



Fall/Holiday 2023

Can You Dig It?

Well, here we are again, the Holiday Season has begun....and Thanksgiving, my favorite holiday, is over and Christmas and Hanukkah are fast approaching and before we know it will be 2024....so much to do, so little time!

This issue is a combination of Fall things.... leaves and more leaves - Why do they turn color? Should we rake or not rake, that is the question.

Then we move on to Christmas and Hanukkah. What can we give our gardening friends.... gift ideas, books to help pass the winter months, and plants usually associated with the holidays.... Christmas Cactus, Cyclamen, and Amaryllis.

So, sit back, with your favorite coffee or tea and “read all about it”!

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and most of all a Joyous, Healthy 2024!



Trish Reynolds, Editor

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Layout and Design—Rebecca Gaffney





Autumn is one of my favorite seasons, the temperatures moderate and we are treated to a colorful display as trees change from their summer cloak of green to the vibrant reds, oranges, yellows and purples of fall.



Photo Credit: CANVA

What Trees Turn Color?

Stems, twigs and buds are equipped to survive cold. Tender leaf tissues would freeze in winter so many trees dispose of them.

Evergreens, pines, spruces, cedars, and firs are able to survive winter because they have toughened up. Their needle-like or scale-like foliage covered with a heavy wax coating and the fluid inside their cells contains substances that resist freezing. Thus, they can safely withstand all but the severest winter conditions. Evergreen needles survive for some years but eventually fall because of age.



Fir tree in Trish's backyard

Broad-leaved trees are those do not have needles or scale-like leaves. The leaves are tender and vulnerable to damage, are typically broad and thin and not protected by any thick coverings. The fluid in the cells of these leaves is usually a thin, watery sap that freezes readily, which makes them vulnerable in winter when temperatures fall. Tissues unable to overwinter must be sealed off and shed to ensure the plant's continued survival.¹

Trees with leaves that change color in fall and fall off are deciduous. Most of the year, deciduous leaves are green because of the chlorophyll they use to absorb energy from

sunlight during photosynthesis. Evergreen trees like Magnolia or those with needles like Pinus (coniferous), stay green to continue the photosynthesis process through the winter.

Throughout the year, leaves convert the energy into sugars to feed the tree. The shorter days and cooler temperatures of fall trigger the trees to transition from the active growth phase of summer to the dormant stage of winter.



Cut-leaf maple in Trish's backyard

What causes the color?

With the drop in temperature and shorter days, trees get less direct sunlight, and the chlorophyll in the leaves breaks down. As the green chlorophyll diminishes in the leaves, the underlying pigments become more visible. Carotenoid pigments are present in the leaves throughout the growing season and are responsible for the yellow and orange hues. Anthocyanins are produced by cool temperatures and bright sunlight and cause the red, purple and blue colors in some leaves.

What color are trees on the shore?

The specific colors and intensities of fall foliage can vary depending on the type of tree and environmental conditions. In some trees, the entire tree will take on the same color, while in others the colors may vary from leaf to leaf. On the shore, you can find a variety of deciduous trees that contribute to the colorful fall display. Certain colors are characteristic of a species, for example:

- Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*): Color: Deep red, purple, or burgundy.
- Oak trees (*Quercus* spp.): Color: Various shades of red, brown, or russet.
- Dogwood (*Cornus florida*): Color: Deep red or burgundy.
- Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*): Color: Bright red, purple, or scarlet.
- Hickory (*Carya* spp.): Color: Yellow or golden.
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*): Color: Yellow, orange, and red.
- Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*): Color: Rusty orange-brown
- Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*): Color: Yellow.
- Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*): Color: Brilliant red orange, or yellow.



- Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*): Color: Vibrant red or orange.
- Elms – poor babies, they just shrivel up and fall, exhibiting little color other than drab brown.

The specific colors may vary yearly based on environmental conditions, such as temperature and rainfall. The right weather can intensify or decrease the display. The best colors

occur when the weather is dry, sunny and cool. Cloudy, damp, windy or warm weather can limit the degree of color and length of the display.

We are fortunate to have this annual display of nature, so if you are thinking of planting a new tree, think of the colors throughout the year.

