

December 2016-Vol.2 No.12



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December Shopping List for Your Favorite Gardener(s)

By Cleve Campbell | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12



To sit in the shade on a fine day and look upon verdure is the most perfect refreshment.- Jane Austen

In the spring at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.- Margaret Atwood

I like gardening - it's a place where I find myself when I need to lose myself. - Alice Sebold

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.- Walt Whitman

Flowers are restful to look at. They have neither emotions nor conflicts.- Sigmund Freud

No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden.-Thomas Jefferson

There you have it. Gardening brings contentment and a feeling of oneness with nature - a pastime that should be encouraged for the people you love. In the spirit of adding to the health and happiness of the gardener(s) in our lives, here is a list of suggested gifts. One or more is sure to please!

- Garden bench - There are some really beautiful benches made of many types of materials

- including weather-resistant woods such as teak and cedar, recycled plastic, concrete and metals.
- Birdbath – and a promissory note to clean it (the hard part of this gift!)
 - Bluebird house – For the do-it-yourselfer, visit the website for the Ivy Creek Foundation on how to build and how to select favorable installation conditions; for purchasing bluebird houses, check the website for the Virginia Bluebird Society.
 - Beautiful ceramic pot they’ve been eyeing for next spring
 - Rubber clogs and/or rubber boots – There are many other brands including: Sloggers, Muck and BOGS, to name just a couple
 - New garden gloves – There are many types of gloves at all price ranges
 - Plant Markers – Zinc or aluminum markers for the perennial garden
 - Journal for logging gardening information
 - Tool sharpeners
 - Small pruners – Felco is a good brand, pricey, but this is for a present. Make it even snazzier with a leather holster – fastest pruners in the Piedmont! This brand makes models for small hands and for lefties.
 - Contractor’s canvas tool belt for keeping track of smaller-sized tools
 - Loppers – Felco and Bahco are good brands
 - An ergonomic trowel
 - Gift certificate to an area nursery
 - A manicure kit to repair nails, made grimy from digging in the dirt
 - Seed packets as a stocking stuffer
 - Kneeling pads to help protect against those aches and pains from weeding or planting
 - Heating mats for seed starting
 - Contribution in his/her name to City Schoolyard Gardens ([org](#))
 - “Official” gift certificate from you promising labor to install a compost pile
 - “Official” gift certificate from you promising labor to fulfill whatever whim your favorite gardener requests
 - Subscription to *Virginia Gardener* magazine

Books:

A Rich Place on Earth by Peter Hatch

Fifty Plants That Changed History by Bill Laws

Flora of Virginia by Alan S Weakley

Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide by Lawrence Newcomb and Gordon Morrison

50 Beautiful Deer-Resistant Plants: The Prettiest Annuals, Perennials, Bulbs, and Shrubs that Deer Don’t Eat by Ruth Rogers Clausen and San Detrick

The Perennial Care Manual: A Plant-by-Plant Guide: What to Do and When to Do It by Nancy J. Ondra and Rob Cardillo

What’s Wrong With My Plant (And How Do I Fix It?): A Visual Guide to Easy Diagnosis and Organic Remedies (What’s Wrong Series) by David Deardorff and Kathryn Wadsworth

The Living Landscape by Douglas W. Tallamy

Bringing Nature Home by Douglas W. Tallamy

Continuing Education:

Try a gardening course, such as the 2017 Spring Lecture Series sponsored by the Piedmont Master Gardeners. These evening lectures (about 2 hours long) will be held on March 16, 23, 30 and April 13. (Examples of topics for 2016 series: epic tomatoes, bulbs as companion plants, and composting for the home gardener.) Check <http://www.pmgarchives.com> for more information in January.

The one-day Piedmont Landscape Association (PLA) seminar held every February at the Paramount Theater on the downtown mall in Charlottesville. Check <http://www.piedmontlandscape.org/seminar.html> in December for 2017 seminar details.

Tufton Farms, one of Thomas Jefferson's quarter farms, now home of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, offers many interesting educational lectures and courses, including the *Saturdays in the Garden Workshops* and lectures offered at Tufton's three annual open houses. For more information, see www.monticello.org.

Lewis-Ginter Gardens in Richmond offers classes on topics ranging from gardening and landscape design to botanical illustrating. See www.lewisginter.org.

- **Garden-centered trips**—A “promise of spring-to-come” all wrapped up with a bow—just when it's most needed!

