



The Common Sense Gardener

WSU Thurston County Master Gardener Newsletter

Volume 6

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December 2006

2007 Training Class Just Around the Corner

by Paul Feenan

I am extremely excited about the upcoming 2007 training class! In response to input generated at our program review, we have made some changes to the program. First of all the class will meet *every third Friday* from January 12 through September 21. This new schedule will allow us to teach the units/chapters of our curriculum at times of the year when we can apply them with “in the field,” experiential opportunities. I am also hopeful that this extended schedule (coupled with the new Mentor Program) will improve volunteer participation among trainees enrolled in the program.

We are still accepting applications to the inaugural Mentor Group which is another effort designed to improve our training program, and strengthen our membership. Qualified Veteran Master Gardeners are invited to apply to become mentors for the 2007 training class, and will be integral in supporting and coaching trainees through the class and their service internship. I strongly encourage all Master Gardeners to consider becoming a Mentor, if not this year, in the future. I believe it will become a vital component in the sustainability of our program!

Applications can be found as an attachment to my email sent 11/8/2006-subject line “Mentor Program” and mailed to those w/o email service. As usual, feel free to contact me with questions, clarifications, or concerns or another application!

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Have a Happy, Healthy, and Local Holiday Season

by Paul Feenan

The Holiday season is upon us and thoughts turn (if they haven't already) to the tasks of decoration and presents! Yes, it's time to deck the halls in festive fashion and search for gifts for loved ones. As avid gardeners in the Pacific Northwest, we are blessed to have a horticulture (and agriculture) industry that remains active throughout the year. I enjoy celebrating as local a holiday as possible. A local holiday theme supports this important segment of our business community and spreads the message to others who may not have considered this option. Whether you are shopping for food, holiday decorations, or those special gifts, there are many ways you can buy local.

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Next Newsletter Feature:

Program Update

Please address any comments to Paul Feenan, Program Manager

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Many local producers plan and work hard to provide us with fresh produce, dairy, and meats, to prepare a wonderful feast. Find what you are looking for by using the 2006 Direct Sales Farm Map (pick one up in the Lacey Clinic) or view the 2005 version online at <http://fertileground.org/foodshed>. This map is a great way to research locally grown food products and learn about their seasonality. Most importantly, it puts you in direct touch with producers!

Another great internet site is Local Harvest at <http://www.localharvest.org/>. Use this website to find farmers' markets, family farms, and other sources of sustainably grown food in your area, where you can buy produce, grass-fed meats, and many other goodies. This is a fun way to explore community options all over the country as well as in your neck of the woods!

Visiting the Olympia Farmers Market is a convenient way to support local farmers, as well as community artisans. Here you can choose from many high quality products for your table, home, or for under the tree. While you are there at the market site don't forget to stop by to visit one of the finest gardens in the downtown area!

The Puget Sound Fresh label represents food produced within the nine counties surrounding the Puget Sound. Look for this label in stores and markets, and make a habit of finding out where the things you buy come from. You can visit their website at : <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/farms/>.

Local nursery and garden centers offer plant material and value added garden products throughout the dormant season, and I love to give and get gift certificates from these establishments so I can cross off entries in my "must have" plant lists! Many do a great job of providing floral, bough, and wreath materials to dress up your place in proper fashion.

Another important consideration for your holiday preparations is waste production. We have taken a critical look at this in our family and have given attention to it in recent years. As you enjoy the upcoming season I encourage you to limit the amount of waste you produce. Choosing local can naturally help with this as these products often require less packaging and shipping.

A healthy "green industry" is important to us as community educators. People are more likely to participate in something that is seen as strong and well supported by others. In addition year-round sales are crucial to our local producers. A vigorous holiday sales season allows business owners to reinvest in new and exciting products for future seasons.

Enjoy Celebrating a Healthy Happy and Local Holiday!



Hanukkah
December 15-22



Winter Solstice
December 22 @
12:22 am



Christmas
December 25



Kwanzaa
December 26



New Year's Eve
December 31

Closed Loop Garden Park by Tam Crocker

As 2006 closes, looking back on the garden year brings warm memories. Everyone has generously given of their time, helping the garden flourish.

