



Horticulture Happenings

An Iowa State University Extension Newsletter for Mid-Iowa Gardeners

January 2005 Vol. 2 No. 1

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IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Helping you become your best.

Comments and suggestions are
always appreciated.

Attention Master Gardeners:

Article submission may be counted
towards fulfilling Master Gardener
community service volunteer hours!

A New Year's Resolution...again



Every year about this time most people make the typical resolutions: Lose weight; Drink more water; Eat more fruits and vegetables; Get at least 8 hours of sleep a night; and Exercise more; etc.

But many gardeners will make their resolutions sounding something like this: Try all the new plants for 2005; Keep the weeds down; Don't plant those melons that didn't ripen again; Keep the weeds down sooner; Plant more/less tomatoes; Keep the weeds down before they go to seed; Add compost to the soil; Keep the weeds down before they need to be mowed; Divide and move crowded perennials; Keep the weeds down before they need to be baled.

Moral: If this sounds like your list of resolutions for the New Year, you may need to consider cutting down on your new plant and seed catalog orders for better maintenance.

How many of you will be eating salsa, homemade from your garden, while watching the bowl games this month? Get ready to participate in our first annual Mid-Iowa Master Gardener salsa contest to be held next fall. You may have the winning recipe! We will have at least two categories Mild and ON FIRE! — watch this column for further details.

One of our Master Gardener Interns was feeling rather blue lately, due to the lack of sun and soil, so she wrote an article for this newsletter on "Over-wintering the Master Gardener." Be sure to catch her thoughts on page 4.

We are excited to be starting an organization of Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners this month. Be sure to watch for upcoming projects from this enthusiastic group! Have a great New Year!

Yvonne Nilles
Extension Horticulturalist
Serving Hamilton, Humboldt,
Webster & Wright counties

New group to be formed!!

Anyone who has completed the Master Gardener training is invited to attend the first organizational meeting of Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners to be held on Tuesday, Jan. 11, at the Webster County Extension Office at 6:30 pm.

Election of officers & program planning will be held. Please plan to attend this important meeting to share your thoughts and become a charter member!



MID-IOWA AREA EVENTS CALENDAR

Jan 3...Hamilton Co. 4-H Horticulture meeting, 7 pm, Hamilton Co. Extension Office. Program: **"Garden Vegetables: 2004 Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Winners"**

Jan 4...Hamilton Co. 4-H Horticulture meeting, 7 pm, Hamilton Co. Extension Office. Program: **"Garden Vegetables: 2004 Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Winners"** (Repeat of Jan 3) Please attend whichever date is most convenient.

Jan 6...Fort Dodge Area Gardeners Webster Co. Ext. Off. – 7 pm

Jan 11...Mid-Iowa Master Gardeners *A new group to be formed!!* Anyone who has completed Master Gardener training is invited to attend. 6:30 pm at Webster Co. Extension Office. Election of officers & program planning will be held.

Jan 20...Fort Dodge Fed Garden Club Izaak Walton, 1:00 pm

Jan 26...Town & Country Garden Club of Webster City will hold a Soup Luncheon Potluck at noon at the Depot. Guests are welcome to attend.

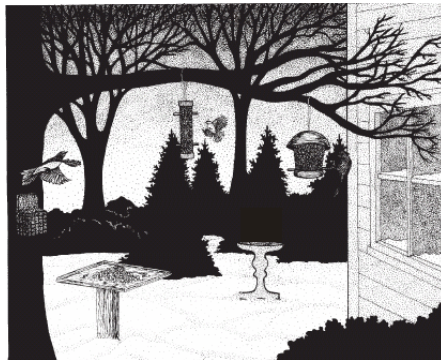
Jan 27...Mid-Iowa Horticulture Council 5:30 pm, Webster County Extension Office.

For further details on these events, call 515-832-9597

Submit your articles & events to:

Horticulture Happenings
ISU Extension Hamilton County
735 Second Street
Webster City, IA 50595-1436

Phone: 515-832-9597
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E-mail: ynilles@iastate.edu



Feeding the Birds

"As winter arrives in Iowa, many wild animals depart or hibernate. Birds which feed on non-dormant insects and worms or need water migrate as the food disappears and the water freezes. But many birds, especially those that feed on seeds or dormant insects remain in Iowa...They exist wherever there is accessible food, adequate shelter, and a ready source of water. Where these requirements are met, birds are often the most visible and animated spectacles of winter." (IAN 602)

Common songbirds that over-winter in Iowa include: cardinals, blue jays, cedar waxwing, American goldfinch, Pine siskin, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, and the white-breasted nuthatch.

Do you wish to attract birds to your yard? By providing the essentials of space, food, shelter and water, many Iowans successfully lure birds to their back yards. A discarded Christmas tree can serve to provide cover, and along with water and feed may encourage feathered visitors.

For additional information on feeding birds in the winter, visit your local extension office and ask for the publications: PM 1351d: *"Managing Iowa Habitats: Attracting Birds to Your Yard"* and IAN 602: *"Iowa Wildlife Series - Iowa Winter Birds"*.

