

What's Inside

- 2019 All-America selection winners
- Valentine's Day flowers
- Garden tips for February
- Upcoming events

Jennifer Schutter
University of Missouri Extension
Horticulture Specialist
660-665-9866
schutterjl@missouri.edu

If you need this newsletter in alternative format, please contact Jennifer Schutter at the Adair County Extension Center.

HOLIDAY CACTI BENEFIT FROM BRIGHT LIGHT AND PROPER WATERING

The holidays may be over, but holiday cacti may still be blooming profusely. My Christmas cactus originates from an 85 year-old mother plant my great-grandmother had in Kansas during the dust bowl. She took it with her when she and her family moved to the Missouri Ozarks in the 1930s. Her daughter then took it to Colorado a few decades later. A few years ago when I was in Colorado, I received cuttings from this plant. I rooted those cuttings and now have two potted Christmas cactus plants. I put them in my sunroom and they are thriving in the bright sunlight they receive.

Many plants sold as Christmas cacti today are a cross between Christmas cactus and Thanksgiving cactus. A more appropriate name might be holiday cactus. Holiday cacti tolerate low light but perform best in bright, indirect light in the home, especially during winter. However, if you move plants outside during summer, keep them in a semi-shady location. Full sun during the summer can result in pale plants. Ideal temperature is 70-80 degrees for its season of active growth, April to September. Holiday cacti are native to a small coastal region of Brazil. As tropical plants, they are not quite as drought-resistant as their name might imply. Like most cacti, however, they do not like a wet root environment. Water only when the growing medium is dry to the touch. A soggy growing medium encourages root rot. Empty drainage saucers to keep excess water from wicking back in the pot.



Only fertilize plants from early spring through late summer. Apply a regular fertilizer at one-quarter strength or a houseplant fertilizer according to label directions. Keep holiday cacti slightly pot-bound for prolific flowering. Repot about every three years. Use a porous and well-drained medium. Choose commercial peat-lite mixes made for epiphytes or add more perlite or sterile sharp sand to regular peat-lite mixes to increase porosity. Re-blooming holiday cacti is not that difficult. These short-day plants flower in response to both day length and temperature. Most prolific flowering occurs when plants experience short days with at least 13 hours of darkness and cool nighttime conditions. Limit watering to slightly stress the plant, which aids in flower induction. In short, subjecting holiday cacti to short days, cool nights and dry conditions in October will cause plants to be in full bloom for the holiday season.

Source: Dr. David Trinklein, University of Missouri Extension

2019 ALL-AMERICA SELECTION WINNERS

AAS winners have been "Tested Nationally & Proven Locally™" for garden superiority by horticulture professionals across North America. All-America Selections is the oldest, independent testing organization of flower and edible varieties in North America. The

2019 winners include:

Begonia Viking™ XL Red on Chocolate F1 (2019 AAS Flower Winner)

A brand new begonia with large, uniquely colored dark leaves. Judges were impressed with how the deep bronze/brown color remained sharp and intense throughout the season, no matter where they were located; north, south, east or west. The color tones shine through to give a stunning garden appearance. Covered with vibrant red flowers, the compact plant retains its shape well and does not become rangy.

Marigold Big Duck Gold F1(2019 AAS Flower Winner)

There's a new marigold in the pond! Big Duck Gold sports very large golden-yellow flowers that continue blooming throughout the season, much longer than the comparisons. These marigolds begin the season putting energy into establishing a solid, healthy plant with clean, deep-green foliage. Then, when it starts blooming, watch out! Full, "plump" blooms top the 15" plants (which are slightly taller than the more compact comparison varieties) and continue blooming through the end of the season.

Nasturtium Baby Rose (2019 AAS Flower Winner)

The last nasturtium AAS Winner was back in the early days, in the 1930's. Now it's time to introduce a wonderful rose colored nasturtium perfect for today's gardens. Baby Rose is a petite-flowered, mounding variety with healthy, dark foliage ideal for containers and small space gardens. AAS' expert judges praised the uniformly compact plants that sported flowers with consistent coloration. Their compact habit means less "flower flopping" with their blooms remaining upright throughout the season. The rose color is uncommon in nasturtiums and contrasts beautifully with the dark-green foliage.

Petunia Wave® Carmine Velour F1 (2019 AAS Flower Winner)

This newest color of the popular Wave® petunias was one of the highest scoring plants in the 2018 trials! AAS judges enthusiastically came up with an array of ways to describe the unique carmine rose color: "Fabulous," "Stunning," "Intense," "Vibrant," "Lively," "Great color," "Bright," "Non-fading," "Outstanding," "My favorite," "Bright colors regardless of clouds or sun." Large 2-2.5 inch flowers literally cover the easy-care spreading plants that rarely need deadheading because new

blooms continuously pop-up and cover the spent blooms.