Blooming during this winter season are the fragrant *Viburnum x bodnantense*. There are almost four seasons of interest for this plant; it is hard to choose a favorite. Pink Dawn began blooming in late October, and Charles Lamont is just getting started. Later the daffodils will come up and brighten many spots, and look for the species tulips near the stairs. The *Bergenia* that was moved up the hill is standing up and asking us to take notice. It has great winter color. Goodness, the *Abelia* was still blooming at Thanksgiving.

Signs for the entrance to the garden and picnic tables for the central area have been purchased by the county. These updates have made the garden more interactive with the public. As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, rearranging of the space for receiving recycling materials will create a different entrance to the garden. Stay tuned, and we will share more details when they are available.

The garden has received new plant material this year. *Heuchera*, *Tiarella* and *Heucherella* are new trial plants, with more coming this next spring. A local, newly established nursery, Magelianica Gardens gave us many hardy *Fuchsia*. We have two new *Berberis wilsoniae* 'Ace' (see the picture which shows it in spring bloom). It is a blue-green leafed barberry, sporting some bright plum colored leaves this winter.

The compost area has a new version of the winter compost bin. A cement block bin area was installed in place of the straw bale bin. Painted to blend in with the surrounding area, it is first class.

Closed Loop Park is a garden of people working together, creating a wonderful garden for the public to enjoy. Each volunteer is special and the hours dedicated to the garden enrich it to the fullest. We wish everyone a wonderful Holiday Season and best wishes for 2007; and we look forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.



DirtWorks Garden News by Karen Walters

DirtWorks closed for the winter the last Saturday of October. We will be working on plans for the enabling garden and the rock garden this winter. Hopefully we will be successful in our quest to acquire a grant for the enabling garden. In February, we will call for a work party to come and help with the pruning and we will also dig up plants from the old Native Plant area. Then in March, we open to the public, and will begin ground prep work on the area where the rose garden, enabling garden and rock garden will go. We will have some work done by machine again, and will look forward to a large work party to help plant the rose garden under the supervision of our committee. The rose garden should be in place by the time of the plant sale in May. We will also have to get the rest of the garden looking neat and tidy by plant sale. Lots to do, so rest up – Spring will be here before you know it!

DirtWorks Children's Garden News by Karen Walters

The Children's Garden received a good clean up before closing in October. But we will have many plants to divide first thing in March. I'm sure a lot of the plants can be used for the plant sale. In February we will hold a planning meeting at the Extension office for the coming gardening season. I want to have the meeting after the 2007 class has met, so we can see if there are some more people who would be interested in helping out in the Children's Garden. We really need more help as the number of children participating increased this year. (The MG's work with children 4-12 yrs on Tuesdays after school is out for summer.) I would also like to have time for us to all sit down and do prep work for the kits, (making copies, cutting out, etc.). Also, for those of you who are working on producing new lessons, please have those ready to present in February. Anyone interested is welcome to come up with new ideas for lessons in the Children's Garden. We are always looking for new and fresh ideas. You may email me at kswalters@comcast.net.

Master Gardeners at the Olympia Farmers Market by Bob Findlay

A year in review

Starting with the February clean-up day, many regular volunteers met several members of the 2006 class to do the semi-annual coppicing of the willows and winter pruning of trees and shrubs with much socializing. Charlie Keck took many trimmings home to his compost pile, and Jim Anderson and Lisa Randlette made the ceremonial visit to the Hawks Prairie recycling site.

Late last year our clinic trellis fell victim to the antics of a wayward passerby, so funding was found for a replacement trellis of rough-sawn cedar. It is almost out of sight beneath the surviving Wisteria and grape vines. Just before market season, Dorothy Taylor lead a group of volunteers in the rehabilitation of the shade garden near the clinic building. It induces many gardening questions.