Lewis Ginter Gardens in Richmond - voted #4 public garden in North America by readers of *USA Today*. You can check the “What's in Bloom” feature on their website to get a current update on what's in flower.

United States Botanic Garden and the National Garden, Washington, DC

Norfolk Botanical Garden

Chanticleer Gardens, Wayne, PA, the country estate of the Rosengarten family, offers beautiful gardens. Be aware that the parking lot holds 120 cars and, if it's full, you'll be asked to return at a later time.

2017 Annual Flower Show in Philadelphia, March 11-March 19, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. This year's theme celebrates the wonders of Holland.

The 2017 Annual Festival of Houses and Gardens, Charleston, SC, March 16-April 22

North Carolina Azalea Festival in Wilmington, April 5-9. Many events, including the Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour

Historic Garden Week, Charlottesville/Albemarle County, sponsored this year by the Albemarle Garden Club, April 22-29

The Biltmore Festival of Flowers, Asheville, NC, April-May



Wow, we have a few gifts to deliver!

We **The Garden Shed Team** wish you and your family a **Safe and Happy Holiday Season** and we look forward to you stopping by The Garden Shed in 2017.

American Holly – More than Just a Holiday Decoration

By Patsy Chadwick | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12



During the winter holiday season, it's not uncommon to find oneself mindlessly humming "Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly" or "The Holly Bears a Berry" or, perhaps, "The Holly and the Ivy." Why this preoccupation with holly, you ask. These traditional English carols refer to the English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), long the subject of European folklore. Because holly remained green in the dead of winter when all else appeared dead, ancient cultures believed it was imbued with magical powers. Eventually, the holly was adopted by Christians throughout England and Europe as a symbol of Christmas. Although the origins of much of the folklore regarding the holly tree have long been forgotten, the custom of decorating our homes with it in winter continues to the present time.



American Holly (Ilex opaca)

The Pilgrims carried this fascination with hollies over from the old world to the new. Arriving the week before Christmas, 1620, in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts, they found many unfamiliar plant species. However, one tree looked familiar to them — the American holly (*Ilex opaca*). A welcome sight, the tree most likely reminded them of their beloved English holly.

The native American holly was used extensively in early colonial gardens. George Washington's ornamental garden at Mount Vernon, populated almost exclusively with native species, was no exception. An admirer of native hollies, Washington mentioned them often in his diaries. On March 28, 1786, he noted his gratitude for a gift of holly seedlings received from Colonel "Lighthorse Harry" Lee. The seedlings were planted that spring in the South Semicircle at Mount Vernon, where they continued to grace the estate well into the 1900s.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMERICAN HOLLY

The American holly's natural range extends from Massachusetts south to Florida and west to Texas and Missouri. It can look somewhat shrubby and misshapen in a woodland setting where it must compete for sunlight, space, and nutrients. But if grown in a spacious landscape setting, this hardy, broadleaf evergreen displays dense, horizontal branching and a symmetrical, pyramidal shape. Although slow growing, a mature specimen will eventually grow 50 feet tall on average with a spread of 18 to 40 feet.

American holly foliage is stiff, spiny, leathery, and dark to olive green. The spines are as sharp as thorns, making it a daunting task for humans to navigate through the dense, prickly foliage. Birds, on the other hand, find its foliage the ideal habitat for nesting and a refuge from hungry predators.

In late spring, small white flowers appear all along the branches. While not particularly noticeable to humans, the flowers attract a broad range of pollinators. In summer, following pollination, green berries form along the branches during the summer. Technically, the berries are four-seeded drupes, or fleshy fruits surrounding a central seed or seeds. In fall, the tree undergoes a transformation as the berries turn from inconspicuous green to glorious, crimson red. The berries are poisonous to humans but an important food source for birds during the winter.

In his illustrated encyclopedia of hardy trees and shrubs, Dr. Michael A. Dirr describes the American holly as perhaps the "finest tree-type evergreen holly." Of the more than 1,000 named cultivars in existence, many of them are superior to the species in terms of habit, disease resistance, and berry production. 'Old Heavy Berry' is considered to be one of the best fruiting selections of the many red-berried cultivars. 'Satyr Hill' is another commonly grown cultivar. It has the distinction of being named "Holly of the Year" in 2003 by the Holly Society of America, Inc.

