Can You Dig It?

Welcome once again to "Can You Dig It"....the Horticulture Newsletter from TCGC's Horticulture Committee.

It is hard to believe that we started this committee back in 2009 with the goals of sharing information on all things horticulture, offering workshops and small trips, encouraging TCGC participation in flower shows, and of course writing our newsletter. We hope you have enjoyed your time with us, and we promise to continue bringing you all the new information of the latest plants, changes in flower show rules (new NGC FS Handbook is to be published this year), interesting and fun workshops, and of course new issues of CYDI.

As we are now into a new year – 2017, I would like to thank our writers.....Jane Anderson, Bobbie Brittingham, Sherry Burke, Kim Eckert, Christie Hamilton, Mary Holston, Samantha McCall and Chloe Pitard....and retired, but always welcome back....Priscilla Thut. Also a deep appreciation and thanks goes out to Rebecca Gaffney for formatting this and all issues of CYDI. A great team.....many thanks from you editor, Trish!

I would also like to put out a request for new Horticulture Committee members. We would love to have you join our group as we are always looking for fresh faces and new ideas, so if you are interested, please let me know and I will be happy to go over what we do! We already have one new recruit....more welcome!

Thanks and think spring!
Trish, Editor

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Design & Layout.....Rebecca Gaffney

"Anytime" Amaryllis

❄ **Mary Holston**

Meaning and Symbolism of Amaryllis

Legend has it that the amaryllis – the stunning red flower we've come to associate with the holidays – began as a shy, timid nymph. Amaryllis fell deeply in love with Alteo, a shepherd with Hercules' strength and Apollo's beauty, but her affections were unrequited. Hoping that she could win him over by bestowing upon him the thing he desired most - a flower so unique it had never existed in the world before – Amaryllis sought advice from the oracle of Delphi.

Following his instructions, Amaryllis dressed in maiden's white and appeared at Alteo's door for 30 nights, each time piercing her heart with a golden arrow. When at last Alteo opened his door, there before him was a striking crimson flower, sprung from the blood of Amaryllis' heart. With this romantic – albeit tragic- tale as its beginning, it's not surprising that today the amaryllis has come to symbolize pride, determination and radiant beauty.

Background of the Amaryllis

Did you, like me, receive a beautiful amaryllis as a Christmas gift and love it but have no idea how to keep it alive and try to get it to bloom next year ? Well, with a little on-line research I found the answers to those questions. I hope they will be helpful to you and that you will try to work with your amaryllis during the year so you may enjoy it again next Christmas or anytime.

The amaryllis originated in South America's tropical regions and has the botanical name *Hippeastrum.* As you may know, this bulb is starting to rival the poinsettia as a floral choice for the holiday season.

Amaryllis are available in single-flowering, double flowering, and miniature varieties (cultivars). The spectacular, trumpet -shaped blooms are available in many colors including red, pink, orange, salmon, white and bi-colors.

Most people treat their amaryllis bulbs as "one-and-done" flowers and discard them after flowering. In truth, you can keep them year after year. Of all flowering bulbs, amaryllis are the easiest to bring to bloom.

Successful Re-blooming

The secret to successfully growing amaryllis is to keep the plants actively growing after they have finished blooming. With proper care this is possible.

Enjoy your amaryllis for the maximum time possible by placing it in a location with diffused light and cool indoor temperatures in the 60-degree Fahrenheit range. Try not to put it in direct sunlight to prolong the life of the flowers. Direct sunlight will destroy the blooms quickly. Keep it barely moist, and be careful not to wet the portion of the bulb that sticks above the soil.

Just Emerging

Seeing What is to Come

When your amaryllis flowers fade, don't worry. Just cut the flower stem off near the neck of the bulb being careful not to injure the leaves or any emerging flower stalks. The leaves are needed to replenish the bulb so it can bloom again next year. The bulb is depleted of minerals after flowering. When the stem starts to sag, cut it back to the top of the bulb. Water it enough to keep the soil most. Empty any excess water that drains from the pot as wet soil will promote root and bulb rot. Feed it with a water-soluble- houseplant fertilizer like Miracle Grow Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food every 7-14 days. Keep your amaryllis in the sunniest spot you have in your home. The more sun it gets the bigger the blooms will be later.