¹<https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/fall-colors/science-of-fall-colors>



To Leave or Not to Leave.....Lin Moeller

Longingly, we all look forward to the cooler weather and to the glorious colors of autumn when the hillsides and woodland edges peak with riotous displays of reds, yellows and oranges, Mother Nature at her best! When it comes to our yards, the autumn fallen leaves may be looked upon as more of a nuisance chore to get rid of rather than a beneficial, free source of mulch or compost and soil booster.



As young children most of us have memories of jumping into high piles of leaves, hiding in them and tossing armfuls of them at each other. These great piles, depending on where you lived were removed and

spread in the wooded edges of the lawns, raked to the curb to be picked up, bagged for removal or burned.

The benefits of using leaves as a mulch were not always considered. Instead, the goal was getting them off the lawn to keep it pristine or fearing too many leaves would smother the grass. Today with mulching mowers the leaves can quickly become a mulch to be spread in the perennial gardens and shrub borders, 2 to 3 inches deep as a winter protection. Over the winter months this leaf mulch decomposes and provides necessary carbon to the plants, an additional benefit.

In recent years a number of state and university extension services, as well as conservation and gardening magazines and newsletters have published articles of the benefits of leaves to pollinators, other insects and wildlife. Thus, encouraging homeowners not to be so quick to get rid of them. Caterpillars of moths and butterflies burrow into the



Maple leaves in Trish's yard

leaves to overwinter as a cocoon or chrysalis. The bumble bees born in late summer are the future queens. After being fertilized by male drones, they will leave the nest to hibernate below brush, leaf piles, etc., and re-emerge in early spring to begin a new colony. A number of insects will winter over protected in the ground below the leaves. Slugs and snails help to breakdown and compost the leaves into a rich humus. Finally, on a winter

day, as we look out on these leaves beneath the trees and shrubs, we may notice a number of our winter bird residents – wrens, sparrows, towhees, etc., picking amongst the leaves for seeds and insects.

Along with protecting plants and providing habitat, leaves are important for erosion control, allowing rains to slowly soak into the ground below and to maintain a moisture barrier during times of drought. In a woodland area the annual layer of leaves built on the remains of the previous year, create a carpet that slowly decomposes into sustaining soil. The moisture of heavy rains slowly trickles through these layers of leaves to be absorbed by the tree roots and soil, rather than running off into streams and tributaries of the Bay as cloudy sediment.

So, to leave or not to leave? In my yard, there are a lot of mature trees, the leaves are either blown or raked into the woodland edges or into a pile to be mulched. Leaves blown by the winds into the shrubs and perennial gardens are left as a protective winter blanket. As I look out on a late autumn day at the creators of the leaves – the trees, I cannot but feel that their beauty and benefits are priceless.





Fall and winter provide us with a whole array for beautiful seeds, pods, and branches to play with in designs. Fresh evergreen branches, pinecones, and magnolia leaves are a staple for holiday decorating, but look a little further and you might find interesting seed pods such as nigella, colorful branches like Red Twig Dogwood, bird feathers, old bird nests, and interesting mosses and fungi.

Foraged items look wonderful in wreaths, garlands, and table arrangements, and can last for more than one season.

Many foraged items can be painted, sprinkled with glitter, or manipulated to create interest. For instance, cutting pinecones in half yields something resembling a rose. Spraying items with clear polyurethane gives them a richer look.

Ideas for designs with foraged materials are almost endless. A simple online search will provide a plethora of ideas for what to collect, how to clean and treat items for bugs, and how to design with them. Our library also has numerous books that I have found very helpful.

A few words of caution apply to foraging for design.

Don't pick things you don't recognize. Many plants are poisonous, can cause skin or eye irritation, or can make a mess in your home.

Don't forage on other people's property without permission. It can be tempting to cut a few items while walking by a home or business, but always ask first.

Clean foraged items and take steps to kill bugs that may be hiding. Some items can simply be washed while others might require a little time in the oven.



Wreath filled with dried okra pods, pussy willow, and eucalyptus, as well as turkey feathers and a deer antler found in the woods.

The University of Florida Extension has a great website filled with information on how to dry and preserve foraged materials. Another helpful site is Manda Panda Projects (<https://mandapandaprojects.com/how-to-clean-and-prepare-pine-cones-for-crafting/>)

What to Collect

The list is long on what can be collected and used for designs. From acorns and pinecones, to grasses, branches, and leaves. Feathers, antlers, shells, and bird nests provide interesting

focal points in arrangements, as do mosses and fungi.