While the vast majority of American holly cultivars have red berries, some cultivars have yellow or orange-red berries. 'Goldie' is an example of a yellow-berried cultivar that bears an extra heavy crop of berries. 'Grace McCutchin' is an example of a cultivar that bears orange-red fruit.

American holly is a dioecious plant, with staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers on separate plants. In other words, a male pollinator plant must be available in order for a female plant to produce berries.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN AMERICAN HOLLY AND OTHER EVERGREEN HOLLY SPECIES

In addition to the American holly species, several other evergreen holly species are also native to Virginia. Unlike the American holly, which tends to grow into a medium-size tree, the other native species are shrubs or small trees. For example:

- **Inkberry holly (*I. glabra*)** - This shrub form's small, smooth, spineless leaves faintly resemble those of boxwood. Unlike other holly species, Inkberry holly produces black berries. This plant is widely available commercially and is commonly used in foundation plantings.
- **Large Gallberry (*I. coriacea*)** - This large 10 to 15-foot tall shrub with small, leathery leaves is similar in appearance to Inkberry. It also produces black berries that are larger than those of Inkberry. This plant is native to the southeastern tip of the Virginia coast, bordering on North Carolina, where it thrives in moist, sandy soil. It does not hold its fruit like other holly species but drops it in late summer or fall.
- **Yaupon holly (*I. vomitoria*)** - This large 10 to 20-foot tall shrub or small, multi-trunked tree with an irregularly branched form has small, oval-shaped shiny leaves that are slightly serrated on the margins. This species is available commercially and is generally used for hedges or foundation plantings. This is the only native North American plant that contains caffeine.

Holly is native to every continent except Antarctica. Many non-native species and their cultivars are widely distributed throughout the United States. For comparison purposes, here's how some of the more commonly grown non-natives compare with the American holly:



Variegated English Holly (Ilex aquifolium)

English holly (*I. aquifolium*) — This species is smaller than the American holly, topping out at around 35 feet. It has glossy, spiny leaves as opposed to the larger, duller, non-glossy foliage of the American holly. The leaves on both species have very sharp thorn-like spines on their margins. English holly is less hardy than American holly and does not like the heat and heavy soils of the southeast United States. The seeds of English hollies are widely spread by birds, which carry them into forested areas. The plant roots sucker, allowing dense thickets to form. The thickets cast deep shade, which affects nearby native vegetation. As a result, English holly is considered to be an invasive species in the Pacific Northwest, New Jersey, and Virginia.

- **Chinese Holly (*I. cornuta*)**

- This 10- to 15-foot tall species is much smaller and less spiny than the American holly. Whereas American hollies are dioecious, Chinese hollies can produce berries without the benefit of male pollination. Depending on the selection, berry colors can range from red to yellow or dark orange. The straight species of this plant is not sold in the landscape trade, but many cultivars are available, including one of the most popular, the 'Burfordii'. A Burford holly can be grown as a large, dense shrub or limbed up into a small tree. A dwarf form of 'Burfordii', with slightly puckered leaves, grows to about 6 feet tall and 4 feet wide.



Dwarf Burford Holly (Ilex cornuta)

- **Japanese Holly (*I. crenata*)** - Unlike American hollies, which have very spiny leaves, Japanese holly foliage does not have any spines. Many of the Japanese holly cultivars have dense oval shrubby forms that mimic the look of boxwood. 'Compacta' is a neat, globe-shaped form of Japanese holly that grows 6 to 8 feet tall and slightly wider. 'Helleri' is another globe or mound-shaped cultivar that only grows to about 4 feet tall. 'Steeds' is an upright, conical selection that grows to about 8 feet tall. 'Sky Pencil' is a popular columnar cultivar that grows 10 feet tall but spreads less than 2 feet wide. The Holly Society of America, Inc., named 'Sky Pencil' as it's Holly of the Year in 2004.



'Sky Pencil' Japanese Holly (Ilex crenata)

CULTURE AND GROWING CONDITIONS

American hollies thrive in USDA Zones 5 to 9 and are adaptable to a broad range of site conditions, including

sandy, loamy, or clay soils. For best success in growing American holly, buy a balled and burlapped or containerized plant rather than a bare-root specimen, which may not transplant as well. Avoid digging up holly specimens from the wild, as they don't ordinarily transplant very well.

