



FROM THE GROUND UP FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

November 2015

“Sowing The Seeds Of Love For Gardening”

<http://www.florencecountymastergardeners.org>

From the Potting Bench,

November newsletter.

It's been a busy time since last month's newsletter. We had a good time with the Plant O'Lanterns. Mine is now ready for the compost bin, minus the pansies and coleus which rooted and will be transplanted to the garden. I don't often think of my backyard as a Winter Destination but there is a flock of robins that certainly do. It's great to live in a climate where you can garden 10 months of the year.



The November meeting is one you should certainly plan to attend. Candy will be teaching us how to make seed tapes. She will provide all the materials; you won't have to bring a thing. Remember the November meeting will be held on the 16th at the Clemson Extension Office at 6:30. If you are interested in saving your own seeds to use in making seed tapes you may want to go the Clemson website and look at Seed Saving, <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic> for some valuable information. Please save seeds for both our seed packets and for planting for the Discovery Day project.

The November meeting is also the date set for the drawing for the small Gardening Bear. Tickets are \$1 each and will be sold at the meeting. The drawing will be held at the end of the meeting. All tickets will remain in the drawing for the large Gardening Bear which will be held at the Christmas Party on December 21.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting on November 16.

Christine

An Ode To Compost

The day is warm, still young and bright.
I'm out of work while still daylight!
I rush back home to check my bin
and see what sort of shape it's in.

I grab my fork and lift the lid
To see what time and hard work did.
I've thrown in leaves, and grass and twigs
Veggie peels and rotten figs.

There's no bad smell, so that is good.
But I still see leaves and bits of wood.
It's not done, oh no, not yet.
It will be soon, on that I'd bet.

So I start digging through the pile.
I know that this will take a while.
There's lot's of stuff, at least a ton.
I'm lucky I think this is fun.

Otherwise this would just be work
To be avoided or to shirk.
But it's good exercise for me,
And the compost that I get is free!

I plunge my fork into the leaves;
I shift my grip and then I heave!
What comes out just can't be beat:
Four tines full of hoary heat!

Actinomycetes makes the scene:
Bacteria that's white, not green.
It's filamentous fibers grow
through every leaf and blade I've mowed.

This thermophilic power play
By this bacteria night and day
Drives up the inner temperature
To kill bad things just like Pasteur.

Lifting here and tossing there
The compost sailing through the air
From full bin 1 to empty 2
Mixes oxygen all through.

This helps wee beasties to respire
and build more heat in my dark fire.
They work alchemically even faster
to make soil like an earth spellcaster.

After 30 minutes muscles hurt
from turning waste into new dirt.
So I decide to pack it in
and cover up my compost bin.

One more week and compost's done
Then I can shoot the starting gun
And get my veggies all to race
To be the first into my face.

By Robert White

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Volunteer Hours

You can now log your volunteer hours online at <http://www.clemson.edu/cemg/login.php> If you do not have Username and Password, contact Simon Carraway at swcarraway@gmail.com and he can assign you a username and password.

Membership Dues

Just a reminder, Master Gardener dues are due in January. Dues are \$10 and if you would like to pay ahead for time, you can contact Shelby McCormick at 843-621-3130 smccormick5@sc.rr.com or pay at the November or December meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS

39th Annual Camden Candlelight Tour of Homes

Saturday, December 5, 2015 - 3:00pm to 8:00pm

Home tours will take place between 3:00 and 8:00pm and will include some of Camden's most elegant homes.

There will be a variety of activities, wonderful restaurants, hotels and shopping in Camden

<http://www.cityofcamden.org/events/39th-annual-candlelight-tour-homes>

Christmas Open House at Kalmia Gardens

Sunday, 06 December, 2015

03:00 PM - 05:00 PM

Christmas Open house with the Hart House naturally decorated by the Darlington County Master Gardeners. This wonderful event will give you plenty of ideas on how to use your own garden plants to decorate your house.

**Riverbanks Botanical Gardens
Natural Holiday Wreaths**

Saturday December 12

10:00am-12:00pm

Using fresh greens, seed pods and natural accents, you can create unique decorations for the holidays. This workshop will cover the basics of how to use natural materials, and everyone will make a fresh wreath during the workshop. We recommend bringing a pair of pruners or sturdy scissors to the workshop.

