

The BACK FENCE

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Orchid Phalaenopsis

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Wintertime color

By Terrence Thompson, Intern Class of 2006

The last blaze of golds and reds of fall is upon us and will be a cruel reminder that we gardeners have the dreary, dark, colorless days of winter looming ahead. No more will we be able to bring a handful of cut flowers into the house to brighten the dining room table. No more will we be able to twist off a fresh red tomato for the kitchen table.

Some gardeners will grow colorful African daisies or maybe an amaryllis bulb or two to help them get through the dark days. That will help. That is what I used to do. However, I think you should consider growing orchids to get you through the dark months. I don't mean just buying a few plants to add some color to your home and then tossing the plants when they stop blooming. I mean growing orchids year-round so that you can have a variety of colors and flower shapes to keep you entertained.

Growing orchids is a way to keep that green thumb the right color even in the winter. There is nothing like the thrill of seeing an orchid you bought the previous year blooming again. You get the satisfaction of knowing you did the work to get those flowers. Those of you who grow orchids can confirm that, so spread the word.



Paphiopedilum, slipper orchid

I got into orchid growing four years ago when I brought home a phalaenopsis orchid in bloom from a local discount store. I didn't know that at the time, though, that I would become an orchid grower. *Phalaenopsis* orchids are often called moth orchids. I loved their graceful arched stems displaying beautifully shaped flowers of delicate colors. That one plant looked so nice on the windowsill I soon purchased three more moth orchids in bloom. Then when I looked out my window onto my brown, barren, winter garden my eye would stop first at exotic orchid flowers.

I enjoyed those orchids all winter long. I had been smart enough

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to purchase plants that had lots of buds and were just beginning to open their flowers. Two months passed and the orchids still looked good. Four months passed and they were still blooming beautifully on my windowsill. One of the plants bloomed for six months. I was astonished. Little did I know that I was getting a condition that most orchid growers have. It's call orchid fever!

By then it was early summer and I wanted to get my first four orchids to bloom for me next year. So I got on the Internet to research orchids. I found an orchid growing book in the bargain bin at a bookstore. Anything that bloomed for such a long time on a windowsill wasn't something I could pass up.

By the next winter my windowsills overflowed with orchid plants. I was out of room. Orchid fever was hitting hard. My reading and research showed that I already had a perfect place where I could expand my orchid growing. I had a four-shelf seed growing stand in my basement with fluorescent shop lights above each shelf. I was in business. Now, four years later, I have more than 100 orchids growing in my basement and on windowsills. My beautiful wife, showing her extreme tolerance, even allowed me to purchase a glass display case so that we could show off orchids in full bloom in the living room. Over these four years I learned much about growing orchids, mostly the hard way, and killed about two dozen plants in the process. But, hey, we gardeners know that some plants we try in the garden do better than others. That doesn't make us stop planting does it?

The orchids I enjoy growing the most are slipper orchids. These type of orchids fit nicely under my growing lights in my basement and I love their exotic shoe-like shapes. I also



Orchid cirrhopetalum

enjoy growing miniature *cattleya*. Some of these mini-catts, as they are called, bloom two or three times a year. In the last year I added some *masdevallia*, *cirrhopetalum* and *bulbophyllum* plants to my collection. Most of you probably don't know what these are and I don't know much about them either. I do know they produced very exotic looking flowers and they fit nicely under my shop lights. I may kill some of those, too. I haven't been able to bloom a *bulbophyllum* yet but one of my *cirrhopetalums* has bloomed and several of my *masdevallias* have produced exotic three-cornered flowers. What a thrill. So there is hope!



Orchid masdevallias

Some of you probably thought by now I would be offering orchid growing information. I am not going to do

that. Just like in our gardens, some plants are exceedingly easy to grow. Some are very challenging -- just the challenge that a veteran gardener would love. There is a huge amount of information about growing orchids on the Internet. There are also dozens of orchid books at book stores. And don't we all love reading about growing things?



Orchid miniature cattleya

Another good idea is to get involved with a group of orchid growers who will give you some hands-on help. One place to do that is at the Orchid Society of Greater Kansas City. It meets on the second Sunday of each month and offers a beginners class before the regular meeting. And just like our Master Gardener program, you can even hook up with a mentor who will give you personal help when you need it. It even invites orchid vendors to meetings and you can buy orchids, often at cut-rate prices. What a deal! You can find information about the group at www.osgkc.org. Or, you can always stop me and we can discuss orchids.

