



## President's Corner

As you have probably read by now, we are planning an Italian theme for our January pot luck dinner on the 21st. Please RSVP to Kelly and please join us, it should be a lot of fun. We will have a brief business meeting and also discuss plans for the New Year. If there is enough interest, we may be doing a significant project this summer on alternate methods to grow tomatoes. Did you know that tomatoes were native to South America? The earliest discussion of the tomato in European literature appeared in 1544 by Pietro Mattioli, who suggested that a new type of eggplant had been brought to Italy that was blood red or golden color when mature and could be divided into segments and cooked, seasoned with salt, black pepper and oil. We will be enjoying Pietro's new dish at our meeting on January 21st.

We need to sign up as many folks as we can for the new Master Gardener class starting on January 14. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please send them the attached flyer.

For those of us who planted a fall and winter garden, this warm weather has produced some tremendous crops! The problem is, my fruit trees are already starting to bud. Hopefully the weather will continue to be mild, and we will have an early spring. I have included the January and February garden guidelines because we need to be looking ahead a little if this warm weather continues.

*John*

John Kueck  
Master Gardener Association President

## January Master Gardener Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **January 21 at 5:30 p.m. at the Ag Center and Fairgrounds**. We will be hosting "Little Italy Night". Master Gardeners are asked to bring any two of salad, bread, soup or entrée. The Master Gardener Association will provide dessert, table settings and drinks. Please RSVP by calling Kelly at the Extension office by January 15.



# January & February Gardening Tips

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## January Indoors

- Don't forget to water your succulents. Just because they like it on the dry side doesn't mean they don't need water. The lack of humidity in your home during the winter months can dry them out more than you think. Depending on the pot size and the soil-to-plant ration, I water mine every two to three weeks. I like to set them in the sink for the process. If they are really dry, you may need to water them twice because the first time you water them it may run through.
- Keep a check on tropical plants like elephant ears, bananas, cannas, ginger, agaves and Boston and Kimberly Queen ferns that you may have stored in an enclosed garage, basement or crawl space under the house. Carefully check them for water. They don't need to totally dry out, but they can easily be overwatered causing them to rot. Any rotting foliage should be removed to prevent further decay.
- For some added color and fragrance during the bleak days of January and February, check out your local garden center for leftover paperwhite and amaryllis bulbs that are likely to be on sale now. Look for bulbs that are firm and have not sprouted. To keep your paperwhites from flopping over, add alcohol to the water. For details on this unusual cultural technique, check out this website from Cornell: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/hort/2009/11/10/pickling-your-paperwhites/>.
- Once your poinsettias begin to languish, often it is best to add them to the compost pile.
- Keep a check on stored garden produce such as potatoes, turnips, winter squash, apples and pears for bad spots that may lead to decay. Remove them and use those with small blemishes right away. Be sure the remaining produce is spread out to allow for good airflow.
- Study seed catalogs if the cold days of winter seem unrelenting, and dream of lush, warmer days.

## January Outdoors

- Continue to keep the leaves off your lawn, especially on cool-season lawns, because they continue to photosynthesize during the winter. We have the tendency to let the seemingly ever-falling oak leaves build up during the cold days of winter. On a dry, warmish day, you can mow both cool and warm season lawns to help groom the lawn and mulch the leaves. Avoid heavy traffic on cool season lawns when it is cold enough for the grass to be frozen. Frozen grass is easily broken and the crown can also be severely damaged.
- In the event of wet snow, brush it off evergreens as it accumulates or as soon as possible after the storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage can be caused by heavy wet snow.
- Avoid using salt to melt snow and ice from your walks and driveway, as it can be harmful to your plants. Several environmentally friendly products are available at home improvement stores.
- As long as the ground is not frozen, you can continue to plant new trees and shrubs, just tuck them in with a 2 or 3 inch layer of mulch. Remember to keep the mulch away from the trunk.
- Pansies will benefit if you pinch off their withered and cold-damaged blooms.

## February Indoors

- Sow broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage seed indoors now or buy transplants in March. Harden them off before planting out in March.
  - Extend the life of your Valentine's Day flowers by changing the water daily and recutting the stems every couple of days, making sure the foliage is kept above the water line.
  - Remove dust from your house plants by rinsing them in the shower.
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# January & February Gardening Tips Continued