Cost: \$25 per person per class.

**Moore Farms Botanical Garden
Wreath Wonderland**

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Registration: \$30 per person

Add a fresh holiday wreath to your home to add that festive touch for the season. In this class, you'll learn how to create exquisite wreaths from the unique greenery, berries and dried materials found right here at Moore Farms Botanical Garden. Your beautiful creation then goes home with you!

For more information, please contact Rebecca Turk at rturk@moorefarmsbg.org

Winter Garlands

Saturday, December 19, 2015

9:30 am to 2:00 pm

Registration: \$35 per person

Add natural beauty to your holiday display with handcrafted garlands by using fresh greenery such as cypress, arborvitae and magnolia. In this class, you'll learn the steps to turn unassuming branches and foliage into beautiful pieces of festive cheer. Come create a fragrant and decorative display for the season.

December in the Garden

GENERAL

Turn your compost pile, and continue to add fruit and vegetable matter.

Sprinkle wood ashes in compost pile or in vegetable and flower gardens.

Prune grapevines and fruit trees.

Gather greenery for holiday decorations.

Mulch trees, shrubs, and bedding plants when dry. They should receive 1 inch of water weekly.

Plant trees and shrubs.

Fill bird feeders and bird baths.

Keep tulip bulbs in the refrigerator until January.

Make sure powdered or granular chemicals are protected from moisture. Keep the labels intact for proper identification.

Keep liquid chemicals sealed tightly and stored in a cool, dry place that is protected from freezing temperatures and excessive heat. Keep all chemicals out of the reach of children.

LAWNS

Planting: You may still overseed your lawn in early December with rye grass seed.

Mowing: Mow cool-season grasses as needed.

Special Care: Wild artichoke, Florida betony, skullcap, or rattlesnake weed should be controlled in the fall and winter through the use of herbicides.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

Planting: Plant fruit trees, vines, and shrubs. Sow lettuce and other greens in cold frames for winter use. Place orders for fruit and nut trees, blueberries and brambles.

Pruning: Prune grapevines and fruit trees. Pinch back windowsill herbs.

Special care: Review the last growing season. Start a garden diary: record crops for rotation, insect outbreaks, varieties planted and how they performed. This can help to prevent problems next year.

TREES & SHRUBS

Planting: Continue planting trees and shrubs. Select and plant camellias while they are in bloom. Transplant deciduous and ornamental trees and shrubs. Choose evergreens to fill in empty spots in your landscape.

Irrigation: Water as needed. Well-watered trees and shrubs have more protection against winter injury. Don't forget to keep warm water in your Christmas tree stand.

Special Care: Remove bagworm cocoons from evergreens and destroy. Check camellias for tea scale, and treat with dormant oil when temperatures are between 45°F and 85°F for at least 24 hours.

FLOWERS

Planting: Plant spring bulbs. Plant bulbs for inside forcing. Divide ferns and apply compost when replanting. Sow seeds of gomphrena, Johnny-Jump-Ups, nasturtiums, alyssum, calendulas, gaillardia, sweet peas, stocks directly into prepared beds.

Fertilizing: Fertilize winter annuals with a complete fertilizer, using 1 lb. per 100 sq. ft.

Irrigation: Water all newly-planted items well during dry periods.

Special Care: Mulch after you weed the beds for winter. Protect tender perennials with thick mulch of straw. Check greenhouse plants and houseplants for mealybugs, spider mites, and white flies and treat. Cut back perennials after frost has browned their tops.

Winter Gardening Tips

Winter is a good time to prune deciduous trees. Once the foliage has dropped, it's easier to get a look at the branching structure and spot any potential problems. Richard Eaton, an arborist with [The Care of Trees](#), an AHS partner and a national tree care company, shares the following tips for pruning small or recently planted deciduous trees:

- Prune out any diseased or broken limbs.
- Remove branches that cross over one another.
- Remove branches that go against the flow of the tree's natural habit (i.e. upward pointing branches on a weeping tree).
- Avoid pruning branches completely flush with the trunk or major limbs; make cuts slightly above the junction point, leaving the branch "collar" intact.
- Don't use wound sealants; trees have a natural ability to heal themselves.
- Try not to disrupt the natural architecture of the tree.
- Be conservative; cut only branches you are confident need to be removed.
- For safety, use tools that allow you to reach up into the canopy, such as pole pruner, rather than climbing up on a ladder. If you need a ladder, says Eaton, it's probably time to call a certified arborist.