Pinecones come in a variety of shapes and sizes and combining them can be interesting. Fruits and berries can be dried for use in designs. Dried okra pods and cotton bolls are among my favorite items to use in designs. I recently made a wreath featuring dried orange slices and cinnamon sticks – it was beautiful and fragrant! And years ago I made a wreath completely out of different nuts in shells. It was beautiful and lasted through several seasons.

Helpful Resources

You can find ideas online, on sites like Pinterest, in the local library, and at local shops. Here are links to a few I have found to be helpful:

Books: *Foraged Flower Arranging* by Rebekah Clark Moody
Everlastings by Bex Partridge

Online: Pinterest –
Christmas Decorations: <https://fi.pinterest.com/search/pins/?rs=ac&len=2&q=dried%20floral%20arrangements%20home%20decor&eq=dried%20floral%20a&etslf=6845>

How to Preserve Fruit for Flower Arrangements: <https://www.gardenguides.com/90559-preserve-fruit-flower-arrangements.html>

Drying and Preserving Plant Materials for Decorative Uses: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP004.rs=ac&len=2&q=dried%20christmas%20decorations&eq=dried%20christm&etslf=9303>



Wreath made with fresh magnolia leaves, cinnamon sticks and dried oranges.





On a typical evening the other day, my husband and I sat down to dinner. It's become a ritual of mine to look for our dogs as we convene in the dining room, as almost inevitably, a rogue tail or paw finds its way under a dining room chair. Not this night, though, and as I considered it, not lately.

I looked at my husband, "Are they where I think they are? Again?"

He replied, with his famous delivery, in a satirically dramatic tone, "But, of course, they are in repose in the Lemon Tree Lounge. It's a very exclusive establishment."

What on earth is a *Lemon Tree Lounge*? Well, it takes a lot to merit the rechristening of a space in a family home. For years this room was just an extension, adjacent to some gallery space for treasured pieces, and an entryway to a library and study. In other words, use had become that of a hallway. Because of the space's amount of natural light, it was the perfect choice as the fall and winter home for our new Meyer Lemon Tree. When I purchased the tree in the Spring, it lived inside until the outdoor temperatures were optimal. It happily grew taller, and fruitful, outside, on the deck outside this new space. When our evenings became cooler, this plant returned inside. The times when our tree lived indoors, the dogs started using this room for naps and what could only be described as meditative perching. If you can't already sense this, we are dog people. The fact that the dogs responded to this touched us.

We tend to compartmentalize our interactions with nature. Spring is when we coax the new shoots and leaves out from under winter's eternal reset. We purchase flats of annuals, pots of well-started tomatoes and already flowering peppers. During summer, it's all we can do to control the mad growth of both desired (gorgeous, colorful flowers), and the less so (those pesky weeds). Many of us count on favorite perennials revealing themselves once more. Autumn beckons us indoors, as we instinctively and practically gather inside, at the proverbial hearth. We may shift our thoughts to wreathmaking with varying evergreens, because, after all, the flowering and productive seasons are gone. Tried and true houseplants, a Christmas cactus and the amaryllis,

notwithstanding, we tell ourselves to simply wait until springtime.

I contend that it doesn't have to be this way. The productive joys of flowering and fruiting plants can be a part of your colder months. Even if a given plant truly needs a hibernation of sorts, the act of assisting it to emerge triumphantly next year is invigorating. So, I submit to you... the case for overwintering your favorite plants. This is not a how-to, but rather a why-to. For a how-to, my favorite resources are the University of Maryland Extension program's online resources, Fine Gardening, and the Old Farmer's Almanac.

If we shift this segmented, seasonally-limited mindset, why? Why bother overwintering anything? To everything, a season...right? To some extent, there is an economic benefit. If we nurture those bulbs, we can enjoy them season after season.

There is also history-making in a sense. I aspire to being a generational caretaker of bulbs that have been part of the family for decades, at least. Ours are bearded irises, and I'm determined to pass this on, keeping them in the family.