The planting site should be sunny or partially shady. While hollies can tolerate a fair amount of shade, they will grow better and bear more berries if grown in full sun. Too much shade will result in a more open, leggier habit with fewer flowers and a diminished fruit production. Site it well, since it can live for more than 100 years.

The soil should be slightly acidic (with a pH ranging from 3.5 to 6.0) and moist but well-drained. Hollies don't like soggy soil. Once established, American hollies can thrive in a site with dry soil, although it does appreciate a little supplemental water in really dry conditions.

In colder, northernmost areas of its range, American holly does best if planted in a site that provides shelter from the wind in winter. Frigid, drying north winds can desiccate the leaves, causing them to turn brown, and kill the twigs and branches. While this can stress the tree, it will produce new leaves in spring.

Plant both a male and a female of the same species that bloom at the same time. For best berry production, position the two plants within 40 feet of one another. One male is generally sufficient to pollinate three female trees.

AMERICAN HOLLY PESTS, DISEASES AND OTHER PROBLEMS

American holly is subject to a number of fungal diseases but few actually threaten the health of the tree. Root rot can be a problem if the soil is soggy and does not drain well. Holly Leaf miner (*Phytomyza ilicicola*) and holly scale (*Asphondylia ilicicola*) are the worst of the insect pest problems.

Deer browse can be an issue in winter when food is scarce. However, the prickly foliage will generally keep browse damage to a minimum. While birds are the primary consumers of the berries, deer, squirrels, and other small mammals will eat them as well.

USES FOR AMERICAN HOLLY IN THE LANDSCAPE

Use American holly as a focal point in the landscape, giving it plenty of room so that it can be enjoyed as a specimen tree. It also works as a vertical accent in a large-scale mixed border. It responds well to pruning and, thus, can be used to create a tall hedge or a screen. Keep the mature size in mind when spacing the trees apart.

American holly species and their cultivars are easy to grow, drought tolerant, generally deer resistant, a favorite of many pollinator insects, and require little or no maintenance. While attractive all year round, they are especially appreciated in the winter garden where most other plants are dormant and the color green is largely absent.

SOURCES

A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America (Peattie, Donald Culross, 1948)

Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs, An Illustrated Encyclopedia (Dirr, Michael A., 1997)

Founding Gardeners (Wulf, Andrea, 2011)

"Evergreen Hollies (Ilex spp)," Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 3010-1482

pubs.ext.vt.edu/3010/3010-1482

“American Holly,” University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment website [uky.edu/hort/American-Holly](https://www.uky.edu/hort/American-Holly)

“Aquifoliaceae *Ilex opaca*,” Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation Website, [American Holly Fact Sheet](#)

“Problem Plant: English Holly,” Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia website mgnv.org/reading-room/problem-plants

Holly Society of America website (hollysocam.org)

The Ornamental Garden in December

By Patsy Chadwick | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12

December marks the beginning of the winter solstice and the shortest, darkest days of the year. Now that the gardening chores are done and the garden is asleep until spring, it's time to break out your warmest sweaters, light a fire in the fireplace, and decorate the house for the holidays. While you're at it, invite a few friends and neighbors over to indulge in some holiday cheer.



Frosted Nandina Foliage in Winter Garden

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

At this time of year, it is customary for many of us to decorate our homes with outdoorsy elements for the winter holidays - holly, ivy, yew, and mistletoe, to name a few. The origins of this tradition are lost in the mists of time. According to a University of Vermont Extension article, (pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/holgreens), the Greeks and Romans were among the first to bring evergreen tree boughs indoors in winter. Centuries later, as a nod to tradition, we continue to decorate our homes with beautiful evergreen boughs.

Lawn Decorations — A lot of people go overboard with lawn and house decorations at this time of year and that's OK. As for me, I draw the line at the oversized Frosty the Snowman and Darth Vader figures on the front lawn. Personally, I prefer to keep things simple. The easiest and, to my mind, most pleasing way to decorate for the holidays is to position a single spot light at the base of a tree with interesting bark. The cinnamon-color bark of the "Natchez" Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) is a good candidate for this simple treatment. The River Birch's (*Betula nigra*) peeling bark and graceful silhouette make that tree another excellent candidate. Our neighbors to the north could do this to great effect with a White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*). Turn the spot light on at dusk and get ready for plenty of oohs and aahs as the light creates a startling contrast of light and shadow against the backdrop of the night sky. Its Mother Nature's equivalent of the little black dress and single strand of pearls - understated but oh so perfect!