Cutting Back Ornamental Grasses

Ornamental grasses such as maiden grass (*Miscanthus* spp), river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), and fountain grass (*Pennisetum* spp.) often remain attractive in winter, even though they are completely dormant. In winter, their foliage turns from summer greens to shades of wheat and almond. They are especially striking when contrasted with evergreens.

There are two rules regarding when to cut back ornamental grasses. The first is that it is up to the gardener to decide when they are no longer attractive. Snow, sleet, and freezing rain can ruin their effect. Once this happens, the time has come to cut them back to a few inches above the ground.

The second rule for cutting back grasses is that the annual clipping must occur before new growth starts in the spring. And it's a good idea to trim them before plants around them start to awaken so as to avoid trampling the tender shoots of emerging bulbs and perennials.



Forcing branches for winter bouquets

The flowers of some shrubs and trees can be "forced," induced to bloom, indoors while the winter weather outside continues. Some of the easiest to force include pussy willows (*Salix* spp), flowering quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*), and forsythias (*Forsythia* spp.).

Among the pussy willows, the Japanese pussy willow (*Salix chaenomeloides*), a small tree that reaches about 18 feet, has three-inch long, fuzzy pink flowers known as "catkins". The black pussy willow grows to 10 feet and has purple-black catkins.

Flowering quince is a six to 10 foot shrub with flowers that are usually orange-red. There are also pink and white flowering forms. Forsythias come in many shapes and shades of yellow. One of the earliest to bloom is called early forsythia (*Forsythia ovata*), which blooms from March to April.

To force the branches of any one of these shrubs, cut them in January or February. Submerge the branches in tepid water overnight. The next day, place the branches upright in a container of water, making sure to cut off any buds from the parts of the stem below water in the vase. Leave the branches in a cool, dimly-lit room and change the water daily until the buds start to swell. Then, move them to a brightly-lit room and enjoy the colorful display!

Take Stock of Your Garden's Design in Late Winter

Winter is the best time to take stock of the permanent elements of your landscape--the lawn, paths, and evergreens. As the backbone of your landscape's design, these parts of the garden interact with deciduous plants during the growing season.

If you find that your yard looks well-stocked, but pretty much the same, winter and summer, you may wish to make room for a small shrub or tree to add excitement with spring or summer flowers. Lilacs (*Syringa* spp), viburnums, and hydrangeas are flowering shrubs that come in many sizes and colors. Stewartias (*Stewartia* spp.) and the 'Forest Pansy' redbud (*Cercis 'Forest Pansy'*) are excellent small flowering trees. Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) put on a glorious show in spring when the leaves emerge and in fall when they turn a dazzling scarlet.

After the first killing frost, does your garden seem empty or lacking in definition? Then look first to the lawn--it may be that its size outweighs other elements in your yard. If that is the case, consider adding planting beds--a larger one in front of the house, beds around existing trees to link them together, or a bed around the periphery of your lawn. Incorporate plants that provide winter interest into these beds.

If you don't have any evergreens, plan to add some this coming spring, keeping their ultimate sizes in mind. The choices are almost limitless, but if deer are a problem in your area, some evergreens they don't eat are plum yew (*Cephalotaxus* spp.) and boxwoods (*Buxus* spp.).



Wildlife in the Garden

Wildlife adds life and color to a garden that is especially welcome in late winter. Now is the time to take stock of the wildlife-friendly elements already in place in your garden and plan to add more in the next growing season to provide for wildlife throughout the long winter.

Think about adding the sorts of plants that invite wildlife into your garden—generally ones that produce food or shelter. Consider those that go to seed or produce berries at different times to keep edibles at hand throughout the dormant season. Natives such as goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) and coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.) have evolved in tandem with the birds and small animals of your region. Allow their seedheads to stand over winter.

Thick or thorny shrubs and evergreens are safe places for cover or nesting. And layers of vegetation—stepping down from trees to shrubs to herbaceous ground covers—provide shelter. Be sure to provide a source of water, too. And, most important of all, try not to use synthetic chemical pesticides, which may harm wildlife.

Permission granted to use information obtained from:

http://www.ahs.org/gardening_q_and_a/winter_gardening_tips.htm