Much like music is a universal language, so too is gardening.

If you need some gift ideas to encourage or get a friend started in gardening try out some of these ideas.

Every gardener needs a good pair of gloves. Mud Gloves are great because they are cloth, come in any color, are coated to prevent dirt and moisture from getting in and can be found anywhere. A light weight version is coated in nitrile for protection and both are easily washed.

A basic tool that can be used for multiple purposes is a soil scoop. Find a scoop with a stainless steel blade and an ergonomic grip for longer comfort. Scoops that have sharp or serrated sides can double as a plant divider as well.

Some gardeners need or like to label their plants with markers.

This can really help in planting annuals in the spring when you need to know

where the perennials are. Plastic markers are cheap but also unsightly and can easily blow away. Permanent marker can be used on bamboo which will blend into the landscape. Another option is to use permanent marker on flat rocks. These will not blow away and are low to the ground and barely seen from afar.



I think a plastic tub or bucket can be utilized to move just about anything in a garden. A flexible rubber tub, which comes in many colors and sizes, should be small enough to pick-up even when full of water or soil. Because they are plastic they can be cleaned and used for holding ice, tools, water, soil or plants. A five gallon bucket works just as well and could be decorated as a personal touch with flowers or a shared garden memory.

A gift can be given when someone is thinking about starting a new garden practice but just hasn't taken the leap. A

Happiness held is a seed.

Happiness shared is the flower."

compost crock can be an excellent gift to encourage friends to make the jump. Usually found in ceramic but also

available in bamboo and metal, a crock should be no larger than one gallon, contain a charcoal filter and be attractive enough to sit on a counter. The idea is to provide an easy alternative to the trash can for holding scraps until the end of the day when they can be moved to the outdoor bin.

Finally, it can never be said enough, keep a garden journal. A garden journal can be a treasure of memories and a great aid in garden planning. These little gems can be found anywhere or custom-made as a gift for a friend.

Possibilities are endless when it comes to sharing garden ideas. Some of the best treasures I have ever received have come from garden friends. The cost doesn't matter, only the camaraderie.



You don't have to garden just for yourself.

You have to share it."

- Augusta



Group News - What's Happening

December 2011

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| <p>Contact your local Extension Center if you have questions about any event on the calendar.</p> | | | | | | |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Cape Co. MG Christmas Party Shadow Rest Ministry at 3 p.m. in Cape | Parkland MG, 6:30pm @ Courthouse Annex - 3rd Fl. | Poplar Bluff MG, 6:30 pm @ PB Ext. Center | | | | |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | | | | | | |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| | Ste. Genevieve MG Meeting, 6:30pm, at the Ste. | | | | | |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
| | | | | | | |

January

- 2 - Parkland MGs 1st Monday at 6:30pm, Farmington Courthouse Annex (3rd Floor)
- 9 - Poplar Bluff MGs 1st Tuesday at 6:30pm, Butler County Ext. Center
- 12 - Delta Area MGs 2nd Thursday at 7:00pm, Medical Arts Building, Sikeston, MO
- 16 - Ste. Genevieve MGs 3rd Monday, at Ste. Gen. County Ext. Center at 6:30pm.
- 19 - Cape Girardeau County MGs 3rd Thursday at Cape County Ext. Center at 7pm.
- 23 - Perry County MGs 4th Monday at the Perry County Ext. Center at 6:30pm.

Upcoming Events

- February - Poplar Bluff Master Gardener Core Training, Poplar Bluff, MO
- February - Delta Area Master Gardener Core Training, Sikeston, MO
- March - Bonsai MG Advanced Training, Farmington, MO
- March 3 - Parkland Master Gardener Conference, Mineral Area College

if you have a horticultural related event for the calendar call 573-686-8064 to add it.

Editor's Corner

The Garden Spade is published monthly by University of Missouri Extension staff for individuals and families living in Southeast and East Central Missouri. This newsletter is provided by your local extension council.

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We welcome and encourage Master Gardener groups and individuals to submit items to the newsletter. We encourage the submission of any news such as upcoming volunteer opportunities, community events related to gardening, warm wishes or congratulations to fellow gardeners. We also encourage Master Gardeners sharing experiences and writing articles on timely topics.

All entries into the group news sections must be received by 4:30 on the 15th of each month for the following months news.

Email News to: kammlerk@missouri.edu,
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Disclaimer: No special endorsement of mentioned products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

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Time To Turn In Your Volunteer Hours For 2011!!