Evergreen Wreaths — If you're planning to use a freshly cut or ready-made evergreen wreath, store it in a cool location until it is ready to be decorated. Soak it in warm water for several hours to keep it moist and looking fresh. Drain it well and then spray it with an anti-desiccant spray to seal in the moisture. After the sealer has set, finish decorating the wreath and hang it, preferably in a shady place that doesn't receive sun. Warning: If you are using boxwood clippings in your wreath or other holiday decorations, see the last paragraph below for information on boxwood blight.

Poinsettias — Choose a poinsettia that has healthy green leaves all the way to the bottom of the plant. Missing or fallen leaves usually indicate that the plant was allowed to dry out. For the longest bloom time, choose a plant with flowers that are not yet fully open. The flowers, by the way, are not the brightly colored bracts (modified leaves). Rather, they are the somewhat inconspicuous yellow-green looking bumps in the middle of the bracts. Poinsettias are very sensitive to cold temperatures, so protect the plant from the cold while you are transporting it to your house.

CHRISTMAS TREES

Cut Christmas trees — So you just bought a cut Christmas tree and can't wait to trim it, right? STOP!! Before you decorate, here are some tips for keeping the tree at its freshest:

- **Trim the tree trunk.** It's always best to buy the freshest tree available but most Christmas trees are cut well in advance of the holidays. If you buy one of these trees, it will be very thirsty. Before you bring it indoors, cut about an inch or two off the bottom of the tree trunk. Be careful not to injure yourself in the process. The fresh cut will allow the tree to absorb water more readily. Place the trunk in a large bucket of water and leave it in a cool place overnight to allow the tree to soak up as much water as possible. Of course, if you have just bought a freshly cut tree, you may skip this step.
- **Position the tree away from heat sources and brightly lit windows.** Select a place in your home where the tree can be kept cool and out of bright light. In other words, don't place the tree in front of a sunny window or position it near a heating vent, fireplace, or stove where the warm air will dry out the needles. To the extent reasonable, lower the temperature in the room. The cooler air will help to keep the tree from drying out.
- **Check water levels often.** After you position the tree in a tree stand, fill the stand with water. Check the water daily and refill the stand with fresh water as needed.
- **Mist often with plain water.** Dry winter air, combined with indoor heating, can quickly dry out freshly cut evergreens. Keep a spray bottle filled with plain water handy and mist your tree, wreaths, and garlands. This will help prolong the freshness of your greenery.

Live Christmas Trees — If you bought a live Christmas tree with the intention of planting it in your landscape after the holidays, keep it outdoors until you're ready to decorate it. Make sure the root ball stays moist and does not dry out. Once you move the tree indoors, keep it in a cool room for a few days only. As soon as possible, move it back outside and continue to keep it well hydrated until it can be planted in a permanent spot in the landscape. For additional information on Christmas tree care, See the Virginia Cooperative Extension's Publication 420-641, "Selection and Care of Christmas Trees" (<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/420/420-641/>).

MOTHER NATURE'S HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

While decorating for the holiday season, look to Mother Nature for ideas to liven up your landscape. Naturally, evergreens such as junipers, arborvitae, pines, spruce, and yew add much needed color, but your options are much broader than just evergreens. For example, the crimson red berries of deciduous hollies (*Ilex verticillata*) make a stunning visual statement in the landscape. Some trees and shrubs have bark that peels, revealing much needed texture in the landscape as well as beautiful shades of cinnamon, brown or gray. The unusual branching habit of Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (*Coryllus Avellana Contorta*) can't be beat in the winter landscape. For greater winter interest in next year's garden, make a note to consider adding plants with colorful berries, bark, or unique growth habits.

BOXWOOD BLIGHT

If you purchase ready-made wreaths, swags, and other decorations made from boxwood clippings, inspect them for symptoms of boxwood blight (*Calonectria pseudonaviculata*). Symptoms include leaf spot, leaf drop, browning, or black streaks on stems. Although reputable nurseries and other suppliers of holiday greenery are taking precautions to avoid spreading this disease, it pays to be cautious. After working with boxwood decorations, sterilize garden tools with alcohol or a chlorine bleach solution. Once the holidays are over, do not compost the decorations or recycle them in your landscape. Instead, bag them for disposal in the trash. For more information, see Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication PPWS-4, "[Boxwood Blight: A New](#)

Disease of Boxwood Found in the Eastern U. S.”