If you want to see some more photos of orchids that I have bloomed in my home you can go to my photography website at www.ttviews.com and click on the button that says "Orchids, Etc." You can even see some photos of my shady garden on the website.

How do you become a holiday plant?

By Becky Peck, Class of 2003

Did you ever wonder why poinsettias, pine trees, wreaths, holly, mistletoe, and so many more plants became associated with the holidays? I found a book that has researched this question called *Decking the Halls, The Folklore and Traditions of Christmas Plants* by Linda Allen. This is a very small and inexpensive book that I could see fitting nicely into a holiday stocking or becoming a gift for a mature person who appreciates history and folklore. Here is an overview of what I learned from this book, followed by some specifics for each plant.

Many plants achieved their associations initially with pagan rituals to honor Gods of nature around winter solstice and a holiday called Saturnalia. The rituals were frequently associated with the Druids, Celts, Norse or Romans. The plants and rituals were thought to bring the sun back from the shortest daylight day of the year—December 21st. The “holiday plants” tended to be green or blooming around December 21st in the part of the world where the tradition arose. Therefore, they would be a symbol of continuing life amongst the darkening days and winter temperatures. They were felt to bring good luck if their use was properly placed and timed. For instance, it was considered bad luck to bring greenery into the house before December 24, or to remove it before January 6th (the twelfth night).

When Christianity began to spread, the use of plants associated with pagan rituals was not welcomed to represent Christian holidays. However, somehow a series of myths arose that linked the plants to the birth of

Christ. A prevalent one is a child who wants to bring gifts to the Christ child in the manger and has none. When encouraged to bring a less desirable object such as a handful of weeds, the weeds magically turned into one of the holiday plants when presented to the child. Now, the plant is acceptable to Christians. I think this could be one of the first uses of our current day term of “market spin.”

Symbols are included in the history including the roundness of wreaths and green colors representing eternal life. Greenery was also used to protect against witches and other demons. Most of the plants have medicinal purposes associated with them also. Let’s take a peek at how some of these plants became part of our holiday celebrations:

Mistletoe

The name Mistletoe comes from the Anglo-Saxon word “misteltan,” which means “little dung twig.” This name recognizes the part birds played in its propagation. It appeared to be a gift from the heavens since it existed as a parasite to the upper part of trees and remained green while other plants were dead. This one really had a list of powers: an aphrodisiac that contains powers of fertility, protection from witchcraft and nightmares, could open all locks, protected the stable and

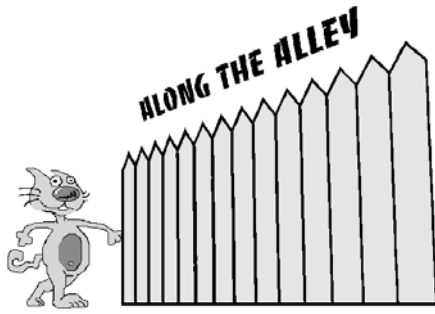


dairy from trolls, was thought to cure epilepsy, protected you from death while in battle, and it was used as a divining rod to locate gold or treasures. Hung over the doors to ward off evil spirits, ensure fertility and encourage enemies to bury past grudges, guests were expected to embrace under the mistletoe.

Kissing under the Mistletoe came from the Roman era. Stories from both the Romans and the Norse speak to a mother unable to protect her son from the spring of mistletoe piercing his heart. The mother’s tears of sorrow became the white berries of the mistletoe and brought the son back to life. In their happiness, they kissed anyone who walked under the mistletoe.

Kissing under the mistletoe has proper etiquette rules that come from ancient times. The gentleman can kiss the lady on the cheek once for each white berry he picks off the mistletoe. When the berries are gone, no more

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By Joanne Couture, Class of 1991

Play “Garden Jeopardy” —This annual was originally called “pot marigold” because it was put in cook pots and used as a cheap substitute for saffron in cooking. What is . . . ? (Solution at end of article)

2006 has been a see-saw year. Gardens thrived in a temperate spring, but sizzled and sulked in those scorching, summer days. Exhausted plants rebounded in a cool, moist September. How did your garden grow? Our annual *Garden Survey* brought these comments from MGs:

Maggie Basch ('05) had success growing annuals from seed. For a colorful window box, Maggie clustered white angelonia, violet-blue verbena, and trailing ‘Deep Rose’ vinca. She also tried the corkscrew vine from Park Seed Co. (5 seeds—2 germinated). Though it didn’t bloom till late September, so beautiful and fragrant were the flowers that she’ll bring it in for the winter. Maggie also had a good crop of ‘Supersonic’ and ‘Mountain Fresh’ tomatoes that were still producing in late September.