Sandy Atkinson agreed to manage the clinic. Her pleas were heeded and we were much more successful in matching market hours with clinic hours this year. Richard Teman, Charlotte Hartwig, Victoria Burr, Norm Gallacci, and Edythe Hulet, made commendable efforts to regularly staff the clinic this year. Mary Boston, Judy Caron, Carla Delducco, Donna Dole, Shirley and Tim Erickson, Deb Freelove, Chris Lair, Margo Mansfield, Dave Myers, Mary Moore, Aline Pinkard, Shanna Winters and others I probably fail to mention, rounded out the clinic staff this year, giving you some idea of the volunteer effort required to keep it going.

The interior of the clinic building was stripped out and reorganized and refurbished to make it an attractive place for volunteers to work. The awning was re-sewn and sports a new clinic sign. A wireless connection to the Internet was made with the public generosity of neighborhood broadcasters. The net connection greatly expands our sources of information as clinic volunteers are gradually discovering through its use.

There was renewed activity in the compost demonstration on the part of new Master Composters Sue Duffy and Glen Buschmann. We plan to improve that site and offer regular encour-

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ters with MCs during the season to supplement the workshops organized by the county and the MC program.

Catherine Eddington was able to start rehabilitation work on the herb demonstration bed late in the season, including the replacement of the lost landmark Rosemary 'Tuscan Blue' thanks to a donation by Victoria Burr. Larry Rus returned to check out our irrigation system, Nancy Yarborough did a weekly cleanup of the garden perimeter, and Kris Mansfield, Melody Mayer and John Geppert all helped make the garden inviting for visitors.

Thanks to the foundation's successful fund raising - accomplished by many of these same volunteers - the 2007 budget will support us in improving the compost site with a shade structure, and the SE perennial border will be rehabilitated as an extension of the Water-wise bed, utilizing many plants already in the demonstration garden in compelling juxtapositions of summer and fall color and texture.

We have accomplished a great deal at the OFM demonstration garden this year. Your commitment, as Master Gardeners, to the success of the OFM demonstration garden and clinic is truly appreciated by the program, the foundation and visitors - whether you can be only at the February clean-ups, occasional participants in clinic and garden activity, or regular contributors of your time and expertise. Thanks, and see you next year as we greet the MG class of 2007.

Foundation President's Column by Mary Moore

This will be my last column as President of the Master Gardener Foundation Board of Thurston County. Since I like to write, and since my profession has involved books, I might just show up writing a column about titles that have caught my eye and helped me out. Or maybe the subject will be web sites or magazines with which I am particularly impressed. Does this sound like something that you all would like? Let Nancy Mills know what your opinion is at nlmills@msn.com.

So, for the last column as Foundation president, I want to ask you if you are a member of the Foundation. If you are, please renew your membership for 2007 when you receive notification to do so. If you are not a member, why not???? One of the things that the Foundation really pushes is camaraderie and teamwork. I have met such wonderful people as a Master Gardener, with many of whom I really enjoy spending time. And I don't mean just working side by side in one of our gardens; I mean having dinner, going plant shopping, checking out nurseries, and touring gardens. These are all activities which the Foundation encourages and often sponsors. I also enjoy learning in a relaxed atmosphere such as the quarterly membership meetings that we hold. And if the speaker is from a nursery, one always has the chance of getting free plants!

Please think about supporting the Program by becoming a member of the Foundation this year. You will be glad that you did!

Master Gardener Foundation Board Members

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Ask the Expert by Don Tapio (Selected and edited for space - [for complete articles go to the Lacey Clinic](#))

Question: We are afraid that our firewood may be infested with insects that will invade our house when we bring it indoors. We are wondering if we should spray it while its still outside with something to kill any insects that may be present. (October 16th)

Answer: Homeowners should not make a practice of applying chemicals to firewood for insect control because of the possibility of harmful fumes being produced when the wood is burned. There is little that can be done to protect firewood from wood-boring insects and there are no practical controls for their larvae once they have entered the wood. The following guidelines may be helpful in reducing firewood pests:

1. Cut wood in mid to late fall. This may make the wood less attractive to attack by borers which emerge in the Spring.
2. Bring firewood indoors only as needed, at most a couple of days' supply at a time. Storing firewood in the home for long periods speeds insect development inside the wood, which allows them to emerge inside the home.
3. Do not stack wood up against the house or garage. This can result in moisture or insect problems in the building. A minimum of three feet between the firewood and building should be maintained. This also allows better air circulation, which promotes more rapid drying of the wood. Stacking the wood off the ground whenever possible will increase drying and reduce potential pest problems.

