



# FROM THE GROUND UP

## FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

### NEWSLETTER

#### January 2013

*"Sowing The Seeds Of Love For Gardening"*

<http://www.florencecountymastergardeners.org>

#### From Our President:

Happy New Year Master Gardeners,

Hope everyone has survived the holidays for another year. It was wonderful to be with family and friends at such a festive time of year. Thankfully, our weather here was much better than other locations around the country. I hope those of you that traveled didn't get stuck in bad weather.

Our last meeting/Christmas party at the PDREC was a lot of fun. We should all gain a few pounds from all the good food. I want to thank everyone who came with such great side dishes and the gifts turned out to be a lot of laughs.

We are starting our preparations for the upcoming workshop in March. I hope everyone will want to participate in the planning. We are also organizing a nominating committee for the upcoming elections. We plan on having a meeting this month and the date will be announced at a later time.

Remember our January meeting at the PDREC greenhouse. We will have a lot of cuttings to repot and it is quite a job so I hope we have a good turnout. We need all the help we can get, so please come on January 21 at 6 pm.

There are still a few calendars left for those of you who did not get one. I have heard a lot of good comments about them and the information that you get with one.

Now is the time to plan those 2013 gardens. Good luck with that!

*Happy New Year and Happy Gardening*  
*Janet Bugbee*

#### Next Meeting

January 21, 6 pm PDREC greenhouse

**"Indoor" gardening now that the cold weather has set in** by Donna Zukus, Frederick County Master Gardener Program

An easy and rewarding type of gardening you may want to consider is forcing bulbs indoors. Forcing bulbs is basically "fooling" the bulb into thinking winter is over and that it is time to bloom once again. You will also find the time commitment and expense are minimal.

There are a number of suitable bulbs for forcing which include tulips, hyacinths, amaryllis, and paper-white narcissuses. At this time of year, you will find the most success with the narcissus followed by the amaryllis because they do not need any type of special preparation. In addition, these choices make beautiful, natural decorations for your home during the holidays.

Paper-whites are best grown in a shallow container without drainage holes. Fill the pot two thirds full with gravel, stones, colored beads or marbles. Place as many bulbs as will fit on the gravel with the pointed side up. Fill gravel in around them, leaving the top halves exposed. The widest part of the bulb should be even with the rim of the container. Add water up to the base of the bulbs and maintain water at this level. Place the container in a cool place (50 to 60 degrees F) with indirect light. Roots will appear within days and this period allows the root system a chance to establish. When green shoots appear in about 2 to 3 weeks, move the container to a cool, sunny spot until they bloom.

If you choose to plant in a container with drainage, use a high quality potting soil and plant with the tip of the bulb even with the rim of the pot. Plant the bulbs close to one another without touching each other. After planting, water thoroughly and keep moist. In about three more weeks you will have masses of heavily scented, white flowers. Blooms will last longer if kept cool and away from direct sunlight.

Once forced, paper-whites cannot be reused, except for outdoor planting. It will then take between 2 and 3 years for them to again achieve full blooming potential.

## Upcoming Events

### FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER OFFICERS:

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~ DUES ~

It's that time of year again when we ask everyone for their yearly dues. Dues for the year are \$10 and are not much for what they provide. Please take the time to send in a check or bring \$10 to the January meeting. Dues can be mailed to:  
Sally Crowley  
715 Joyce Lane  
Florence, SC 29501

We still have calendars, shirts, cobra- head tools and cookbooks available. Please contact Janet Bugbee.

Winter is the time of promise because there is so little to do – or because you can now and then permit yourself the luxury of thinking so.  
~Stanley Crawford

**Jan 10 and 17** Jumping Gingerbread  [REGISTER](#)  
Discover the tasty root that makes gingerbread a special treat.

**Jan 24 and 31** Painting with Plants  [REGISTER](#)  
Create a masterpiece as we turn plants and nature objects into art tools.  
Riverbanks Gardens and Zoo, Columbia  
<http://www.riverbanks.org/education/garden.shtml>

**January 12, 11am**  
Carol Stein's Gardeners Forum Attracting Bluebirds  
Free, but registration is required. The Garden Hut, 1004 Old Honeycutt Road, Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526 (919)-552-0590  
<http://www.nelsagardenhut.com/>

**January 16** – Winter Walk - Toby Bost, of Bost Consulting and former Arboretum Director, will lead us in an informative walk through the Arboretum, identifying different trees and some shrubs. He will discuss the attributes of each tree or shrub and how they provide winter interest in your home landscape.  
<http://www.gardeningcarolina.com/calendar.html>