Chuck Thiesenhusen’s ('94) “best for 2006” were roses: ‘Zepherine Drouhin,’ “an old Bourbon climber with great vigor and a wonderful scent,” and ‘Honey Perfume’ for its color and fragrance. But roses also presented a major gardening problem: Chuck lost ‘Sally Holmes,’ ‘Easy Living,’ and ‘Fourth of July’ to the Rose Rosette virus, spread by vector mites. Some symptoms of the dis-

ease are twisted “witches’ brooms” in elongated new shoots, mottled flower color, and deformed buds. Multiflora roses are especially susceptible and possibly the initial host of the disease. Chuck said that University of Mo/Columbia horticulturalist and Extension agent, Mary Kroening, also had the virus on ‘Knockout,’ the very popular shrub rose, and will trim out the affected parts and spray next spring. Chuck suggests for “excellent information and photos of the virus”, go to the website www.ext.vt.edu and type in “Rose Rosette” in the search box. With other perennials, he was pleased with the coneflower ‘White Swan’ but disappointed in rudbeckias ‘Maya,’ and ‘Sonora,’ and especially the heuchera ‘Peach Melba.’

Carol Huhs ('05) likes to experiment. She plants perennial seeds for flowers and Alpine strawberries [check this on Google] “as early as I can” in pots on her deck, then transplants them when they are thriving, later in the season. “You get much more for your money that way” though they generally won’t flower until the next year. Her lavender was especially successful grown in that method. Also, a success: her butternut squash, which tripled in size after fertilization; the herb stevia, which she dried and stored; ‘Yellow Boy,’ “the best of the tomatoes;” a variegated Joe Pye Weed; and her lace cap hydrangea ‘Blue Billow’ (more delicate than traditional “mophead” blooms) was happier moved to a shadier location. A disappointment: following the book *Square Foot Gardening*, Carol was displeased with the checkerboard design of flowers and veggies. The crookneck squash crowded out the peppers and the flowers did not display well and took away space from the food crops.

Michael Horton ('97) gardens “on what must be holy ground”—St. Peter’s Episcopal Church on Red Bridge Road near her home “stripped

the sod and made community gardens on their grounds.” Michael likes to try something new every year, such as ‘Maine Berry’ tomatoes from seeds given to her seven years ago. Listed as a “currant-type” indeterminate tomato, it’s fruit is blueberry-sized and prized for its flavor. “They are terrific and make huge bushy plants.” Michael also grew enough okra to share and, for a late crop, planted purple-top turnips.

Becky Peck ('03) tried several new approaches with vining plants (squash, cucumber, gourds, pumpkin and watermelon); she planted the seeds between mulches of “six pages of newspaper, overlaid with straw flakes” (according to her farmer friend, “flakes” are pieces that peel off the straw bale). “They looked gorgeous” and never needed watering or weeding. And a green manure crop of rye, planted the previous autumn, came up with her Sugar Snap peas. “The grain crop held the vining peas upright and off the ground.” Becky also loves golden privet, which “has the most gorgeous-smelling blooms in the spring.” On pine trees lost to disease, Becky leaves four-foot stumps as bases for bird feeders or climbing roses. But she had no luck with Arctic kiwi, supposedly hardy to Zone 3. Any MGs out there with suggestions?

Julie Koppen ('02) grows plants from Seed Savers’ Exchange. She praises Austin’s ‘Organic Red Pear’ tomato—very prolific, disease and pest resistant, and still producing in late September. ‘Cherokee Purple’ tomatoes were very sweet, but tended to split. For flowers, Julie’s “favorite easy vine” is ‘Grandpa Ott’s morning glory’ (*Ipomoea purpurea*), purple with pink star centers which “covers my arbor and iron fence.” More challenging, was growing Missouri Wildflower Nursery’s Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) from seed, which

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must be “cold, wet, and stratified for two or three months before planting. “One plant had stunning red blooms this year” (typical of many perennials). They love water, take some sun, and make a good rain-garden plant, something she knows about: Julie helped eight of her Midtown neighbors design rain gardens and order plants and barrels this year.