Question: Where do the bugs of summer go when the weather turns cold? (November 2nd)

Answer: Insects don't just 'disappear' and magically reappear the next year. Each species has developed a distinct way of dealing with the cold weather. One insect follows the example of the migratory birds and heads south. The Monarch butterfly travels to a few small areas in northern and central California each fall.

Most insects however, can't afford the trip to southern latitudes, and stay here year round. They employ a variety of tactics for survival. One is to simply move in with humans. Insects such as ladybird beetles, cluster flies and elm leaf beetles over-winter in wall voids, attics and other out of the way places in homes and other structures. Before humans started building "insect hotels" they probably found shelter in hollow logs and other natural cavities including leaf litter.

Many insects spend the winter in an immature stage as eggs (the tent caterpillar is a good example), as larvae underground (June beetles and wireworms) or as pupae (fall webworms). A number of insects, such as aphids, lay eggs near or on leaf buds. As soon as growth begins, the insects hatch and find their food source close by.

Yellowjacket and paper wasp queens, as well as some mosquitoes, are other examples of insects that over winter as adults. Like the ladybird beetle, they seek out a protected spot and become dormant until warm weather activates them again.

And finally, the body chemistry of some insects drastically changes as temperatures drop. The water in their cells is replaced with anti-freeze such as ethylene glycol and glycerol. These compounds, called cryoprotectants, prevent the formation of ice crystals at temperatures below freezing. Among the insects that can make their anti-freeze are certain species of ants, beetles, aphids, cankerworms and flies.

Question: We have several older trees in our yard that have produced a number of roots that have now surfaced in our lawn. They are so large it is nearly impossible to mow over them. Would it be okay to simply cut them off? (November 13th)

Answer: Much to the dismay of many homeowners, landscape trees sometimes grow roots above the ground. Nearly every large tree, given enough time and water, will produce at least some surface roots, especially if it's growing in a lawn. How soon the roots develop depends upon the tree species, the soil type and water availability. In general, fast growing trees, such as ash, liquidambar, poplar, alder and willow produce surface roots quickly.

It is important to remember that natural root growth itself contributes to surface rooting. Most of a tree's root system, even in a large tree, is in the top two to three feet of soil. As large lateral roots grow in diameter, they may eventually surface. The process speeds up in a lawn situation, where the tree roots grow to the surface to take advantage of moisture and fertilizer.

As you might expect, roots grow where conditions for growth are favorable. The old adage that roots grow toward water is wrong. Roots grow in moist soil, where the water is. Roots grow very little in dry soil. Since roots respire, they also grow best where there is abundant oxygen. That's why surface rooting is a greater problem in dense clay

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soils, where tree roots must grow near the surface because there is little oxygen for good root growth deeper down. Once roots appear, there is little that can be done to remedy the situation without substantially damaging the tree. You can prune off the visible roots, but the damage to the cut roots and the fine feeder roots surrounding the area can harm or even kill the tree. Pruning the roots should be confined to situations where the roots breaking up sidewalks or driveways.

 Question: What about just adding more soil to cover up surface roots? (November 13th)

Answer: By far, the most common and serious root injuries we inflict on mature trees are from changing the soil's aeration. Adding soil, even as little as several inches over the existing surface places the major root mass that much deeper. With less oxygen, the roots may die quickly, and unless new roots can be rapidly produced in the soil surface, the tree will die. Soil compaction has the same effect, reducing available oxygen in the soil plus creating a physical barrier to new root growth. Areas that receive regular foot or vehicle traffic are prone to this problem.

The best remedy for surface roots is to choose the proper plants for the situation. But if you already have a large old tree with surface roots that you don't want to lose, you may just have to learn to accept its intrusion into the lawn.