These publications are on-line at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1351D.pdf>

and

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/IAN602.pdf>

RECIPE CORNER



Recipe from the past—

SIMMERING POTPOURRI

3 oz. whole cloves
3 oz. whole allspice
3 oz. dried, chopped orange peel
5 to 6 cinnamon sticks, broken in pieces

Mix cloves, allspice, and orange peel together.

For simmering pot: Place small amount of mixture in the pot, cover with water. Add more water as needed. Save and reuse by keeping mixture refrigerated between uses until fragrance is diminished.

For cider: Use 1 ounce of mixture in 1 gallon of cider. Heat to just below boiling point. Reduce heat, cover pot and simmer for 30 minutes.

Purple ribbon winner, Junior Division, 1987 Hamilton County Fair, Amy Erickson, Boone Crafters 4-H Club – from the *4-H and Friends Cookbook*.

Flower of the Month –

Carnation



Dianthus caryophyllus
(dy-AN-thus kar-ee-oh-FIL-us)

January's flower is the carnation. *Dianthus* is the genus name, and is from the Greek word *dios*, which means "divine" and *anthos*, which means "flower".

The common name Pinks is attributed to the edges of the petals, which look as cut by pinking shears.

Sweet Williams are the biennial pinks, and the name may have come from the French word *oeillet*, "eye", which became "Willy" and then "William".

- from *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names*, by Dianna Wells.

Meet a Master Gardener...

Rich Rethman



Rich Rethman, Eagle Grove, is an active Master Gardener in Wright County.

Rich Rethman of Eagle Grove is our featured Mid-Iowa Master Gardener for the month of January. A Wright County Master Gardener since 2002, Rich has been active in volunteer work and various projects.

Rich's wife Shelly, who recently completed her Master Gardener training, was accompanied by Rich to all of her Mid-Iowa Master Gardener training sessions this fall. He even volunteered to work as a guide during the Saturday ISU on-campus training day at Ames for our Mid-Iowa Master Gardener students.

Over the years, Rich has entered his garden vegetables in the horticulture division at the Wright County Junior Fair, and has won many blue ribbons for his efforts. He is also well known for the many different types of peppers he has grown.

Hats off to Rich for his dedication to horticulture and the art of gardening!

Recycling Christmas Trees

by Richard Jauron, Department of Horticulture
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

Iowans will buy several hundred thousand Christmas trees this holiday season. After the holidays, there are several ways to dispose of or recycle your tree. (Before recycling your Christmas tree, remove all tinsel and ornaments.) Some suggestions are: Place the tree in the yard or garden for use by birds and other wildlife. The branches provide shelter from strong winds and cold. Food can be supplied by hanging fruit slices, seed cakes, suet bags, or strings of cranberries or raisins on the tree's branches. You can also smear peanut butter and seeds in pine cones and hang them in the tree.

Prune off the branches and place the boughs over perennials as a winter mulch.

Chip the tree and use as a mulch around trees, shrubs, or in perennial flower beds.

If you can't use the tree yourself, contact local government offices, such as the Public Works Department, or your sanitation service. Most communities have some type of Christmas tree disposal program. Some have central collection points, others collect the trees at curbside.

Conservation groups may be another option. Some hunting and fishing groups collect trees and use them to provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

Don't burn your Christmas tree in a fireplace or wood stove. Dry, evergreen branches literally explode when burned and could cause a house fire. Also, burning the tree may contribute to the buildup of creosote and lead to a flue fire.

For many, selecting and decorating the Christmas tree is one of the highlights of the holiday season, and then after the holidays to recycle the tree and prolong its usefulness.

This article originally appeared in the 12/5/2003 Horticulture & Home Pest News.

Over-Wintering Master Gardeners & Master Gardener Interns

by Lori Runkle, Humboldt County Master Gardener Intern



Just as many of our outdoor plants react to the arrival of winter through their seed production, patient dormancy, or timely death; Master Gardeners and Master Gardener Interns also react to the nips and tucks of Jack Frost's arrival on the Iowa winter scene. Autumn preparations and clean up in the garden can help ensure the continuity and health of our beloved chlorophyll-filled friends, but now it is time to tend to ourselves. Keeping the Master Gardener and the Master Gardener Intern in tip-top mental and physical shape over an Iowa winter requires more than just fertilizer if we are to thrive, and thriving, not simply tolerating our low-light conditions, is always the goal of a successful Master Gardener or Intern.

The first of many winter blights that can be prevented by routine maintenance is dry skin. Winter wind strips human skin of moisture, so apply a moisturizer much more liberally than you ever dared apply fertilizer in your garden. Applying moisturizer immediately after a shower or bath, when a gardener's skin is still dewy, will leave the gardener's skin hydrated and glowing. Just as an aphid sucks moisture from a delicate flower's shriveled leaves, winter winds will give Master Gardeners and Interns the *dry-flakey-scratchies*. Vulnerable areas for this uncomfortable condition include the middle section of the back, also known as that part of the back that is most difficult to reach and successfully itch by the gardener him or herself. The rule of "moisturizing infrequently but deep" does not apply here. Forget what you learned in class, and slather on the moisturizer after every bath or shower.