One may also consider productivity as a motivator for overwintering. Potting and moving inside vegetables such as your favorite tomato could extend your harvest. Moving our lemon tree inside promises that the dogs... I mean, my husband and I...can enjoy fresh lemons year-round.

That evening, at the dinner table, I smiled, knowing we had done well for ourselves. The *Lemon Tree Lounge* has fostered life and a hospitable, year-round environment for the plant, but also has rooted our sense of home... and humor.

* One must always be cognizant of plants that could harm pets with curious mouths. Thankfully, this is not a concern with our pooches.





When it comes to our gardens, we have learned the importance of native plants and using organic, environmentally friendly products. When it comes to other preparations are we equally mindful of the need to change?

The Holiday Season... we literally get so wrapped up in the planning, traditions of decorating, gift wrapping and sending out season's greetings to family and friends that we don't think about the impact many of our preparations and activities have on our environment, whether they are eco-friendly. Perhaps if we did a bit of tweaking, modifying or changing how we did things, the impact will be more sustainable, eco-friendly. So, what can we do...

Skip the artificial and go natural with holiday decorations. We all have a 'go-to' garden center in our yards. Grab the clippers and head out into the fresh air! Clip enough to have extra to freshen decorations as needed. Natural greenery can easily be incorporated into existing holiday decorations in a number of ways:

To extend the life of any greenery collected, soak it for a couple hours to give it added moisture and remove unwanted insects. Also keep the greenery outside in a protected area to keep it fresh and ready to use. A gentle spray of Wilt-Pruf or hair spray extends freshness.

One of the first, welcoming decorations that can be done is a wreath, swag or garland for the front door. Being in the cool of the outdoors it will last for weeks. I reuse wire edged ribbons from previous years.



Decorate the fireplace mantel with snippets of greenery, all one type such as holly or a balanced variety of spruce, pine, holly, boxwood, etc. To this intertwine a short string of battery-operated LED lights, ribbon, pinecones, etc.

Vases could be filled with sprigs of holly or a variety of greenery. Clear glass containers could be filled with various

cones. Accessories you already have could be added to compliment them.

Create a holiday table centerpiece with a variety of evergreens, similar to decorating a mantel or a shelf, add ribbon, LED light string, fruits, nuts, ornaments, etc. Slip an evergreen sprig or two behind the corner of a painting or wall hanging.

Be a 'Do-It-Yourself' decorator. Online there are lots of DIY ideas for making simple, natural decorations for walls, windows and door, tree ornaments, etc. using items found in your yard, a bit of twine, raffia and a glue gun. Build memories by making it a family or friends' affair. It is better for the environment and much more fun than purchasing pricy, natural-looking items made cheaply in a foreign country!

Be wise about sending holiday greetings to friends and family. My mother is always of the logical philosophy that anyone who you will be seeing over the holidays should receive a warm verbal greeting, not one mailed. According to one conservation source, mailing holiday cards is one of the most wasteful traditions in the United States (sorry Hallmark!). All of the holiday cards and their envelopes purchased, sent, then trashed could fill a football field up to 10 stories high! When you do send holiday greetings find cards made with recycled paper and recycle any you receive or use your laptop to send e-cards or special texts messages. (My nephew sends a group text greeting with family photo on Christmas Eve or morning. The rest of the family across the county responds back and forth – much closer and more personal than a card.)

Be creative with gift wrapping. Skip the one-time use paper that gets ripped, wadded and tossed to the trash container – landfill. According to the organization 'The Green Citizen,' Americans create 25% more waste during the holidays than average which equals a million extra tons of trash each week – much of which should be recycled. Some suggestions for gift wrapping:

Purchase natural, plain rolls of paper, even kitchen parchment paper is great for gift wrapping! Trace cookie cutters and cut out, decorate and glue on the wrapping or use stencils.

Instead of ribbon use simple twine or raffia (paper raffia or from the raffia palm) with a couple of pinecones or sprigs of greenery. One source noted that if everyone in the U.S. used just two feet less ribbon with each wrapping, it would have a big impact on landfills.





Make your own name tags using traced and cut out cookie cutter designs. **Make the wrapping** part of the gift. If you're giving small garden tools or

supplies, use a tool bag or flowerpot to place all the items in, and use twine or raffia instead of ribbon. Special hand or kitchen towels also make great wrapping alternative for personal spa or kitchen gadget gifts.