Boxwood Blight. Photo: Richard Buckley, Rutgers University PDL



Boxwood Blight. Note fallen leaves. Photo: Richard Buckley, Rutgers University PDL



Boxwood Blight. Note black stem lesions caused by blight. Photo: Richard Buckley, Rutgers University PDL

Becoming a Master Gardener

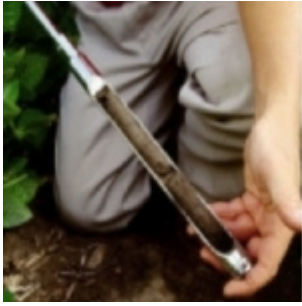
By Cleve Campbell | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12



I am one of the newest batch of Master Gardener Interns. This means that this past spring over the course of 3 months, we have had a massive amount of information poured into our heads. We have been educated by a variety of incredibly knowledgeable speakers whose wealth of information astounds me. From abiotic stress (who even knew what that was?), to vegetable gardening, to pruning, to water quality, to plant propagation, to native plants and why they are important to keep in our landscapes, we have covered more topics than I have fingers to count them on. It has been a stupendous experience.

And what I have learned is this: I know nothing!! Forget the idea of being a “master” of anything at the end of our 3-month training. It will take years and years to reach a point of expertise in any given area. Shucks!

The value of the training is the learning and exposure it gives you to know how to obtain information and how to impart that information to others. We are now aware of the many resources out there and how to use them- for example, that using .edu sites and extension sites are preferable to using commercial sites when researching a topic



Taking a soil sample.

We impart only science-based information. We now know there is an Integrated Pest Management Plan (this is going to take me a long time to wade through—the content material is not quite as riveting as the latest mystery novel. Actually, now that I think of it, it sort of IS a mystery novel—at least to me.) We have been introduced to some fine gardeners throughout the state and sources of good quality supplies. We have learned about soil pH and the value of a soil test. That by itself is worth the price of the course. We have been introduced to many of the projects going on throughout Albemarle County, which are run by Master Gardeners, using both their expertise and their muscle power. We have met some seriously accomplished local gardeners. We have sweated with anxiety standing in front of the class, giving our short presentations. It is the best course I have ever taken.

During our 3-month training, we flew from topic to topic faster than a mosquito finds a human victim to bite. I volunteered in one of the MG demonstration gardens at the Senior Center Rose garden one Friday morning and learned about using fish emulsion as a good fertilizer. I immediately went out to buy some. But then it rained for 2 weeks and I forgot about fish emulsion. By then we were on to pruning. The fish emulsion is still setting on the floor of our kitchen unopened. After the lesson on pruning, I got a pruning saw for my birthday and could hardly wait for daylight so I could begin my next project... getting rid of a beautiful but overly vigorous vine that was growing up into our chimney, one that had been indentified as an invasive plant by a neighboring gardener. We had just finished the class on invasive species and I was not going to let that thing live to see another season. Did I know exactly what I was doing? No. But it was fun and I felt like I was making headway! I'm going to be a Master Gardener! (Too bad that it turned out to NOT be the invasive variety and we now have a gaping hole on the side of our house where we once had lovely green foliage.) Two steps forward, one step back, I always say!



The Senior Center Rose Garden- A Piedmont Master Gardeners Project.

If you love plants and gardening and have time to attend one day per week classes and do lots of reading (OK, and the time for a few panic attacks from the sheer amount of material you are presented with), the Piedmont Master Gardener Program might just be the next step for you. Any of the newest interns would be thrilled to tell you about their experiences. And someday I may even know enough to actually answer a question when working the Horticulture Help Desk!

Here is how you too can become a Master Gardener:

Call the Extension office at 434-872-4580 to get the application. Deadline 12/09/16 or contact your local Extension office

- Cost: \$190, need-based scholarships available (Cost may vary by location)
- Commit to Training class - 70 hours, all day Mondays, 9-4 pm, February 13 - May 1, complete a 1 year Internship with 50 volunteer hours, then annual maintaining of 20 volunteer hours and 8 hours continuing education
- Here are some of the topics covered during the training course: Botany, Soils, Water quality, Trees & Shrubs, Integrated Pest Management, Small Fruit and Berries, Vegetable Gardening, Weeds, Entomology, Propagation, Herbs, Plant Diseases, Native Plants, Urban Ecology.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is here to train, enable and support members of the community who wish to become educated and then give back to the community their time and energy volunteering. All of our volunteer projects address community needs through outreach education that provides science base, environmentally sound horticulture practices. Come join us...we are a fun filled group eager to learn more

about gardening and share that knowledge with others!