 Question: November's torrential rains resulted in many parts of our garden being flooded. How long can plants be underwater before they will die? (November 20th)

Answer: For landscape trees and shrubs, it's difficult to say what the long-term effect of being underwater will be. When soils are completely flooded, oxygen is prevented from reaching the root system. Although some trees are more tolerant of waterlogged conditions than others, the longer the lack of aeration, the greater the chance of root death. The general thought is that most landscape plants can survive being submerged for about a week or so. The extended lack of aeration to the roots will result in root die-back, with the above-ground symptoms appearing as leaf yellowing, droopy foliage, leaf drop and eventually, branch die-back.

Right now, as the winter raining season is just beginning, there isn't much you can do other than wait for drier weather to prevail and allow water to drain. As more favorable conditions return, watch for signs of die-back, but don't be too hasty to cut limbs. Branches that have lost leaves aren't necessarily dead; even though leaves may drop, there may be live buds that will be able to re-leaf next spring. Live stems and buds will have some green tissue visible. Remove only those limbs that are physically damaged or obviously dead.

 Question: A number of our landscape trees have broken limbs with jagged ends. What is the best way to repair these? (November 20th)

Answer: Removing the jagged remains of broken limbs is the most common repair that homeowners can make after a storm. It is also an important task because if done properly, it will minimize the risk of decay pathogens entering the tree. Following good pruning techniques, cut off limb stubs where they join the next largest branch or the trunk. Do not simply cut immediately below the break. Because of its weight, a large limb could tear loose during pruning, further stripping bark and creating jagged edges that invite insects and disease. That won't happen if you follow these steps:

- A. Cut part way through the branch from beneath at a point one or two feet from the trunk.
- B. Make a second cut on the top of the branch, several inches out from the first cut. This should allow the length of the limb to fall from its own weight and be safely removed.
- C. Complete the job by making a final cut next to the trunk, just outside the branch collar, with the lower edge farther away from the trunk than at the top.

 Question: Our neighbor told us we should fertilize our lawn now. We are confused---doesn't grass go dormant in the winter? (November 27th)

Answer: Although turfgrass growth does slow down during the winter months, it does not go dormant. WSU turfgrass specialists recommend giving home lawns a final application of fertilizer between mid-November and the first week in December. Applying fertilizer now will not only enhance grass color, but also maintain turf vigor. Maintaining fertility levels this time of the year will also help reduce the fungus disease corticum red thread. This disease is notorious for giving lawns a pink discoloration during the winter months due to the light pink to red fungus strands which grow from the tips of grass blades.

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 Question: Is there anything we can do now to prevent moss from invading our lawn this winter? (November 27th)

 Answer: Regardless of what you do, most lawns in our coastal climate are prone to moss invasion during the winter. Moss thrives in an environment of low light intensity, high moisture and cool temperatures. Maintaining a regular fertilizer schedule, which includes an application of Ammonium sulfate now, will help to reduce the amount of moss. Applying 5 pounds of ammonium sulfate per 1000 square feet is the recommended rate. There are no products on the market which will prevent moss invasion.

 Question: We heard that applications of lime on our lawn would prevent moss. Is this true? (November 27th)

 Answer: Applying lime to the lawn now is a very good idea since winter rains will dissolve the lime and carry it into the root zone of the grass. Unfortunately it will do very little if anything to prevent moss from growing during the winter months. Lime reduces soils acidity and supplies calcium, an essential plant nutrient and improves soil structure over an extended period of years. It takes about three months or so for lime action to become entirely effective because it is dissolved so slowly.

 Question: We have been told that cedar sawdust is toxic to most garden plants. Is this true? (November 27th)

 Answer: This is another one of those "horticultural myths" that continues to be handed down from one generation of gardeners to another.

There is no documented evidence that cedar sawdust is phyto-toxic when used as a mulch. Cedars, especially the Thuja species, have developed chemical weapons against a number of pests and pathogens. Researchers have found that the heartwood of our common Western Red Cedar, *Thuja plicata*, contains thujaplicin, a water soluble chemical which not only inhibits various bacteria and fungi, but also has anti-tumor activity. This antimicrobial activity is more than likely responsible for the rot resistant nature of cedar wood. There is no evidence however, that this substance harms humans.

