

Happy Holidays to all from The Backyard Gardeners!

Backyard Views

The Backyard Gardeners

Winter, 2010-11



The Backyard Gardeners, Inc. was established in 2007 as a non-profit organization to provide free education to homeowners in the Hampton Roads area on gardening and horticultural practices, designs and techniques in order to encourage conservation of our natural resources, the enjoyment of gardens, garden-related activities and creative garden art.

Calendar of Events

Garden Talks, 7-8:30 pm
Chesapeake Library
298 Cedar Road

December 14

"Decorating Naturally"
TBG

January 18

"Vegetable Gardening 101"
Gill Gillespie, Norfolk Master
Gardeners

February 15

*"Day Tripping: Gardens of
Interest"*
TBG

March 15

*"Effective Landscaping with
Trees and Shrubs"*
Doug Spencer, Lowe's and Va.
Beach Master Gardeners

2011 dates:

April 19, May 17, June 21,
July 19, August 16, September 20,
October 18, November 15,
December 13.

Additional topics for 2011:
bonsai, propagation, daylilies,
pests and plant diseases.



Tool Maintenance-Winter Care *by Gary Bennett*

One of the best pieces of advice that old time gardeners offer is to buy good quality tools and to take care of them. Tool maintenance isn't hard and takes only a few minutes, some elbow grease and a few common household products. Following a few simple techniques will keep your tools in perfect shape and extend their lives. Moisture can cause rust and increase wear and tear on your garden tools. Proper maintenance and storage will help keep them in top working order. For best results clean them after each use, but be sure to properly prepare them for the winter rest so they, like you and your garden, will be ready in the spring.

The items needed to maintain your garden tools are: work gloves and safety goggles, bastard file, wire brush, cloths or rags, linseed oil, and drop cloth or newspapers.

For the best results, clean your tools after each use, store them off the ground in a dry place, remove any rust, sand and oil wooden handles to keep them smooth and conditioned and sharpen cutting edges, clean them thoroughly and give them a coating of oil before storing them for winter.

Taking some time to clean and sharpen tools and oil the wooden handles will pay dividends in the future. As you prepare your tools for winter, take stock of any tools you may need to replace or new ones you may need to purchase. The winter is a great time to search the catalogs and online retailers for the best tools for you.

Plant Profiles: Shrubs for Winter Interest *by Shiela Strudwick*



Contorted Filbert

Also known as Corkscrew Hazel or Harry Lauder's Walking Stick, the Contorted Filbert, is a specimen tree that adds great interest to any garden panorama, especially in the winter. By November's end, the leaves have fallen to the ground making an attractive winter mulch.

The contorted filbert has twisted spiraling branches and twigs that have dramatic eye-catching appeal during the winter. Late winter blooms add tremendously to its cold-season interest. Green catkins lengthen through November & December and dominate the branches after the leaves fall. These burst into soft, bright golden catkins in February, lasting through March.

Inkberry

Native to the swampy woodlands of eastern North America, inkberry shrubs are winners in the winter landscape. They grow in sun or shade, tolerate wet areas & poor salty soil and are deer resistant.

Inkberry has great adaptability, dark green evergreen foliage that shines and a mounded character that is wild yet formal at the same time. If pollinated, inconspicuous greenish white flowers give way to pea-sized, jet black, berry-like drupes which mature in early fall and persist throughout winter unless consumed by birds.



Spotlight on Gardens



The Arthur & Phyllis Kaplan Orchid Conservatory *by Audrey Knall*

Winter has arrived in Hampton Roads. The wind is blowing and the air is frigid. However, step through the doors of the Arthur & Phyllis Kaplan Orchid Conservatory on the campus of ODU and you're immediately transported to the tropics. Warm, moist air surrounds you, a waterfall trickles in the background, but what has you spellbound is the incredible display of blooming orchids and tropical plants.

Cattleyas, Oncidiums, Dendrobiums, Bulbophylums, Lady Slippers and Phalaenopsis are just some of the many orchids on display. They hang in the tropical trees, sit on or cling to the rock wall that spans the width of the display area, nestle in the ground with ferns and bask by the waterfall. Some flowers are so tiny they can easily be overlooked. Others are big and showy, demanding to be admired. There are blooms in white, pink, lavender, maroon, yellow and every combination. Some have the scent of chocolate, others of vanilla, citrus or perfume. Others smell (as the late Dr. Kaplan would describe it) like "a dead elephant... one that's been dead for three months".

Beyond the display area are the growing rooms where the plants live when they are not in bloom. The facility is maintained with a state-of-the-art computer system that regulates each room's temperature, humidity and ventilation. As the plants come into bloom, they are moved to the display room for viewing by the public.

Dr. Kaplan donated his personal collection of over 1,000 orchid plants to ODU in 2008. The building itself was funded through donations from his brother, Leonard Kaplan, and The Dalis Foundation. Currently there are over 250 species of orchids housed at the conservatory. New plants are being acquired regularly to enhance the collection. In addition to the orchids, the conservatory has other tropical trees and foliage such as papaya, mango, chocolate, cinnamon and coffee. There are also tiny tropical frogs that live among the plants.

Late fall, winter and early spring are the best times to visit the conservatory, as the majority of orchids bloom during these times. The display area of the conservatory is open to the public Monday through Friday from 10am to 2pm. Groups can arrange a tour of the entire conservatory by contacting its curator, Steve Urick, at 757-683-5839.

Garden Hints *by Patty Bennett*

- * Clay pots make great cloches for protecting young plants from sudden, overnight frosts and freezes. If the temperature warms up, be sure to remove them in the morning so the plants don't bake!
- * For winter protection, group potted plants in a sheltered corner of your yard and put bags of leaves or pine straw around them. Once it warms up in the spring, move the plants back into the yard and dump the leaves/pine straw on the compost pile.
- * To keep concrete bird baths from gathering water and freezing in the winter, turn the bowls over and set them back on the pedestal. You can place a clay saucer with bird seed on top to feed the birds.
- * Use your birdbath as a holiday decoration by placing a wreath on the bowl and setting a potted plant in the center. Decorate with natural items. Or you can create a buffet for the birds by using the wreath, pieces of fruit, seed heads from your garden and/or a garland of cranberries.



Holiday Events *by Nancy Radcliffe*

November 19-January 2

*Holiday Lights at the Beach, Virginia Beach
Oceanfront*

November 25-January 2

Garden of Lights, Norfolk Botanical Gardens

November 25-January 1

Celebration of Lights, Newport News City Park

December 5

Grand Illumination, Colonial Williamsburg

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or by emailing gardenguru@thebackyardgardeners.org.