In addition to moisturizer, don't forget to use a body scrub or exfoliator at least once a week. When gardeners exfoliate, they slough off the top layer of old skin, thereby revealing the new and fresh skin underneath. Just as old and rotting plant material can be composted or burned, old human skin should be sloughed off and washed down the drain at least once a week during the winter season. Believe me, you will feel the difference!

Winter takes a toll on skin, but it is especially brutal to cuticles, elbows, and lips. Treat your cuticles, elbows, and lips as if they were experiencing drought-like conditions. Chapstick and hand cream should be purchased in bulk, preferably on a summer sale, in the months of August or September, and stored until the winter weather arrives. Applying each product liberally, to the proper areas of the body, 2 to 5 times daily will prevent conditions known as cracked lips, dried elbows, and hanging nails. Protect these important bits from the cold, and be ready to welcome summer with a smile and a wave.

Grow lights work for both human gardeners and their plants because we both need the sun's light to thrive. Tolerating low levels of light throughout the winter is no fun for gardeners or for their houseplants. That is why companies like Gaiam have created the *HappyLite Deluxe Light Bath*. And, according to Gaiam's web site, this Happy Lite helps alleviate light-deficiency symptoms — whether from winter days or seasonal changes. Ask yourself and your houseplants, do we want to tolerate low light conditions, or do we want to thrive?

Although Iowa's winters create low light conditions for all life forms living within the state's boundaries, dangerous rays from the sun do make their way to human skin. That is why it is wise for Master Gardeners and Interns to use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on a daily basis to avoid annoying sun wilt and malignant melanoma too.

Stay active and physically fit in the winter! In no research ever conducted on physical activity and Iowa gardeners does it say, "Low levels of activity and a high-calorie diet are the key to successfully over-wintering." Having stated this important lack of research to support sofa-potato winter behavior, it is important to note that a Caribbean, Hawaiian, or Fijian vacation with plenty of glasses of rum punch does wonders for a wind-chilled and snow-whipped Iowa Master Gardener or Intern. Consider starting a vacation fund for such a holiday. Your houseplants may want to accompany you back to their roots/homelands, but try to discourage this longing for the native soil. Viewing their native kin thriving in ideal growing conditions will not help their morale when they return to Iowa's low-light winter conditions.

Think positive! According to several credible sites on the Internet, Alaska has the highest suicide rate in the nation, perhaps due to the state's long, frigid, dark, and depressing winter. Iowa's suicide rate is very near the national average; however, if during your over-wintering experience, you begin to feel yourself wilt or droop; remember that lemon yellow crocus bloom in March. When you can't wait to sink your green thumbs into your neutral, base, or acidic soils; close your eyes and bask under a grow light with your houseplants and sing the following song, "The sun will come out tomorrow..."

Seed Catalogs

...Gardeners are already making plans for 2005. Gardeners can purchase seeds at local garden centers and mail-order companies. Most mail-order seed companies will automatically send catalogs to individuals who have purchased products from their business in recent years. New customers can obtain catalogs by mail or computer via the web. Most catalogs are free.

For your convenience, the mailing addresses and Web sites of several mail-order seed companies are provided. (No endorsement of companies is intended in this listing, nor is criticism implied of similar companies that are not shown.)

W. Atlee Burpee & Co.

300 Park Avenue
Warminster, Pennsylvania 18974
www.burpee.com

The Cook's Garden

P.O. Box 1889
Southampton, Pennsylvania 18966
www.cooksgarden.com

Harris Seeds

P.O. Box 24966
Rochester, New York 14624
www.harriseseeds.com

Johnny's Selected Seeds

955 Benton Avenue
Winslow, Maine 04901
www.johnnyseeds.com

J. W. Jung Seed Co.

335 South High Street
Randolph, Wisconsin 53957
www.jungseed.com

Nichols Garden Nursery

1190 Old Salem Road NE
Albany, Oregon 97321
www.nicholsgardennursery.com

George W. Park Seed Co.

1 Parkton Avenue
Greenwood, South Carolina 29647
www.parkseed.com

Pinetree Garden Seeds

P.O. Box 300
New Gloucester, Maine 04260
www.superseeds.com

Seed Savers Exchange

3094 North Winn Road
Decorah, Iowa 52101
www.seedsavers.org

Stokes Seeds

Box 548
Buffalo, New York 14240
www.stokeseeds.com

Territorial Seed Company

P.O. Box 158
Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424
www.territorial-seed.com

Thompson and Morgan

P.O. Box 1308
Jackson, New Jersey 08527
www.thompson-morgan.com

Otis S. Twilley Seed Co.

121 Gary Road
Hodges, South Carolina 29653
www.twilleyseed.com

Veseys Seeds

P.O. Box 9000
Calais, Maine 04619
www.veseys.com