Joy Durland ('04) favors fragrant, night-blooming container plants that surround her swing “within nose-reach to maximize my relaxation time.” Her *datura* (angels' trumpet) began bloom in early June and still continued into late September. “The scent is indeed heavenly!” But her four o'clocks were laggards—bloomed after 10 PM and were done by morning. Non-nocturnal plants also provided perfumed evenings: “white petunias' scent changes in the evening . . . and they look like little moons glowing in the darkness. Also the honeysuckles have a sweeter scent in the evening. I grow two varieties in a large pot with a trellis, and they overwinter nicely.” For next year, Joy is planning a little meditation garden at her church with plants mentioned in the Bible. An interesting idea—we'll check back in 2007.

Soraya Lucille Woodson ('05), like many MGs, had tomatoes and peppers that set fruit but did not mature. And her greenleaf white begonias and red impatiens were especially hit by the summer heat and drought. She has moved and hopes to have better luck in next year's garden.

Cathy Cleary (2000) had a shade garden scorched this year when her neighbor had his trees thinned and topped [YIKES!]. But her native five-year-old white dogwood tree bloomed for the first time, and her pansies survived until August with some shade and extra watering. Cathy also planted two Collins' blueberry bushes that

produced a few berries—more next year, she hopes. And a story common to metro rose fanciers: hers revived in the fall for great bloom after the summer's heat.

Betty Wilson ('03) had her tomatoes ravaged in early May by a possible pest rather new to this area: the armyworm. More common in southern areas, the armyworm is smaller than the hornworm and deposits hundreds of eggs protected by white spiny material under the leaves. But her wildflowers, echinacea, and succulents thrived in the heat.

As for my own garden, I returned from a week to the West Coast during KC's dry, 100 degree-plus July days, to find all the tomato plants sun-crisped and webbed with spider mite. Jets of water, severe pruning, plus a diluted side-dressing of nitrogen jump-started them after several weeks. By mid-September they were again setting fruit. But the grape-type 'Juliet' revived the best—ripened with more prolific fruit than 'Jet Star,' 'Celebrity,' and '4th of July.' Other good performers: Park Seed's new perennials, purple-spiked *Salvia farinacea* 'Evolution' and agastache 'Purple 'Pygmy.' Ever mystified by 'volunteers' you or your neighbors have never planted before? Next to my butterfly bush, tall ironweed (*Vernonia altissima*) shot up and bore small, aster-type magenta blooms for several months. Also, a surprise: a burst of amaranthus (love-lies-bleeding) with its blood-red leaves and slender red flower spikes. Compliments of the birds, perhaps?

Paula Cosentino ('99) is not one to loll on a porch swing reading trashy novels! Paula and her husband bought a 32-acre property a few years ago “with two houses, a five-acre pond, and horse barn . . . it had been neglected for some time, so the first year was spent just cutting down brush and weeds and picking up things left lying around.” Plus plan-

ning a big June wedding for their son. Plus, with Ami Zumwalt (Leighter) of Powell Gardens, introducing biodiversity to the area based on *Noah's Garden* by Sara Stein. Plus an exciting “archaeological” find: Paula observed that “grass died in a distinct pattern” on the east side of her house. Digging around, she discovered turquoise tile and a concrete-walled pit—voila! A kidney-shaped swimming pool! The former owners admitted it was there when they bought the property in the 50s, but they jackhammered the bottom and filled it in. Undaunted, Paula went to work. “You should've seen me on the backhoe in my pj's!” She's turned it into a sunken patio, laying the flagstone floor herself, with a small water pond already inhabited by frogs. She'll surround the patio with a garden and shrubs. [I'm exhausted just writing about this!]

Needed information for 2007:

Has anyone tried growing tomatoes in that newer method—they sprawl downward from special pots? Please e-mail me at jcouture2003@yahoo.com

“GARDEN JEOPARDY” solution:
What is the calendula (?) The original European marigold, it is from the Latin “*calendae*” (calendar) because it bloomed every month of the year. From 100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names by Diana Wells



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kissing. A successful kiss results in marriage. If a girl refuses to be kissed, she will become an old maid.

Becoming a symbol of endurance and survival to the early pioneers, its abundance and its characteristic full bloom during the holidays, mistletoe returned to prominence as a holiday plant.