Gift bags, especially of plain brown or colored paper that can be decorated, or DIY sewn cloth bags with a tie opening at one end can be saved and reused.

Finally, after the holidays, return the now rather sad-looking greenery outdoors to the compost for additional beneficial use. **Recycle the cards, envelopes, wrappings and raffia which is 100% biodegradable. If we all thought, 'just tossing this little amount won't impact our landfills' and then trashed, what a quagmire we would be in!**

The goal of these ideas is to minimize. Minimize our holiday carbon footprint, minimize what ends up in the landfill, and minimize holiday costs by using greenery from our yards and being creative with DIY ideas. Being mindful, switching one of our 'usual' holiday preparations and traditions to a 'eco-friendly' alternative will benefit the environment. If everyone did just one, imagine the impact! Have a happy, sustainable holiday!



A Few of My Favorite Things!.....Myra Gons

“Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens... a few of my favorite things!” When I hear “my favorite things” I immediately start singing the song from the *Sound of Music*. A more recent reference might bring to mind Martha Stewart saying - “it’s a good thing.” Whichever comes to mind we are all looking for gift ideas for the gardeners in our lives.



At the top of my list of favorites are a variety of compost crocks and pails that look attractive on the kitchen counter with plenty of capacity for kitchen scraps.

Check out the options offered by Gardeners Supply at gardeners.com and be sure to order a supply of Bio-bags to go with your crock or pail. These make emptying your compost crock less messy.

Trish Reynolds recommends her [Hori Hori knife](#): “it does everything!” There are several different options available on



Amazon. The knife is described as “ideal for gardeners and outdoorsmen alike. It is used for weeding, seeding, transferring bulbs, digging the perfect hole and cutting branches. These knives aren't only for gardeners! It is also a great knife for hunting, fishing and camping.”



“Who could survive gardening without great gloves?” asks Janet Mackey. “I love my Foxglove gloves. They are soft and comfy with two lengths to cover your wrist or your forearm. Great colors. LOVE them!” Go to foxglovesinc.com. They are even SPF 50; I’m heading to the website as soon as I’m finished with this article!

This is the *scuffle hoe* Lin Moeller gave her father 30 years ago. It is her go-to for weeding, and she thinks of him each time she uses it! Also called a *Dutch hoe*, the blade has two sharp edges which allow for cutting weeds with both a push and pull action. On Amazon search for either scuffle hoe or Dutch hoe. You will find quite a few choices.





Another item she uses all the time are *Farmers Defense sleeves* “to protect my arms from scratches and contact dermatitis.”

Pam Keeton also recommends her favorite hoe, a *diamond hoe*, available from greenhousemegastore.com. “It not only makes quick work out of weeding, but also loosens the soil.”

Pam’s other must-have is her *garden cart*. “It’s very flexible, with sides that drop down. And the large tires make it easy to pull.” Amazon: VIVOHOME Heavy Duty 880 Lbs. Capacity Mesh Steel Garden Cart Folding Utility Wagon.



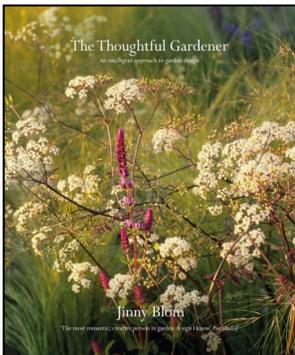
Gardening Books For the Holidays To Own or to Gift or To Receive.....Chloe Pitard

I’ll Build a Stairway to Paradise. A Life of Bunny Mellon, by Mac Griswold. I read this book this past summer and enjoyed it. Mac is a childhood friend of Bunny’s daughter. Since we are going to Bunny’s Virginia home, Oak Spring, in April, it will lend another dimension to our visit there. She led a fascinating life.

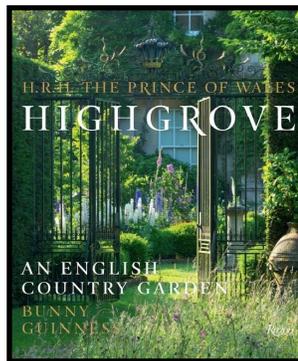
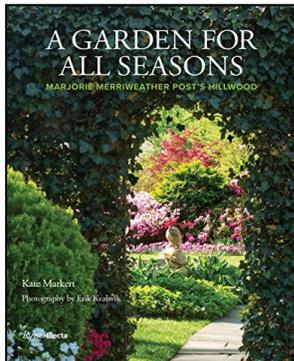
Garden Secrets of Bunny Mellon, Linda Jane Holden, Toomas Lloyd, Bryan Huffman, forward by P. Allen Smith. Great photos!