Another interesting quality of cedar is its use as an insect repellent. Cedar contains the chemical thujone which is well known for its ability to repel clothes moths. In fact, thujone and other foliar terpenes in cedar also repel, inhibit or kill cockroaches, termites, carpet beetles, Argentine ants and odorous house ants. These chemicals are not readily soluble in water, but volatilize and become airborne. Who hasn't opened the doors of a cedar-lined closet and exclaimed over the wonderful aroma?

Remember that regardless of which kind of sawdust you choose to use as a mulch, they all tie up nitrogen as they decompose in the soil, causing plants to suffer from nitrogen deficiency. Additional nitrogen fertilizer is often needed in the second and even third year the mulch is applied to maintain plant growth. Nitrogen deficiencies are easily noticed when plant leaves turn pale green and growth slows.

 Question: We have been told to use a weed killer called Casoron to prevent weeds from growing in our landscape beds during the winter months. Is it safe to use everywhere we don't want weeds to grow? (November 27th)

 Answer: While Casoron is a simple and effective herbicide for home gardeners to use, it can also cause problems when used inappropriately. Casoron will effectively kill most plants that have an herbaceous or non-woody root system. This includes all perennials as well as spring flowering bulbs like daffodils and tulips. If you do choose to use Casoron, plan on **not** being able to grow herbaceous plant material in treated areas for at least a full year after application.

While Casoron is effective in preventing weed germination, it has limited value in killing off established perennial weeds like quackgrass and dandelions. Translocated herbicides, like 2,4-D, will eliminate dandelions, while glyphosate formulations, (Roundup), will effectively kill most grass weeds when used according to labeled directions.

 Question: Our family always likes to go out and cut our own Christmas tree. Do you have any special tips on what we should do to make sure our tree lasts through the holidays? (December 4th)

 Answer: According to Washington State University Christmas Tree Scientist Dr. Gary Chastagner, "water" is the key. Chastagner's research indicates that daily water consumption by a fresh cut Christmas tree ranging from 5

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to 8 feet high, averages slightly less than a quart of water per inch diameter of the trunk. A three-inch diameter tree needs a minimum of 3 quarts of water per day. Choosing a large-capacity stand is one of the most important steps to maintaining tree freshness.

When you bring your tree home, immediately cut off a disk of wood about one-half inch thick from the base of the trunk before putting the tree into the stand. Make the cut perpendicular to the trunk axis. Don't cut the trunk at an angle or into a "V" shape. The most efficient water transporting cells are just below the bark. Once the water level falls below the exposed surface on a tapered trunk, drying will begin. Drilling a hole in the base of the trunk does not improve water uptake. Put your tree in water just as soon as possible after re-cutting the trunk.

 Question: Should I add bleach, aspirin, soft drinks, floral preservatives or other things to the water to make the tree last longer? (December 4th)

 Answer: No! Research has shown that plain tap water is by far the best. Some commercial additives and home concoctions can actually be detrimental to a tree's moisture retention and increase needle loss. Water-holding stands that are kept filled with plain water will extend the freshness of trees for weeks.

In addition, applying film-forming antitranspirants to the tree does not have a significant effect on the rate of moisture loss from the tree. These products supposedly block the evaporation of water from the surface of the foliage, but in reality they have little effect.

 Question: What if I forgot to make a fresh cut off the base of the tree before setting it up? (December 4th)

 Answer: If a fresh cut was not made the tree may still take up water but at a reduced rate. Hot tap water in the tree stand increases water uptake in some trees.

Keep displayed trees away from sources of heat, (fireplaces, heaters, heat vents, direct sunlight). Lowering the room temperature will slow the drying process, resulting in less water consumption each day. In general, if the tree continues to use a relatively constant amount of water, it indicates that the tree is maintaining a fairly high moisture level. If there is a marked reduction in water consumption, it probably indicates that the tree is beginning to dry.

 Question: We would like to plant some tree seedlings around our place. Can we do this now? How big should they be? Where can we get them in bulk quantities? (December 11th)

 Answer: You would be much better off to wait until next March to plant your seedlings. If you plant them earlier than that, you run the risk of winter-kill. However, now is the time to order your trees! [A discussion about tree seedlings follows in the complete article at the clinic.]