The Holiday Tree

Some of the legends here include:

The fir was the original “Tree of Life” in the Garden of Eden. As the tree’s punishment for aiding Eve in sin, its leaves shriveled to needles and its fruit changed into cones.

Another legend says the tree bloomed again on the night of the Nativity and became the first Christmas tree. The Middle Ages featured “Paradise Trees” in home on December 24, to symbolize the events in the Garden of Eden.

The Romans decorated trees with lighted candles and trinkets during Saturnalia to honor the sun god Saturn. The modern day holiday tree, however, originates from Germany. A British monk and missionary named St. Boniface is credited as the person who first associated an evergreen tree (fir) as the Tree of the Christ Child. Planting fir saplings became a custom. In 1539, the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Strasborg created the first holiday tree with paper flowers, cookies, fruit and nuts to decorate it. Martin Luther is credited with furthering the symbolism by placing lighted candles on an evergreen tree as a symbol of the life-giving light and to replicate the beautiful winter scene he felt inspired by.

Massachusetts enacted a law in 1659 to ban all frivolity and celebrations during the holiday season. It was felt that they were distractions from the sacredness of the Nativity. It was repealed in 1681.

Popularity in the United States

began around the beginning of the nineteenth century. Cedars were the tree during the pioneer days due to their availability. The first White House holiday tree began in 1856 with Franklin Pierce.

Wreaths



Unlike what you might think from watching *The Lion King*, the circle of life refers to the wreath. A wreath has no beginning and no end, like the love of God. It also symbolized victory and honor in ancient days. Often called the common man’s crown, wreaths of leaves placed on your head symbolized great wisdom. Recall a statue or two like that?

London used evergreen boughs to decorate in the streets for the holidays as early as 1444. The stories of how the wreath came into holiday plant status are similar to that of the Christmas rose and the poinsettia below.

The Yule Log

Another tree associated with the holiday season was the oak tree. It provided the Yule Log. Oak stands for strength, power and immortality. Druids decorated the oak with gilded apples and lighted candles to honor their sun god. The Vikings would carve into the wood symbols that represented undesirable traits like dishonor and bad luck to have the god take away from them.

Burning the log symbolized the removal of those bad qualities.

The Yule Log is more popular in Europe. It symbolizes warmth and glow of the holiday season. Christian leaders provided a different folklore for the log to separate it from pagan rituals. It was said to represent the ancient Yggdrasil. Burning the log symbolized destruction of this heathen belief and the acceptance of Christ as the light of the world. You select the log months before the holidays so it could dry and season properly so it would burn a long time. It should be as big as you could fit in the fireplace to burn through the twelve traditional days of Christmas. Roots from the tree were often included. If you helped bring this trophy into the fireplace, witchcraft would not harm you in the next year.

Before the log was burned, various “treatments” were applied to honor the log and bring good luck: sitting on the log, kissing the log, and pouring wine on the log three times while praying for health, wealth and happiness. Then, you would fire the log with kindling taken from the prior year’s log. Oh yes, you must have freshly washed hands to touch the log and not let it go out. The log’s magical powers would protect the home from evil spirits and heal misunderstandings and hatred between people.

Holly

In religious symbolism, the green of the holly stands for eternal life, nature and youth. The red symbolizes fire, blood and charity. Holly’s traditions and legends are very similar to those for mistletoe.

The Romans used the holly in Saturnalia celebrations. They believe it could ward off evil spells, lightning and strengthen their homes. Early Christians used holly as if celebrating

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Saturnalia to hide their Christianity. One legend says holly popped up under the feet of Christ on his way to the crucifixion. The red berries represent his blood. The bad legend associated with the holly tree, and the mistletoe and dogwood trees are that they were used for the crucifixion cross.

Here's one for you to try. The European tradition addresses which holly you bring into your home. One has pointed leaves and it is the masculine type. The other has smooth, round leaves and it is deemed the feminine type. The first holly brought into the house during the holiday season determines who would rule the house the next year—the husband or wife. You aren't to bring the holly into the house before December 24, or you will have family quarreling. Brought in at the proper time, you will have peace and joy. Think about the ghosts that Ebenezer Scrooge saw in *The Christmas Carol*. Two had holly—Christmas Past held a branch in his hand and Christmas Present wore a wreath set with shining icicles.

Plant the holly near the house to give protection from lightening, thunder, fire, witchcraft the worst threat of all—the evil eye. Don't smash the berries, bring the holly flowers into the house during the summer or burn the tree while green unless you want bad luck. A sprig on the bedpost brings happy dreams. Decorations throughout the house bring a jolly, joyful atmosphere.