The Vegetable Garden In December

By Cleve Campbell | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12

Happy holidays from The Garden Shed! You've completed all your Christmas shopping and done all your decorating, so now you're looking for a few gardening tasks. Right? Well, here's our list of December tasks and tips for the edible garden:

- Looking for a gardening gift for that friend who has everything? Consider **a gardening journal**. Winter is a good time to start a garden journal and document all the trials and triumphs of the gardening season. When the mailbox gets deluged with seed catalogs for next season, your friend will have a record to refresh his or her memory about which seeds to order and which to avoid. For more great gardening gift ideas check out this month's featured article: "**December Shopping List for Your Favorite Gardener(s)**."
- If your soil test shows a need for raising the pH, **apply dolomitic limestone now** so the winter rain and snow can move it into the ground.
- If you have run out of sage, or just want a different flavor, **substitute savory or rosemary** in your turkey recipe.
- Use a combination of **red and green sweet peppers frozen** from last summer's garden to give holiday food a seasonal flair.
- If you are planning to lay out **newspapers as mulch** next spring, glue them end-to-end this winter and store them in rolls. When needed, the paper mulch unrolls easily and won't be lifted by the wind before they can be anchored.
- There are several herbs that can be grown in pots in the home during the winter. **Parsley is one of the most widely-grown herbs** in home gardens and can serve as a houseplant during the winter. The plant will provide fresh green leaves for garnishing or flavoring for egg dishes, soup, fish or potatoes. Chive plants can also be grown in pots during the winter. The leaves are used to season soups, salads and stews. Finely chopped leaves add delicious flavor to sour cream for dip or salad dressing. Plant seeds in pots filled with rich, well drained, and sterilized potting mix. Cover the pots with plastic bags or clear wrap until germination occurs. Put the pots in a warm room, in a sunny, southern window and keep the soil moist.
- You still have time to make **herb vinegars with chives, shallots, garlic or any herbs** on your windowsill. Use approximately 4 ounces of fresh herbs to 1 quart of wine or rice vinegar. Allow the herbs to infuse for at least two weeks.
- **Don't forget** to use some of those vegetables still out in your garden: carrots, turnip greens, kale or other hardy vegetables.

The Garden Shed team hopes you and your family have a safe and happy holiday season. We look forward to your visits to **The Garden Shed** in 2017.

Source:

Adopted from The Virginia Gardner by Diane Relf

Individual Prosciutto, Spinach, and Egg “Pies”

By Cate Whittington | December 2016-Vol.2 No.12



Recipe Serves 4-6

I discovered these elegant and delicious little “pies” at Foster’s Market when my children were students in Chapel Hill, N.C. Sara Foster, the market’s owner, said she had many customers who regularly stopped to pick up these crustless morsels on their way to work.

A healthy alternative to muffins and donuts, I have found these appetizing little bundles to be the perfect thing to have on hand around the holidays. With major lapses in time between the earliest and latest risers,

we rarely try to gather everyone around the table for breakfast. However, I do like to set things out on the counter for morning grazers.

Prosciutto forms the outside of these pies, but you can easily leave it off for vegetarians. Instead, layer whole spinach leaves around the inside of the muffin tins to hold the other ingredients in place.

Ingredients

6 thin slices prosciutto

6 large eggs

1 cup loosely packed spinach, roughly chopped

¼ cup shredded Cheddar cheese

12 grape tomatoes, halved

Salt and pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly grease a 6 cup muffin tin with olive oil.
2. Line the muffin cups with the prosciutto slices, pressing the prosciutto into the bottom and sides of each cup. The slices will overlap each other on top of the tin.
3. Crack one egg into each cup. Sprinkle spinach over the eggs, then the Cheddar cheese, dividing them evenly.
4. Top each serving with 4 tomato halves and season with salt and pepper.
5. Bake the pies for 15 to 18 minutes, until the egg whites are firm and the yolks are starting to set, but are still soft in the center. Set them aside to cool for about 5 minutes.
6. Run a knife around the edges of each cup to loosen, then lift the pies out of the tin. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Resources: *Sara Foster's Casual Cooking* (Foster, Sara, 2007)