When all danger of frost is past (probably safely in May here on the Eastern Shore), acclimate the amaryllis to the outside by first placing it in shade or indirect light. (Don't transplant it to the soil, just keep it in its original pot.) Gradually, in 2-3 days, move it to a bright garden or bed where it will receive partial or full sun for at least 6 hours daily. Dig a hole and sink the pot into the soil. Keep fertilizing it with your water-soluble fertilizer monthly so it can build up nutrients in the leaves and bulb for flower production next year. Also, keep watering the plant during hot weather.

Bring your plant back indoors before the first frost

Amaryllis Photos
Trish Reynolds

in the fall. Although amaryllis do not require a resting period and will bloom if kept evergreen, the blooming time can be controlled by allowing the bulb to go through a resting or dormant period and then storing the dormant bulb at a temperature of 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. To induce dormancy, place the plant in a cool, semi-dark location (closet or basement) in late September and withhold water. Cut off the foliage when it turns brown. Then place the dormant bulb in a 50-55 degree Fahrenheit location for at least 8 to 12 weeks. Inspect the bulb periodically and bring it into the light to start the growth cycle again by watering the bulb and placing it in a well-lit 70-75 degree Fahrenheit location. Keep the potting soil moist, but not wet.

Usually one or more flower stalks appear first, but occasionally they are preceded by leaves. Flowers usually develop in about 4-6 weeks from a dormant bulb, so it can be timed to flower at Christmas or for Valentine's Day

Although there are several insects, mites and disease organisms that may attack amaryllis plants under greenhouse conditions, they are not as prevalent on amaryllis grown in homes. Proper watering and good sanitation practices will prevent most insect infestations as well as the development of diseases.

Poor Results??

If a plant produces leaves, but no flower stem, in a given year, continue to tend the plant so the leaves will feed the bulb for next year's flower. Some bulbs may not have the strength to produce the flowers each year.

If a bulb shows no green growth from forcing, use your fingers to squeeze the potted bulb below the dirt surface. If the bulb is not firm, it may have rotted and needs to be discarded. Rotting also can indicate that a bulb received too much watering during its cycle.

I hope with this information you will be able to have amaryllis every Christmas or Valentine's Day!

From the Potting Shed

❄ **Sherry Burke**

Stocking the Shed for Spring

The tease of warm days in January gives a nudge to thoughts of spring. Daffodils are starting to emerge and buds on some trees are swelling with the promise of the season ahead. It may be too early for actual planting, but something gardeners can do is to stock the potting shed. The wish list could be extensive, but a few basic things to have on hand include:

- Horticultural Oil. This is sold under the brand names of All Seasons or Neem and is also called dormant oil because it is used in the dormant season to knock out problems before they arrive. The purpose of this oil is to safely control mealybugs, red spider mite, aphids, scale and some diseases on trees and shrubs where there are predictable insects in early spring. The oil works by suffocating dormant insects and their eggs. The first spraying should be done in February, followed by another in March, before the buds on the trees open.
- Baking Soda. Equal to any purchased treatment for powdery mildew is this homemade recipe: one gallon of water, 2 tablespoons baking soda, a few drops of dishwashing soap and 2 tablespoons of horticultural oil. Combine in the sprayer and use where mildew problems occur, such as on zinnias, herbs or roses. This recipe does not cure black spot on roses.
- Espoma organic fertilizers. This company makes organic fertilizers for many specific uses. Bio-Tone is a good choice to use when setting out new plants, and Garden Tone adds nutrients to the vegetable garden. There is a large selection at Robin's Nest Garden Center in Easton.
- Leafgro. A bag of this "gardener's gold" will give you organic humus made of composted grass clippings and leaves which will add nutrients and organic matter to your garden. Place some in the hole when planting trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. Of course, if you have a compost bin and are making your own compost you do not need to buy Leafgro.

Trish's Potting Shed

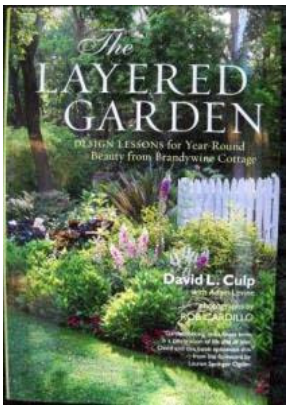
This list could go on and on. For more garden information, go to these useful web sites provided by the manufacturers of some of these products:

- www.espoma.com has a beautiful color newsletter with many good ideas,
- and www.bonide.com has a problem solver section where you can identify weeds, bugs and other problems in the garden. January is a great time for reading about gardening and setting goals for your spring garden.

Inspired by The Layered Garden

❄**Kim Eckert**

As a garden designer and plant enthusiast, I have collected a lot of gardening books over the years. One of my favorites is *The Layered Garden* by David L. Culp. Relatively new to my library (published in 2012), *The Layered Garden* speaks to my passion of glorious gardens that seamlessly transition from formal to informal outdoor rooms. David Culp and his partner, Michael, purchased a 1790's farmhouse with two acres in Pennsylvania in 1990. The hilltop house had great bones but, was in need of repair and the land was overrun with poison ivy, multiflora rose and honeysuckle. The site reminded him of his grandparents' farm near Pittsburgh that he visited as a young boy. As a garden designer, he could see the potential of the property he would later name Brandywine Cottage. In this book, David introduces the concept of layered gardens, walks you through his design at Brandywine Cottage and finally lists plants with seasonal interest.



David Culp describes the layered garden as beginning with a bed made up of a variety of plants with various shapes, textures and colors. The layers can include plants from the smallest trillium to the tallest canopy tree all complementing and contrasting with each other. In addition, each separate garden bed on the property is a layer unto itself... Finally, the topography of the land is another layer. It may seem overwhelming to view a garden this way at first. The concept of the layered garden seems complex. *The Layered Garden* allows you to take a journey with David, as he retraces his steps in designing the gardens at Brandywine Cottage.

As you walk through the design process with David, he teaches you how to create a layered garden using shapes, textures and color. The signature shape you choose for your gardens will aid in the transition from one area to another. As an example, if you choose a vertical shape, you can use plants, like Digitalis or Salvia, columns or an obelisk to carry you from one garden to another. One tip is to view your design or garden in black and white. Is it still interesting? Do the vertical lines carry you from one area to another? If so, you can move on to texture and color, using each one of these elements to create even more of a flow between gardens. The transitions between beds created by your signature shape, color palette and texture will provide gentle movement between the layered beds.

One design element that is often forgotten is time. David discusses time as a layer as well as those listed earlier. When designing a garden, it is important to consider each season. At Brandywine Cottage, which is in zone 6, the gardens have something to offer all year long. It is important to consider each bed, the interaction between beds and the general landscape in all seasons. In *The Layered Garden*, David lists some top performers for each season as well as those plants that offer something all year round. As we are in zone 7, the lists are very useful and offer a few surprises.

The Layered Garden is a beautifully illustrated and informative book. David Culp is a passionate plantsman and designer and this book will take you on an amazing journey through Brandywine Cottage. It is a great read in the winter and since the Cottage is in Pennsylvania and often open for tours, perhaps a visit in the spring would provide even more inspiration.

Editor's Note: I asked some of our writers to tell us about their Favorite Plants, for the winter, and in general. Here are their comments.

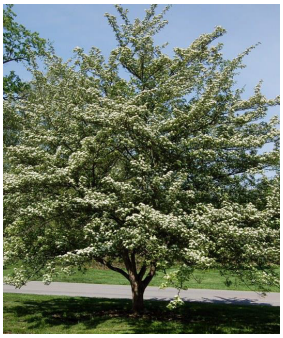
The King of Your Winter Garden

by Christie Hamilton

Well, our venerable editor asked for an article on my favorite plant. Here lies a problem. My favorite plant TODAY happens to be a showy flowering TREE with the most amazing red berries right now that will last for most of the winter, until the chickadees, cardinals, blue jays, and waxwings will dine on these softening fruits. The WINTER KING HAWTHORNE, *(Crataegus viridis)* will be the KING OF YOUR WINTER GARDEN! These red berries are SO WELCOME and spectacular in the winter landscape on days when all color seems to fall along a gray scale. (They also are a lasting and not-fragile floral design component.)

This is a cultivar that is disease resistant, has a profuse spring bloom, thus having year round interest. The gray barked tree is of moderate size…25-30 feet high, and tolerant of soils and conditions that are less than ideal. I happen to have a pair of these beauties, but I if I could manage a "landscape do-over," I would look to plant an 'allee' of these trees.

Photo, Christi Hamilton



Photo, Bower and Branch

Yellow in Winter

by Christie Hamilton

Christie also had a second recommendation, one that your editor loves as well. . .

Bulb Recommendation: *Eranthis hyemalis* – Winter Aconite. One of the earliest spring bulbs to flower is *Eranthis hyemalis*, the Winter- aconite. Every year it is a race with the snow drops to see who can be first. They are not uncommon, but you rarely find them in a retail shop. They are readily available by mail order.

The bulbs, actually tuberous rhizomes, look like little brown pebbles. It is recommended that you soak them overnight in water before you plant them in deciduous shade, under shrubs where they will not be disturbed. When they bloom they look like stemless buttercups, glowing in the dark winter garden.

Combine them with *Galanthus*, (snow drops) and *Crocus tommasinianus*, (the one crocus that squirrels do not eat) for a lovely spring picture. All of them are very hardy and trouble free. They would look especially lovely under a witch hazel.

Photo, Trish Reynolds

In my gardens snow drops do not truly naturalize. The clumps become larger, but I must dig and divide them if I want them to spread. *Eranthis*, on the other hand, truly do reseed. Over time you will find them in the grass and coming up in beds in various spots for a arming spring surprise.

There are *Eranthis* in the garden at the Talbot County Historical Society. mixed in with the Hellebores along the wall and spreading out into the grass. Look for them in February or March.

Near and Dear Favorites

by Jane Anderson

Photo, Jane Anderson

Two of my favorite plants are the common *Dendrathema Koreanum 'Sheffield'* (previously known as Chrysanthemum) and the more exotic cardoon *Cynara cardununculus. T*hey have become standards in my landscape and I recommend them both to you.

My love affair with "Sheffield Daisies" began with a plant exchange in Virginia. This pass along plant was in a quart sized pot, just the right size to travel to our old farmhouse on the Eastern Shore.

Without ceremony, I found a spot near the back door and heeled it into an old flowerbed. These lovely apricot single chrysanthemums bloom every September and have spread into a heavenly drift of blooms over the years.

Photo, Trish Reynolds

Pollinators of all kinds love them and, like asters, the Sheffield Daisies provide needed, late season nutrition and beauty. It never disappoints. It is late to start up in the spring and can be under- planted with spring bulbs or surround the base of trees or structures.

Photo, Trish Reynolds

This hardy plant will bloom for weeks, even through a freeze. They are drought tolerant and spread both by roots and by seed. The offspring are sometimes variant in color in shades from mauve to deep orange.

Photo, Jane Anderson

Jane's second favorite - *Cardoon cynara* is a relative of the artichoke and the thistle. They will create a dramatic accent in your landscape and provide an unusual side dish for your table. The leaves are nearly two feet long, silvery in color and fuzzy with deeply toothed edges. The leaves alone can produce a spectacular floral arrangement but the blooms are giant neon purple thistle heads. Fully opened blooms can be dried for lasting accents in Autumn floral bouquets.

On the Eastern Shore this plant will die back to the ground when hard freezes come but are sturdy enough to return with a flourish in the Spring. They create a stunning potted plant for the patio or pool as well.

The choke type flower heads are difficult to cook but the young stalks of the Cardoon have been considered a delicious staple in Mediterranean cuisine for centuries. It is prepared much like celery or asparagus. In Italy young cardoon stalks are peeled, cut into strips and tossed in olive oil, salt and pepper. Then they are baked and garnished with fresh Parmesan cheese.

Berries in the Winter Garden

by Chloe Pitard

My favorite plant is often the one in bloom right now. This is certainly true about Winterberry.

Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata* is native to most of the Eastern United good reason. You will notice its cheerful bright red berries this time of year in many places including along major highways.

It is a deciduous holly, and like most hollies it is dioecious. There are quite a few varieties; tall, small, large berries or small, even yellow berries. Most are shrubby and tend to sucker as they mature. You are sure to find one to fit your particular spot.

While it is common in the wild, the female plants, the ones with the berries, are seen much less often than the male plants. If you purchase some, you should get at least one male plant for the most prolific crop of berries. Winterberry is happy to grow in moist places but will do well in any regular sunny garden site. It is quite hardy and generally disease free. For most of the year it is a common looking green shrub. Late in the fall it comes into its own when the berries ripen. It is often sold as cut branches and used in Christmas decorations. There are a number of branches decorating the TCGC garden at Five Corners. A great plant!

Photo, Anne Jelich

A Heart-filled Valentine's Day Design

❄Samantha McCall

Valentine's Day is fast approaching and who wants the calories from a box of chocolates? That's why I recommend fresh flowers. They don't go on your hips and they offer days more pleasure than the fleeting taste of a chocolate truffle.

Not that there's anything wrong with chocolate!

Here's a fun, calorie-free twist on a fresh floral design that isn't the same old dozen red roses we've all seen a million times before.

Inspiration for this design came from a hyacinth grass basket, shaped like a heart, that I found at Pier One. As soon as I saw it, I knew the possibilities would be nearly limitless. The heart shapes can also be found at craft stores or you can give new life to an old chocolate box.

After some thought, I decided to see what I could make that offered texture, color and the possibility of re-using some of the materials for future projects. With that in mind, succulents were called for and I just happened to have some that are overwintering in the sunroom.

I also gave myself a challenge. All floral material had to come from the grocery store and/or my garden. So off to Harris Teeter I went (which has the best "grocery store" selection in Easton, in my humble opinion) and bought a pack of Jade roses, pink roses, and a bunch of baby's- breath on sale for $2. I really wanted spray roses as their diminutive would fit well in the 7-inch by 7-inch basket but none were to be found so I did the best with what I had. A short rainy stroll through my winter garden yielded some nice long strips of ivy and a few clumps of moss that were still green.

Here are the steps:

1. Cut a corner of a black plastic trash bag big enough to line the inside of the basket. I used one block of wet Oasis that was cut in two to fit snugly inside the heart shape.

2. Using the succulents first, I then used the next largest flowers, making a gentle line with the pink roses. All flowers were cut to approximately 3 inches long and were inserted in the Oasis after a little sip of Quick Dip.

3. I then used the smaller Jade roses, still relatively tight in the bud which was okay because they created a nice pattern. Blank spaces were filled in with bits of moss and Baby's Breath, all the while trying to maintain the shape of the heart.

4. After the flowers were inserted, I wrapped ivy around the outside top edge of the entire basket, crossing over strands and giving it a loose romantic look. The end of the ivy strands were pierced into the Oasis for stability.

5. With the design complete, I sprayed it with Crowning Glory to help the flowers live longer.

When the flowers eventually fade, I can re-pot the succulents and re-use the basket for another project. Have fun and be creative!

Design & Photo, Samantha McCall

100th Anniversary Daffodil Planting

❄Trish Reynolds

November 12, 2016.....what a wonderful day! TCGC officially began our 100th Anniversary Celebration (1917-2017) by planting 13,000 daffodils in front of Moton Park, along the Easton By-Pass, Rt. 322.

The 100th Committee researched the best way to accomplish this and engaged Brent & Becky Bulbs and their unique bulb planting machine for this incredible venture.

After gaining permission from all the relevant government agencies and ordering the bulbs, we were ready to get started.

Here are some pictures from that day for those of you who were not able to join us!

Illegal Plants

❄**Trish Reynolds**

At a recent meeting of a local garden club, Chris Myles-Tochko shared information on Illegalized Plant Material. We all have heard of Invasive Plants, but this was first for me – Illegalized Plants. This information is so important that I felt the need to share it with you.

The source for this information was a July 30, 2016 article from the Washington Post titled "From Garden Favorites to Illegalized Weeds."

The article goes through a list of plants that have been brought in as decorative ornamentals and have become invasive. Here are a few examples:

- Fig buttercup, *Ficaria verna* Huds, is from Europe. It is a very pretty yellow flower with green leaves. Maryland officials say it is one of the most destructive plants in the state. Starting in 2017 it is illegal to sell this plant in Maryland. Fig buttercup has occupied fields that used to be full of wildflowers according to co-president of the MD Native Plant Society.
- Yellow flag iris, *Iris pseudacorus*, grows best in very wet conditions, and is often common in wetlands, where it tolerates submersion, low pH, and anoxic soils.
- Shining cranesbill, *Geranium lucidum*, is a herbaceous annual plant of the genus Geranium. It is native to Europe, western Asia and North Africa.
- Asian bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus* is a woody vine of the Celastraceae family. It is commonly called Oriental bittersweet.

Five other invasives will get signs noting their problems: burning bush, border privet, Chinese wisteria, Japanese wisteria and an Asian wisteria. The State Agriculture Department's Invasive Plants Advisory Committee plans to evaluate 28 additional species.

These species eliminate native plants by a variety of ways:

- Blocking sunshine
- Taking all the water
- Climbing to the tops of trees until the tree becomes top heavy and topples or strangling the tree.
- Disrupting delicate ecosystems
- Not providing nutrients to native animals or birds.

Did you know, according to this article, invasive plants cover 133 million acres now with 1.7 million acres covered yearly?

Behnke Nurseries, a leading nursery on the Western Shore, has stopped selling invasive plants on their own; the nursery redirects customers to native plants. Lilypons has stopped selling yellow flag iris. The owner of Eastern Shore Nurseries, Mike Hemming, is a member of the Invasive Plants Advisory Committee. He says it takes about 50 hours to evaluate plants to determine if they are invasive.

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