As far as its curing potential, it is believed to heal dropsy, rheumatism, gout and asthma. Tea is sometimes brewed from it. Native Americans used the tea to treat measles. Although birds like to eat the red berries, they are poisonous to humans.

Poinsettia

Unlike the other traditions, the poinsettia is native to Mexico. The Aztecs grew it for its color, which symbolized purity to them. They made dye from the bracts and used it as a medicine to reduce fever. They called it "Cuetlaxochitl." It was native



to a town with a similar name near present-day Taxo, Mexico. The indigenous name meant "flower which wilts" and we all know why. A love story much like Romeo and Juliet suggests that the poinsettia was created to honor the lady's chastity and purity.

When a group of Franciscan priests settled near Taxo in the 17th century, they adopted the poinsettia as part of the Nativity celebration because it bloomed at that time of year. The poinsettia came to the US as a gift from Joel Poinsett, the first US Ambassador to Mexico. As a botanist, he propagated the plants in his plantation home in Greenville, South Carolina. The flower was subsequently named in his honor.

Rosemary, or the Rose of Mary

It has been suggested that Rosemary is from of Rose of Mary—a reference to the Virgin Mary. Rosemary is evergreen and belongs to the mint family. The leaves provide a fragrant oil used in perfumes and cooking. Greek students often wore rosemary in their hair at exam time

to improve their memories.

During the Middle Ages, the custom was to spread rosemary on the floor at the holiday season so that when people stepped on it, a pleasant pungent fragrance consumed the house. On the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, the rosemary bush provided shelter for Mary. She threw her robe over the bush to create a hiding place and its white flowers changed into blue—the color of her robe. Even today, Mediterranean villages spread linens over rosemary bushes to dry and perfume them.

In medieval times, young girls slipped springs of rosemary under their pillows to attract their true love in their dreams. The Romans considered it an aphrodisiac. Tucked in a bridal bouquet, it symbolized happiness. The bride would give it to her new husband to ensure his fidelity to her. They also added it to the wedding cup that guests shared. Anne of Cleves, the short-lived wife of Henry VIII, wore it in her crown on her wedding day. Napoleon loved it so much he had over 100 bottles of rosemary water for his honeymoon. For additional evidence, consider this line from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance pray love, remember..."

The Christmas Rose

is not a rose! It is related to the buttercup and is said to be the stars that fell from the heavens on the night of Christ's birth. Actually the Helleborus Niger from Egypt, this plant also started with pagan rituals. Scattering petals throughout the house would guard against evil spirits. Although the rhizomes are poisonous, they have been used as a heart stimulant and cathartic as well as for treatment of epilepsy, gout and mental disorders.

Modern folklore instructs that you

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should plant the Christmas Rose by the door to welcome Christ into your home.

Cinnamon

Native to India and Sri Lanka, the cinnamon tree will grow to 30 to 50 feet in hot, humid, tropical climates. To cultivate it, the shoots from the tree are trimmed twice per year. Cinnamon is often used in cooking and to decorate wreaths. Oil of cinnamon is distilled from the bark and used for medicinal purposes and for flavoring. It is an ingredient for love potions, perfume and incense. The rumor is that over a year's supply of cinnamon was burned at Nero's funeral in Rome.

Before Christ's birth, spices were highly valued. The Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon with a great caravan of camels loaded with gold, gems and spices, including cinnamon. The king declared the cinnamon as part of his prized treasury.

Peppermint

Also from the mint family, legend says that peppermint can provide relief from stomach disorders and indigestion, chapped hands, and mouth and gum sores. Rubbing it on the table will increase the appetite of whoever sits there.

The peppermint candy cane is fashioned in the shape of a shepherd's cane. It became a holiday symbol to honor the humble, first visitors to the manger. The red and white stripes were added at the turn of the century. Promotion of our familiar red and white canes came from the McCormack family of Albany, Georgia. Originally done by hand, Gregory Keller, a Catholic priest and brother-in-law to McCormack invented a machine and mass production began. The shape of the cane is also said to be a "J" for Jesus. The white represents purity and the red his blood.

The stripes represent the beating from the Roman soldiers.