Melon Orange SilverWave F1 (2019 AAS Edible Winner)

Orange SilverWave is an exotic melon bred in South Korea with an extremely sweet, orange flesh and unique rind color. Many foodie gardeners are looking to grow something different to "Wow!" their guests and this melon will do just that! The attractive 5" oval melons grow on vigorous producing up to six fruits per vine. Whether grown in a large container or in-ground, it's best to grow the vines on a trellis (bracing the melons) for better disease control.

Pepper Just Sweet F1 (2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner)

A unique snacking pepper with four lobes like a larger bell pepper, only smaller. Not only are the 3 inch fruits deliciously sweet with nice thick walls but the plants are vigorous growers (up to 36 inches tall and 15 inches wide) that don't need to be staked because they've been bred to have a strong bushy habit. Many judges conduct consumer taste tests and reported back that this pepper won those tests, hands down. The Just Sweet peppers are exceptionally bright, shiny and a vivid yellow color with a flavor described as sweet with aromatic accents.

Tomato Chef's Choice Black F1 (2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner)

This variety is the sixth color variation in the popular Chef's Choice tomato series. Chef's Choice Black is a beefsteak type tomato with a dark green/brown/black hue. AAS Judges reported vigorous, healthy plants with clean and uniform fruits that were early to set and had a meaty interior with great flavor. This hybrid boasts a prolific yield of 8-ounce fruits grown on strong, 5-foot indeterminate vines. You'll harvest 30 or more blemish-free fruits throughout the season from this disease-resistant plant with dark green leaves and well-behaved form.

Tomato Fire Fly F1 (2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner)

This adorable newcomer is not as small as a currant tomato and not as large as a cherry tomato, but is a "just right" in-between size. The fruits produced are super sweet pale white to pale yellow round fruits less than 1 inch in size and weigh about 1/2 oz. Delicate, translucent skins offer a mild acid flavor that enhances the sweet taste. They're small juicy fruits exploding with flavor, perfect for snacking and in salads. Indeterminate plants must be staked or caged as they grow upward to 5-6 feet and have good disease resistance.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Tomato Red Torch F1 (2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner)

Red Torch is a striped oblong tomato with 1.5" long fruits that weigh about 1.5 ounces. This hybrid is a very prolific early-season producer. The combination of excellent flavor, great texture, and high yields make this hybrid better than other varieties in the trendy niche market of striped tomatoes. Plants have been bred with excellent tolerance to environmental stresses like heat and harsh growing conditions. Fruits are borne on indeterminate vines that grow 5-6' tall and ripen 60-70 days from transplanting. Judges were pleased with both the earliness and yield of this variety in addition to the unique skin coloration.

Tomato Sparky XSL F1 (2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner)

Sparky is one of the few X-tended Shelf Life (XSL) cherry tomatoes available to home gardeners. Sparky brags about being early to mature, prolific and very flavorful. Fruits are well suited for market growers and produce a large number of usable fruits per plant. You'll enjoy gardening with these plants that have excellent tolerance to environmental stresses like heat and harsh

growing conditions. Very sweet fruits have an average Brix score of 8.5. Round fruits weigh 1 ounce and are 1 inch in diameter. Indeterminate 5-6' plants produce fruits 60-70 days from transplant.

Watermelon Cal Sweet Bush (2019 AAS Edible Winner)

From ancient wild watermelons in the African desert to today's new selections, watermelons have come a long way! Cal Sweet Bush is another example of how ongoing breeding efforts result in a new and better product. This is a true short internode (the sections between the stem joints) watermelon. These watermelons have compact, bushy vines that grow only 14-18" long and still provide enough foliage cover to protect the fruits. Each plant yields 2-3 fruits weighing 10-12 pounds. Like all AAS Winners, this newbie delivers exceptional taste and texture. Cal Sweet Bush is a great watermelon choice for gardeners with limited space or those wanting a container melon. Cal Sweet Bush will produce at least one fruit per vine if grown in a container.

Source: <https://all-americanselections.org/>. See photos of each of these winners at this website.

VALENTINE'S DAY FLOWERS

Giving flowers on Valentine's Day first became popular in the 17th century. Roses, having the distinction of representing love in all its forms, are the blossoms of choice on Valentine's Day.

The most popular rose colors are red, white, and pink. The rose was reputed to be the favorite flower of Venus, and so it was dubbed the flower of passion and love.

One single perfect red rose framed with baby's breath is referred to by some florists as a "signature rose," and is the preferred choice for giving on Valentine's Day. Red stands for strong feelings, which is why a red rose is a flower of love. White symbolizes purity, and pink is perhaps the most appropriate color for young lovers - a meeting point between the two extremes.

Although the traditional Valentine's Day flower is a long stemmed red rose (or a dozen if you're feeling very romantic), if you'd like to surprise your Valentine, you might like to try something slightly out of the ordinary like sunflowers, daisies, lilies, carnations, and potted plants.