 Question: Despite our efforts, we never have very good luck keeping our Christmas poinsettia looking attractive. What sort of care do they need? (December 18th)

 Answer: The long-lasting nature of today's poinsettias can be enjoyed only if they receive the proper care in your home. The best way to extend their beauty is to match, as closely as possible, the conditions in which they were produced. Poinsettias are raised in greenhouses where cool temperatures can be maintained between 60 and 75°F. with high relative humidity and high light intensity. The following tips will help keep your poinsettia looking festive throughout the holiday season.

A. Protect your plant with a large shopping bag when transporting it home or to a friend's. Plants left in an unheated car can be injured or killed quickly.

B. Place your plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day. If direct sun can't be avoided, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain. Do not allow the foliage or flowers to contact cold window glass. Both hot and cold drafts can cause leaf drop, so avoid placing plants near doors, fireplaces or heating vents.

C. Both under and over-watering can decrease the life of your plant. Plants that are allowed to wilt will begin to brown along the edges of the leaves or may drop leaves entirely. Poinsettias should be watered when the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch. Be sure to allow water to drain away.

 Question: Our Christmas poinsettia is absolutely beautiful! We would really like to try and keep it growing for next year's holiday season. How do we do this? (December 18th)

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Answer: Unless you are a dedicated gardener, enjoy your holiday poinsettia and then discard it. Red poinsettias will last well over a month in your home and the white and pink varieties may retain their beauty for more than two months. If night temperatures are near 60 degrees F., then these times can be extended even further.

Question: Both of our fruit trees and some of our deciduous azaleas are covered with crusty, gray colored growths. What is this? Will it kill our plants? Should we be spraying it with something? (December 25th)

Answer: The crusty, gray colored growths you are referring to are most likely lichens. The cool, cloudy, wet weather in our area is ideal for these organisms. Lichens have two components—a fungus and an algae living in association with one another to give the appearance of a single plant.

They do not directly injure the plant on which they grow. Heavy growth however, may have a "suffocating" effect and can reduce the sunlight reaching the leaves. In addition, they can harbor insects and also hold extra water on the plant. During a freeze, the water turns to ice and adds weight to the plant making it more susceptible to wind damage.

One of the easiest things home gardeners can do to eliminate lichens is to simply prune infested trees and shrubs to allow better air circulation and light penetration. A dormant spray of lime sulfur applied in January will effectively control lichens on deciduous plants when used according to labeled directions. Do not apply lime sulfur on evergreen plants such as rhododendrons and conifers as it will damage the leaves.

Question: My African violets always quit blooming during the winter months. What can I do to make them flower? (December 25th)

Answer: Violets quit blooming during the winter months because they do not have enough light. Although these plants grow well in indirect light, it must be bright; however, don't put the plant in full sun. Not only is light intensity a problem, but so is its duration. Twelve hours of bright, natural light is not likely in winter, so plants need artificial light. Turn lights on for 14 to 16 hours each day.

Dates to Keep In Mind

Meetings

NORTHWEST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY:

Wednesday, January 10, 6:45 p.m.

"Woodland Monarchy: *Podophyllum - Paris - Arisaema*"

The first 2007 meeting of the NW Horticulture Society will be held at the UW Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH), located at 3501 NE 41st in Seattle. A reception will be held starting at 6:45 p.m., followed by a lecture at 7:15 p.m. Dave DeMers, a Vancouver Based horticulturist and plant explorer, will share his excitement about the 3 named special genera for the woodland garden. He will tell us about their lives in the wild and provide advice for adapting them to the NW woodland. Price: \$5 for NHS members; \$10 for non-members.

NORTHWEST HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY:

Wednesday, March 14, 6:45 p.m.

"The Plant Hunter's Garden" Bobby Ward, an environmental scientist and author, will introduce us to nursery men and women who have made their mark in horticul-

ture since the end of the Cold War. He will tell us about their adventures and discuss their best contributions to our gardens. Same time, place and cost as the January event.

Shows

NW FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW