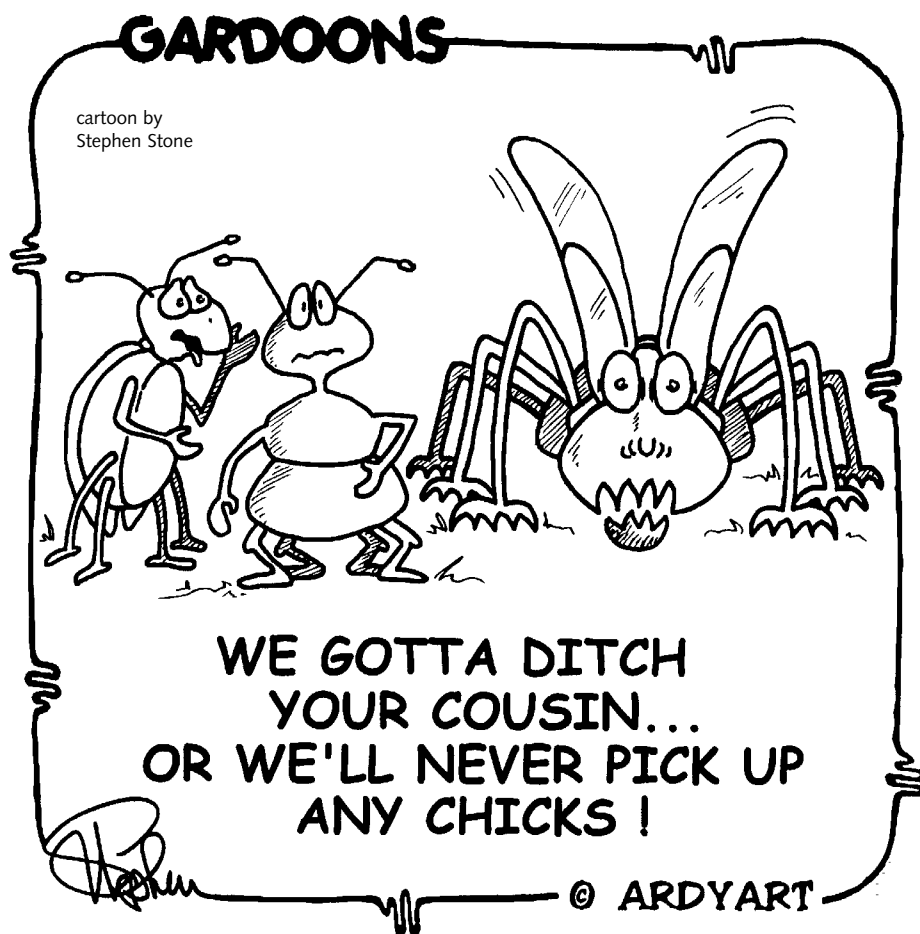
Cranberries

This one is a story of function. The cranberry is native to the US and one of only three fruits native to North America. The other two are the Concord grape and the blueberry. Cranberries like to grow in bogs. Native Americans had food, medicinal and decorative uses for it before the Europeans arrived. Many legends tell of how the cranberry came to exist in different parts of the US. The Plymouth colonists changed the name to "crane berries" because the vine has pink flowers with long stems that resembled cranes. British ships carried cranberries as a scurvy preventative. A dye was made from the berries, a diuretic tea from the leaves, poultices from the berries and an astringent was used to stop

bleeding. The cranberry's juice is still a recommended remedy for urinary tract maladies.

One of the first holiday tree decorations were popcorn and cranberry strings on outdoor trees to provide a treat for birds and other wildlife.

Well, with this bit of knowledge, there is no excuse for you to have lack of hunger, trolls in your house, or bad dreams. If your child's grades are a little low, try sticking some rosemary in their hair. You now know how to properly kiss under the mistletoe. As you think back on these stories, they really aren't stories about the winter holidays. They are stories about the blending of mankind into the rich history we have today. Each time I look at my holiday plants, I'll see greater meaning this holiday season. I hope you will too.



Garden gnomes: Gardening tradition vs. good taste

By Cheryl Ann Novick, Class of 2004



1870

What are your feelings on garden gnomes? Totally tacky artifacts of a kitschy bourgeois mind set, or historically based reproductions of a facet of our gardening past? Too cute to be comfortable in your border, or that “just right” touch amidst the ferns and fox-glove?