**Daily** The Audubon Swamp Garden is a unique world where trees grow from the water, islands float, and everywhere wild creatures go about their secret lives. It boasts a diversity of living things almost unequalled anywhere else in America. Thousands of plant and animal species coexist amongst the cypress and tupelo gum trees, surrounded by blackwater. Each year, hundreds of egrets, herons, and other waterfowl nest within feet of the walking path. You can explore this wild and otherwise inaccessible landscape on boardwalks, bridges, and dikes.  
[http://www.magnoliaplantation.com/swamp\\_garden.html](http://www.magnoliaplantation.com/swamp_garden.html)

**Daily** You don't have to travel far to experience the beauty and adventure of Berkeley County, South Carolina's own Cypress Gardens! Beautiful Cypress Gardens has been a preferred group and family destination since 1931. Visitors from all over the country come to experience this unique and exciting attraction, which has been featured in numerous national magazines. 3030 Cypress Gardens Road, Moncks Corner, SC 29461 | Phone: 843-553-0515  
<http://www.cypressgardens.info>

## January in the Garden

### General

Have your soil tested for lawns and spring gardens.

Plan herb garden now; then order seeds as soon as possible.

Cut back browned perennials.

Plan garden layout.

Study seed catalogs; order now for spring and summer planting.

Prepare beds for spring planting; remember to add compost, manure or other organic matter!

Replenish mulch to protect roots and tender plants; mulch to make vacant beds appear tended.

Water gardens during periods of inadequate rainfall. This will reduce damage to plants during a cold snap.

Remove dead flowers from and around camellia bushes to prevent camellia petal blight.

Apply aluminum sulfate to hydrangeas to obtain blue flowers; treat with lime for pink flowers if this was not done in the fall.

Deep water plants before a hard freeze.

Force spring bulbs for early blooms indoors.

Mist houseplants to maintain humidity.

### LAWNS

**Mowing:** Cut back ornamental grasses to 6-8 inches above the ground. Edge the lawn. Even when dormant runners that stretch onto the sidewalk, driveway, and beds can be trimmed.

**Special Care:** Treat broad-leaf winter weeds with post-emergent herbicide.

### VEGETABLES & FRUITS

**Planting:** Sow seeds indoors for spring gardens. Start seeds for tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers inside. Plant garden peas and mustard mid-month. Plant asparagus crowns. Plant fruit and nut trees, as well as blueberries. Sow dill and chive seeds now through March. Set out transplants of broccoli, brussel sprouts, and cabbage late in the month. Plant sugar snap seeds and other edible podded peas now.

**Fertilizing:** Fertilize established asparagus and strawberries. Mulch strawberries and order additional plants.

**Pruning:** Prune muscadine and other grapevines.

**Special care:** Spray fruit trees with dormant oil to control mites and scales. Do this on a day when the temperature will be at least 45 degrees for 24 hours.

### TREES & SHRUBS

**Planting:** Plant / transplant ornamental trees and shrubs. Consider mature size. Choose varieties recommended for the Pee Dee area. While selecting a spot for a new shrub, remember that an area sunny now may be in the shade when deciduous trees are in leaf. Root hardwood cuttings, i.e., azaleas, camellias, hollies, forsythias, crape myrtles, flowering quince, old-fashion roses. Prepare beds for roses now for planting later, select location that is well drained and receives at least 6 hours of sun per day.

**Pruning:** Wait until spring to prune plants that are damaged by freezes. Extent of the damage can be better assessed at that time.

### FLOWERS

**Planting:** Plant seeds of cool-season annuals (larkspur, sweet peas, poppies). Sow seeds of slower growing annuals (ageratum, petunias, begonias) indoors. Force bulbs indoors now. Plan changes and additions to your garden and then order seeds and plants.

**Fertilizing:** Continue feeding pansies every two weeks with liquid fertilizer and water regularly. Feed spring bulbs with 5-10-10 or bulb food when leaves appear.

**Pruning:** Deadhead pansies to encourage more growth.

**Houseplants:** The most common reason that houseplant leaves turn yellow or drop is too little light. Be careful to water correctly: most plants like to be slightly dry between waterings. Look for spider mites, scale, and mealybugs. Treat as indicated.

## What to Do with Your Christmas Tree After Christmas

The packages have been unwrapped, the carols sung and Christmas dinner is now just a sweet memory. It's time to start packing away the ornaments and garland. And it's also time to decide what to do with your Christmas tree.

Most cities will pick up Christmas trees along with your regular trash, but before you haul it out to the curb consider some better uses for your old tree.

### Offer your tree to the birds

If you have a yard, why not turn your Christmas tree into a winter-time feast for the birds and squirrels?

- Take the tree outside, then smear the branches with creamy peanut butter and/or a solid white vegetable shortening like Crisco™. (Your local big box store is a great place to get both in bulk without spending a lot.)
- Press or sprinkle bird seed, dried fruit, raisins, popcorn or nuts onto the sticky branches. (TIP: Spread newspaper or used wrapping paper under the tree while you "decorate" it to help catch the extra seed or other food, so you can reuse it on other branches.)
- If you have pinecones left over from your Christmas decorations, smear them with peanut butter, roll in the seeds, fruit or nuts and then tie them onto branches with leftover Christmas ribbon. (Don't use the scented pinecones sold in craft stores. The chemicals used on them can be toxic to birds and small animals.)
- As animals eat their feast, add more to the tree. Kids love watching the birds and other visitors, and might want to keep a list of who visits their tree this winter.

### Give it back to the earth

With some basic [garden tools](http://www.catalogs.com/garden-yard.html) [http://www.catalogs.com/garden-yard.html], you can turn that old tree into a boon for your yard and garden.

- Cut off large branches to use as an "igloo" over tender perennials. Use the natural curve of the branch to create a dome that will protect the plants from snow weight, while still allowing light and water in.
- If your soil is alkaline soil (a common problem in most of the Western U.S.), work needles into the ground or your compost pile to help lower the pH of your soil.
- Use loose needles and small branches as mulch around plants. Contrary to popular myth, pine needle mulch won't hurt plants that don't need acidic soil. The amount leaching from the needles used as mulch is minimal. But the needles and small branches do a great job at keeping away some damaging insects and they stay in place well during rain. Regular bark mulch floats!

### Stay warm!

The trunk of your Christmas tree makes great firewood. Use a saw to chop it up into easy-to-handle lengths and add it to your winter wood pile. Store dried needles, small branches and pinecones in a box to use as fire starters.

If you don't have a fireplace, give the cut wood to a neighbor or friend who uses wood to help heat their home. Pine, spruce and fir all burn well once the wood is well-dried.

Or share the warmth by donating the tree to a company which turns old Christmas trees into sharable power for the local grid.

## **Enjoy the scents of Christmas well into winter**

Save some of your pine needles to use in potpourri. Mix the pine needles with dried orange peel, whole cloves and a dash of essential oils for a sweet scent for closets and drawers.

## **Your tree, reused**

No matter which option you choose, you'll feel better knowing that your Christmas tree is still giving back for months to come. Now go spread the word before your neighbor's trees end up in the trash!

*Permission granted to use information obtained from:*

[www.catalogs.com](http://www.catalogs.com)

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## **A Gardener's Tips for Curing the Winter Blues**

Sue Bucher

Adams County Master Gardener

Activities for the Winter Months:

- It is a good time to clean and repair your garden tools. Check the rototiller, lawn mower and sharpen tools.
- Transplant and maintain your houseplants. Divide some of your plants to start as gifts for upcoming holidays such as Easter and Mother's Day. Starting African violets from leaf cuttings is an easy skill to learn. Select a leaf of medium size, slide your finger down the leaf stem and push down at the base. The stem should break away from the parent plant. Leave the stem on the leaf, and dip the stem in rooting powder. Insert the stem at an angle into the soil mix. Place the leaf and pot in a plastic bag, blow in some air and tie it shut. Keep the bag in bright light but not direct sun. If you see mold or moisture in the bag, open it for a few hours to let the excess water evaporate. The stem will root in about a month. When the leaves are an inch long open the bag. In 6 to 8 weeks small leaves will form at the base of the leaf. When they get to be half the size of the mother leaf, carefully separate them from the mother leaf and repot the plants individually. The plants should blossom in six months, if given bright light, warm temperatures and fertilizer.
- Build a bird feeder or purchase one. Watching birds in the winter is a great activity for the whole family. Buy an inexpensive bird identification book, which will make this activity even more fun. Try putting out different birdseed mixes to see whether different birds come to feed.
- Consider purchasing or even building an "Indoor Grow Lab" that will allow you to start plants from seeds, propagate root cuttings, raise flowering foliage and vegetable plants, force plants to flower and experiment with how plants respond to light. Instructions for building a lab are available at the Extension Office or library, if you are handy with woodworking tools. The cost will probably be \$100 - \$150.
- Visit a local nursery and drink in the beauty of what is growing and blooming.