Flower Facts:

- It's estimated that the U.S. alone is going to spend \$3.3 billion on flowers for loved ones this year.
- The only other day that beats Valentine's Day in floral sales is Mother's Day.
- Of the 124.6 million households in the U.S. it's predicted that 43 million of them will purchase flowers.
- And the most likely flower to be purchased? Red roses of course!
- Would you believe that young people are leading the trend in floral sales? In 2016, 63% of floral-buying households were under the age of 35.
- Who says you can't be your own Valentine? In 2015, 18% of women sent themselves flowers.
- Of flowers given 84% are roses. Other flowers given include tulips, carnations, lilies, mixed bouquets and potted plants.



GARDENING TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

Ornamentals

- Water evergreens if the soil is dry and unfrozen.
- Inspect summer bulbs in storage to be sure none are drying out. Discard any that show signs of rot.
- Winter aconite (*Eranthis* sp.) and snowdrops (*Galanthus* sp.) are hardy bulbs for shady gardens that frequently push up through snow to bloom now.
- Take geranium cuttings now. Keep the foliage dry to avoid diseases.
- Sow seeds of larkspur, sweet peas, Shirley poppies and snapdragons where they are to grow outdoors now. To bloom best, these plants must sprout and begin growth well before warm weather arrives.
- Seeds of slow-growing annuals like ageratum, verbena, petunias, geraniums, coleus, impatiens and salvia may be started indoors now.
- Start tuberous begonias indoors now. "Non-stop" varieties perform well in this climate.
- Dormant sprays can be applied to ornamental trees and shrubs now. Do this on a mild day while temperatures are above freezing.

Fruit

- Inspect fruit trees for tent caterpillar egg masses. Eggs appear as dark brown or gray collars that encircle small twigs. Destroy by pruning or scratching off with your thumbnail.
- Collect scion wood now for grafting of fruit trees later in spring. Wrap bundled scions with plastic and store them in the refrigerator.
- When pruning diseased branches, sterilize tools with a one part bleach, nine parts water solution in between cuts. Dry your tools at day's end and rub them lightly with oil to prevent rusting.
- Begin pruning fruit trees. Start with apples and pears first. Peaches and nectarines should be pruned just before they bloom.
- Grapes and bramble fruits may be pruned now.
- Established fruit trees can be fertilized once frost leaves the ground. Use about one-half pound of 12-12-12 per tree, per year of age, up to a maximum of 10 pounds fertilizer per tree. Broadcast fertilizers over the root zone staying at least one foot from the tree trunk.

Vegetables

- Run a germination test on seeds stored from previous years to see if they will still sprout.
- Season extending devices such as cold frames, hot beds, cloches and floating row covers will allow for an early start to the growing season.
- If soil conditions allow, sow peas, lettuce, spinach and radish. If the weather obliges, you will be rewarded with extra early harvests.
- Sow seeds of broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage indoors now for transplanting into the garden later this spring.

Miscellaneous

- When sowing seeds indoors, be sure to use sterile soil mediums to prevent diseases. As soon as seeds sprout, provide ample light to encourage stocky growth.
- Repot any root-bound house plants now before vigorous growth occurs. Choose a new container that is only 1 or 2 inches larger in diameter than the old pot.
- To avoid injury to lawns, keep foot traffic to a minimum.
- Branches of pussy willow, quince, crabapple, forsythia, pear and flowering cherry may be forced indoors. Place cut stems in a vase of water and change the water every 4 days.

-Missouri Botanical Garden-

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 9: Beginning Beekeeping class; hosted by North Central MO Beekeepers Assn. 8:30-5:00. Macon High School, Macon, MO. Cost is \$60. Limited to 30 individuals. To register call Tammy at 660-214-0132 or georges@chbeekeeping.com.

February 9: Keeping the Farm in the Family: Succession Planning workshop. 9:30-3:00, MO Dept. of Conservation, Kirksville. For information and to RSVP, call Yvette at 660-785-2420. No cost to attend. Lunch and refreshments provided.

February 11-12: Midwest Winter Production Conference, Carver Farm, Jefferson City. Features national & regional presenters with hands-on experience in winter vegetable production. Cost \$50 for two days, includes lunch and a manual. Contact schut-terjl@missouri.edu or 660-665-9866 for more information.

February 20: Private Pesticide Applicator Training, Adair County Extension Center, 2 pm. For individuals wanting to obtain a license or needing to renew their license.

February 21, 28 and March 7 & 14: Woodland Stewards Course, 6-8 pm, Putnam Co. Extension Center. Topics: getting to know your woodlands, managing your woodlands, identifying and managing woodland threats, and wildlife and woodlands. Free. RSVP by February 18 to Putnam Co. Extension at 660-947-2705. An MDC forester will be present to answer questions.

February 22-23: Missouri Blueberry School, classroom sessions and farm tours suited for beginning and expert producers. Missouri State University's Darr Agricultural Center, Springfield, MO. 8am-5pm both days. Cost is \$90 and includes lunch both days and tour transportation. If interested, contact schut-terjl@missouri.edu for more information.