You may be surprised to learn that garden gnomes have been used as garden décor since at least the 1800's. Those first gnomes were made in Germany from hard fired terra cotta. It was not until midway through the 20th century that plastics were utilized. Now they can be found made of the original material as well as resin, concrete, and metal.

But why has the gnome persisted as garden ornamentation over all these years? The reason is that there's more to it than just a cute (or sinister—you choose!) little statue. The garden gnome is representative of a kind of race memory we have of little people living amongst us. And always in our thoughts, these little people are associated with the earth; with the plants and animals of field and forest; and with the treasures to be found if one just digs far enough. So, to put a statue of a gnome in one's garden is to acknowledge that they are welcome, if and when a real one should happen to roam by.

And brother, don't garden gnomes roam—usually with the help of teenagers. There are whole websites devoted to roaming garden gnomes, as well as gnome “sanctuaries” and “free range” preserves (www.freethegnomes.com, www.gnomeswithouthomes.com). So popular is the concept of gnomes being great travelers, that a gnome is the spokesperson for a travel web site. They certainly didn't start out as vagabonds, but have become so in response to our modern world. As the human experience changes, so too goes the gnome.

And yes, their looks have changed over time as well. What started as a stout but tiny person with fairly normal human features, has morphed into a wide eyed, pug-nosed cutie-pie caricature. According to legend, gnomes are not always the most blissfully cheery of creatures. The earliest garden gnomes acknowledged this fact with faces that revealed a bit of inner character. To counteract the cute-ification of modern garden gnomes, some producers have resorted to recasting antique gnomes in the original terra cotta (www.kimmel-gnomes.com). To see the transformation, see the accompanying images of this progression of “lolling” garden gnomes through the years. (Images courtesy <http://www.gnomeland.co.uk>).

Does a gnome belong at your home? Well, tradition has it that if you don't have a garden gnome statue, the real thing will never visit. He just won't feel welcome. And since having gnomes around is also historically considered “lucky” for gardeners (because they help with the gardening chores while you're sleeping, I think), one would do well to have at least one garden gnome tucked in amongst the perennials. No human need see them, unless you want them to. And that, my fellow gardeners,



1930



1950



2003

effectively solves the problem of garden gnome tradition versus good taste!

For more fun gnome information visit the following web sites: www.bushgnome.com, www.garden-gnomes-need-homes.com, www.nthposition.com/gnomeliberation.php, www.flakmag.com/misc/gnome.html, or just Google “garden gnome history.”



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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
Extension

The International Rose Test Garden, Portland Oregon

By Walt Fulps, Class of 2005

We went to Portland Oregon for a ship's reunion, it was my second visit. The same ship was repaired at Swan Island in 1964 while I was a crewmember. My only regret from my first visit is that I didn't visit the world famous Rose Garden. It was not on the reunion's itinerary this time, but it was on mine.

As I stood looking at the 4½ acres of garden, I was spellbound. I had never seen so many roses in one place.

Portland's International Rose Test Garden is the oldest public rose test garden in the United States. The site was chosen by the first curator and rose fanatic, Jesse A. Curry. With the support of The American Rose Society, city officials and civic-minded citizens, the garden was established in 1917.

Today there are over 9000 rose plants, with over 550 varieties. The hardiness zone is perfect for roses, zones 7-8, so they don't have to winterize. I have never seen healthier or more beautiful blooms. Some of the plants are taller than I am—of course I'm vertically challenged.

They use a 12-5-7 fertilizer, three times a year, in April, June, and August. They irrigate automatically with underground irrigation. The primary soil amendment is garden compost. When asked about cutting back roses they say, "Forget 3 or 5 leaflets, cut a growth bud at any length you want."

The primary purpose of the garden is to serve as a testing ground for new rose varieties. The city of Portland awards Gold Medal Awards annually, to the best introductions. They



are then planted in the Gold Medal Garden. The garden is one of 24 official testing sites for the All-America Rose selections.

Roses under test are not named, but designated by code numbers. Four plants of each entry are scored for two years on 14 different points, including plant habit, vigor, disease resistance, color, form, and fragrance. About 200 hundred rose cultivars are tested each year.

The rose garden is broken up into many different gardens, so many roses I tried to keep track, but alas, I could not. I wandered about taking pictures and thinking of my scrawny looking roses back in Raymore. I must do better! But until I can manage to change the hardiness zone, I'm going to have to be satisfied with what I have. But I'll always have the pictures and the memories of the most beautiful rose garden I have ever seen!