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## February Outdoors

- Bluebirds are already looking for a place to nest, so clean out your birdhouse soon. If you are in need of a good bluebird house, check out Homes for Bluebirds Inc. <http://www.danfinch.com/birds.htm>.
  - Barrenwort (*Epimedium*) and Lungwort (*Pulmonaria*) will be in flower soon. Cut back last year's foliage before new growth appears.
  - Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*) and its hybrids are one of the first plants to flower in the new year. A little cleanup makes a big difference when these winter beauties blossom. There are two thoughts on removing last year's foliage. If you're like me, there's less to do in the garden now, and if I wait around until March, it might not get done. I like to cut back last year's foliage on *Helleborus* before the flower stalks appear. Follow the old leaves down to the crown and remove the entire leaf stalk near the soil. In mild winters, the foliage often still looks good in February, but as the flowers and new foliage appear, the old leaves will become unsightly. The old foliage will be much more difficult to remove once the new growth has appeared. In some winters, the earliest flowers may get damaged, but I don't mind sacrificing a few for a tidy plant later on.
  - For indoor forcing of blooms, cut branches of pussy willow, forsythia, flowering quince, redbud and star and saucer magnolia. Choose stems with flower buds that have begun to swell. Cut them at an angle and place in water in a cool location in your home with indirect light.
  - Late February and March are good times to trim trees and shrubs. If the limb is larger than 2 inches in diameter, or heavily weighted, use the three-step method for removing branches. Make the first cut on the underside of the limb about 6 inches away from the trunk, cutting about one-third of the way through the limb. On the top side, cut through the limb 3 to 6 inches beyond the first cut. Remember when pruning to remove dead or diseased branches first and then take out any rubbing or crossed branches. Prune to maintain a natural form unless formality is appropriate for the design.
  - Postpone pruning of spring-flowering and early summer-flowering shrubs like azaleas, forsythia, spirea, and mophead hydrangea until just after they flower.
  - Cut back monkey grass (*Liriope*) before new growth appears. Use a string trimmer for larger areas.
  - Spot-control weeds in a dormant warm-season lawn by pulling them or by applying a broadleaf weed control.
  - Apply dormant horticulture oil, such as Ultra-Fine, to fruit and nut trees to eliminate scale and other pests. It must be applied before spring growth appears. These oils also can control scale insects on hollies, euonymus and camellias. For best results, be sure to completely spray the entire plant.
  - Soil in Tennessee tends to be acidic. Have your soil tested to see if and how much lime is needed. Your local UT Extension office can provide you with instructions on how to proceed. It takes months for lime to react with the soil, so the sooner the better. Pelletized lime is the easiest form to apply.
  - Green/English and sugar snap peas can be direct sown in the garden in February. In cooler parts of the state, wait until the end of the month. If sown too late, they will not have time to flower and fruit before it gets too hot.
  - If your ornamental grasses such as *Miscanthus*, *Pennisetum*, Mexican feather, switchgrass and muhly grass are looking tattered and blowing about the garden, cut them back 3 to 6 inches above the ground. You can wait until March.
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# November Master Gardener Meeting Minutes

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The regularly scheduled meeting of the Master Gardener Association was held at the Ag Center and led by President John Kueck. He reviewed the two day participation in PumpkinFest on October 30 and 31. Feedback was so good that he asked if the Master Gardeners wished to participate again next year. The members who volunteered in the booth felt the children and parents had great exposure to the Master Gardener program, many for the first time, and that we should have a booth again next year. This was placed in the form of a motion by Dianne Pfeiffer and seconded by Eddie Starring and passed unanimously.

Treasurer report: no report at this time.

Discussion followed concerning the completion of the barn, hoop house and then on to the specifics of the Master Gardener Building:

- We need to make sure we have the commitment of time and people
- When finished it will be for Master Gardener activities, with no scheduling conflicts from other groups
- We have the restriction of finishing within the two fiscal years. We can get it done but it must be in the dry, stud walls, doors and windows as soon as possible as well as HVAC.
- 2016: when all of the above is done we can look at inside equipment such as chairs, tables, and a kitchen if possible...it will be Master Gardeners' decision and we must find the hours and workers

Thomas then presented the possibility of a *Junior Master Gardener program*. He is very excited about the prospects of this and explained there would be training on March 17-19, 2016 at the state Master Gardener Conference. He will need help from the Master Gardeners and must also get the sponsorship of teachers and the school system in general.

Thomas also expressed a desire to have the Master Gardeners travel to the UT Gardens to tour and learn of their experiments with soil, plants and pest control—hopefully this spring (April/May).

*The State of TN Master Gardeners Association* is going to order business cards for any Master Gardener interested in having them...please let Thomas know.

There will be *NO December meeting in 2015*, but an important January meeting with a pot-luck supper on January 21.

*The 2016 Intern Class* will start in January on the 14<sup>th</sup>. There are pamphlets and fliers available. Please take some and talk to those you think might be interested. If you need some to distribute, please take some or come by the Extension office.

*Possible fund raisers*: ordering fruit trees at wholesale prices and selling them at a profit; would take pre-orders as not to be left with ones not paid for in advance. If we order in large amount our shipping costs go down. It was also discussed about the idea of strawberry plants at Strawberry Festival (they would be June bearing plants), as the exposure at PumpkinFest was so good to the community. It was suggested to review this project at the January meeting as there were some concerns about the inability to preorder those, not knowing how sales would go; but then Thomas and John expressed concern that January would be too late to make this decision for the fruit tree sale. This was placed in the form of a motion by John Kueck and seconded by Bruce Pfeiffer to endorse the fruit tree sale which passed unanimously.

*MainStreet Dayton Membership*: one of our active members brought up the possibility of joining MainStreet Dayton. A discussion followed and it was decided to look at the cost of membership vs. how much would be gained by the Master Gardeners. This was tabled to the next meeting after costs/info would be gathered

*2016 Spring/Summer Program*: UT/TSU Extension will again be offering a "short" course and Thomas is looking for suggestions on new ideas for that course. He also asked that we bring ideas on *Container Gardening to the January meeting*...he is hoping to reach the community with our topics by newspaper articles, outlines, posters, etc. Any ideas on better exposure to the community are welcome. His ideas for novel programs this year include: tomato variety tasting (new, heirloom, and tried and true varieties); comparing raised beds with straw bale planting and in ground plantings; compare the yields, low/medium/high acidity.

Natalie Baumgartner would like to spotlight our Ag Center, so keep this in mind as we commit to our projects this year. We could really shine!

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned with wishes for all to have a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Blevins*

Substituting for Faith Young

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