The Thoughtful Gardener, Jinny Bloom. I saw this at The Flying Cloud Bookstore. It is full of romantic, mouthwatering photos. Jinny Bloom is a garden designer, and this is a beautiful book!

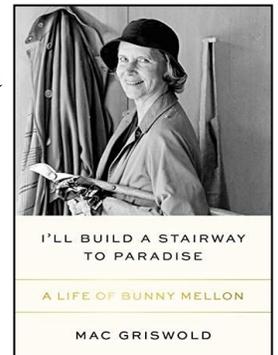
A Garden for All Seasons, by Kate Markert. This is the story of Hillwood, Margaret Merriweather Post’s home and garden in Washington DC.



Highgrove, An English Country Garden, Bunny Guinness. This is King Charles’ country estate and quite famous garden.



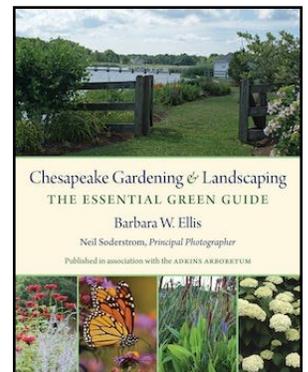
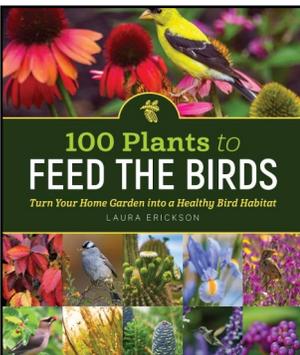
Chesapeake Gardening & Landscaping, by Barbara W. Ellis published in 2013. Ms. Ellis lives at Hackberry Point, a seven-acre property near Chestertown, and is a very eco-friendly gardener. This book might be just the thing for some of our members who are new to the Eastern Shore. I moved here from the Philadelphia area and found gardening here is very different from there even though we are



so close geographically. This book was published “In Association with Adkins Arboretum”, although I am not sure what that means.

100 Plants to Feed Birds: Turn Your Home into a Healthy Bird Habitat by Laura Erickson. This paperback has suggestions of native plants, including trees, that are beneficial for the care and feeding of birds.

The Complete Gardener by Monte Don published in 2021. I have not seen it, but this book, according to several sources, is the best recent gardening book. He is English, of course, but I bet it is a very useful book.





Thanksgiving or Christmas Cactus: What's the Difference?..... A Friend

Ever wondered why your Christmas cactus blooms early? Maybe its not a Christmas cactus at all but a Thanksgiving cactus! The shapes of the leaves are one of the easiest ways to tell them apart. A Thanksgiving cactus has serrated leaves with pointy appendages that slightly resemble crab claws. A Christmas cactus has more rounded leaves with scalloped edges. Thanksgiving cacti tend to be more frequent in retail stores because they are not as fragile and likely to break as a Christmas cactus.

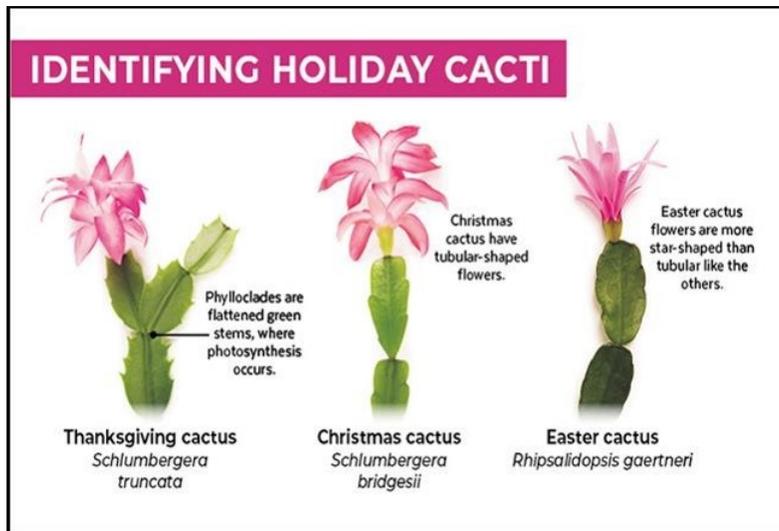
Identifying holiday cacti:

Cacti require well-drained soil. Pot in an equal mix of peat moss, perlite, vermiculite and soil, which will give the plants the good drainage they require. Wait until the soil is dry before watering. Don't overwater!

Christmas and Thanksgiving cactus like bright light but not direct sun. They also prefer night temperatures around 65 degrees (although flower bud formation requires temperatures 10 to 15 degrees cooler). Come summer, put your holiday cactus in a cool, bright room or set it outdoors on a partly shaded side of the house. You can leave these cacti outdoors until fall temperatures dip to 35 degrees



Trish's Blooming Thanksgiving Cactus



How to get a holiday cactus to bloom:

Cool evening temperatures, around 50 to 55 degrees F, and 12- to 14-hour nights promote bloom set.

To ensure your Thanksgiving or Christmas cactus blooms for the holidays, it needs a lot of time in the dark when the buds are forming from September through November.

During this time, bright, indirect sunlight is fine during the day, but from dusk to dawn, keep it in a dark place with a temperature of 50 to 55 degrees.

An unused bedroom with a south window or a 3-season porch works great, but don't turn on any lights at night and keep the plant away from street and porch lights, which can delay flower bud formation.



Judgment CallsSuggested by Lin Moeller

Florists' cyclamen remind me of butterflies and angel kisses, so lovely, delicate and fleeting. Every year I kill one.

I adore these impossible plants. Right away there's trouble: they need cool temperatures -- 60 to 65 degrees in the daytime, nights at 50 -- and definitely no drafts of any kind, although good air circulation is helpful. They need good light, but not too bright -- no scorching in a southern window. An eastern or northern window is preferred.

They need high humidity, maybe daily misting plus a pebble tray. (Pebble trays are great for indoor plants during the dry winter heating season. Put a layer of gravel in a shallow tray, set the containers on the gravel, and add water to just below the bottom of the pots. Refill to offset evaporation.)



Watering

Watering provides another opportunity for missteps and melodrama. Keep soil moist while plants are in bloom but not overly so. When the normally crisp foliage hints at limpness -- but is not yet wilting -- then water. Never pour water over top of the tuber as this can cause it to rot. You may water along the pot rim or set it in a pan of water to wick for about ten minutes, then set it aside to drain before finally replacing it in its normal location.

Good Grooming

Grooming is also important, and there is a special technique for removing tattered leaves and faded blooms: Rip them off by their little stems! Well, not exactly. A gentle tug should detach them cleanly from the tuber.

If You Have the Nerve, Encourage it to Rebloom

If your specimen arrived with loads of unopened buds, it might bloom until Valentine's Day. Eventually though, it will slow down, fade, and go dormant. Stop watering, tip the pot on its side, and keep it cool. Repot the tuber in midsummer. Cover it only halfway with potting mix and wait for it to sprout. Once sprouts appear, return to the basic regimen of cool and bright and moist but not wet. Use a water-soluble fertilizer at half strength and cross your fingers, throw salt over your shoulder, and hope for the best. Gardeners who have somehow managed to rebloom a cyclamen at home

report that the flowers tend to be smaller and paler and fewer than remembered.

Well, gee whiz.

I used to think cyclamen was named for its cyclical nature, but that's

wrong. Apparently, the name comes from the Greek word "kylos" meaning circular and describing how the stems curl or spiral downward after the seeds form. I've never seen that because mine never get to that stage. I enjoy them and then throw them out. Just like a bouquet -- no strings attached, no looking back.

You and I know that plants never read columns like this -- so let this be the year all your judgment calls work out just fine: your cyclamens flourish, your tomatoes win blue ribbons, and your wildflower meadow becomes weed-free and self-sustaining. Here's to a happy, peaceful, and fruitful new year!

Source: Mid-Atlantic, Author Barbara Martin



Amaryllis Gifts Arrive Sprouting & Grow up to an Inch Per Day.....Trish Reynolds

Gifts for Nature Lovers. Give Your Loved Ones Some Living Joy with **Amaryllis**.

Amaryllis may be purchased as bare or planted bulbs and are prized for their exotic trumpet-shaped flowers born on 1- to 2-foot leafless stalks or scapes. They add dramatic color to homes and gardens and make wonderful gifts to gardeners from beginners to experts.

Native to Africa, the genus *Amaryllis* comes from the Greek word amarysso, which means "to sparkle." Bulbs were brought to Europe in the 1700s and have been known to bloom for up to 75 years. However, the amaryllis bulbs we commonly purchase and grow as houseplants are hybrids of the genus *Hippeastrum* and are native to Central and South America. Amaryllis flowers range from 4 to 10 inches in size and can be either single or double in form.

While the most popular colors are red and white, flowers may also be pink, salmon, apricot, rose or deep burgundy. Some varieties are bicolor such as purple and green, or picotee (having petals with a different edge color).

- Select the largest bulbs available for the desired plant variety as they will produce more stalks and blooms in the first year. The larger the bulb, the more flowers it will have.
- Bulbs should be firm and dry with no signs of mold, decay or injury.
- It is common to see new growth (leaves, buds) emerging from bare or planted bulbs.
- Choose bulbs with bright green new growth and without spots or visible damage.





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- Some bulbs may have an offshoot growing from its base. This will eventually grow into a new bulb and

can be removed and planted separately.

- Amaryllis grow best in narrow containers. Containers may be made of plastic, metal, ceramic or terracotta.
- Bulbs should be firm and dry with no signs of mold, decay or injury.
- Select a container that has one or more holes in the bottom and drains easily.
- Good drainage will minimize the chance of bulb or root rot (rotting from excess moisture).
- The diameter of the pot should be about 1 inch wider than the widest part of the bulb and twice as tall as the bulb to allow space for good root development.
- Fill the pot about half full with sterile, new potting soil high in organic matter such as peat moss.
- Set the bulb in the pot so the roots rest on the potting soil.
- The bulb should sit up above the edge of the container.
- Add more soil, tapping it down around the bulb, until one-third to one-half of the bulb remains visible.
- Firm the potting medium around the bulb.
- Set the pot in a sink where it can drain freely, and water until the potting soil is thoroughly moist. Allow to drain completely.
- Set the pot on a saucer and place in a sunny window.



- The secret to keeping amaryllis thriving for years is to keep the plants actively growing AFTER they have finished blooming.



- After the flowers have faded, cut them off to prevent seed formation. Seed formation will deplete important energy reserves in the bulb and reduce blooming.
- Do not remove the flower stalk until it has turned yellow.
- A green stem will continue to promote photosynthesis, which creates energy that is stored in the bulb for future leaf growth and flowers.
- If the bulb does not produce a flowering stalk in the next blooming period, it is likely that has not stored enough nutrients during the post-blooming period.
- Keeping the plant healthy and growing will promote blooming.
- After your plant has finished blooming, place it in the sunniest possible location indoors. It will continue to grow long, smooth leaves. These leaves will promote photosynthesis.
- Continue to water and fertilize the plant regularly with an all-purpose houseplant plant fertilizer.

I will end this article with a short comment. Back in 2013 I had some amaryllis bulbs that I just put in a basket and took them out to my potting shed, leaving them outside. Along comes July, and what did I see.... a beautiful pink amaryllis blooming right in the basket. Now that was a surprise!



(Note: All Pictures in this article are from Tish's Collection.)

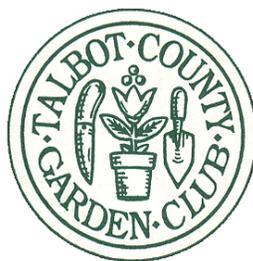




We hope you have enjoyed this issue of “*Can You Dig It?*” ...it has been fun putting it together...sharing so many wonderful articles, ideas, books, plants, gifts.... a little something for everyone we hope!

So from our families to yours.... Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah. And Good Health and Cheer for 2024!

Trish, Pam, Kim, Tracy, Myra, Janet, Susie, Lin, Chloe, Dana and Rebecca



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