

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

January 19th through February 23, 2016



Hello Winter!

February 2



It's Groundhog Day! Oh, no...it's finally happened. After a groundhog bit a small-town Wisconsin mayor during a ceremony last year, the town is now considering changing the ceremony. Sighting safety concerns for the public and the groundhog himself, there may be a new ceremonial, non-breathing groundhog to do the honors going forward.

Now for the back story: after the groundhog used in last year's ceremony bit the mayor on the ear, the authorities advised the groundhog's owners that they needed a license to own a groundhog, which prompted the owners to release the animal into the wild. Now it's anyone's guess who will do the honors on Groundhog Day. But one thing is certain...if by chance another live groundhog should take the job, it will definitely be kept in a cage! Better stick with old Punxsutawney Phil. It's a wonderful world we live in!

February 16

Our next board meeting will be held in the meeting room at the Topsfield Town Library at 10 am.

February 23



Our next regular membership meeting will be held at the Gould Barn at 11:30 am. Please note that this is a change in time of day! Our program will show us "How to Use Herbs for Health and Beauty" and will be presented by Linda Sesson. Come with your bagged lunch. Our hostess committee will provide the beverages. Should we have a prize for the best bagged lunch?

***Hostesses are Shirley Holt and Sandy Whelan*

...more news on the following page...

NOTES



February 23, 2016, 11:30 am, Gould Barn... How to Use Herbs for Health and Beauty
March 22, 2016, 6:30 pm, Gould Barn...Wardian Cases (a descendant's history of terrariums)
April 2016 (date & time tba), Bus trip to Art In Bloom at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts
May 24, 2016, (time tba), Essex River Cruise
June 7, 2016, 6 pm, Danversport Yacht Club, Annual Meeting & Installation of Officers

...Bits and pieces...

To right: Nancy Emmons, Claudette Poor, Linde Martin and Rose Ann Waite create centerpieces for the Topsfield Council On Aging Holiday Luncheon.



The crew is busy setting up!



Guidance from workshop leader, Rose Ann Waite.

Topsfield Council on Aging Boxwood Tree Workshop 2015



Busy, busy, busy.



All done and very happy!

...more news on the following page...



*Jane Cullinan & Claudette Poor
share a bit of holiday cheer.*

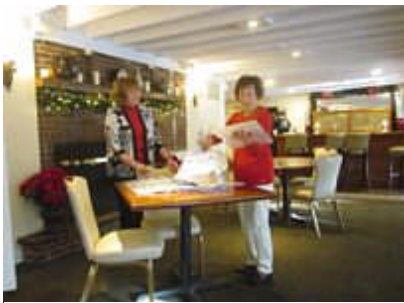
Holiday Social 2015



The gifts for the swap await!



*What could Honorary Member, Nance
Proctor's bag contain?*

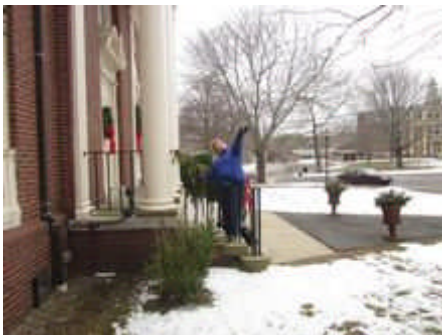


*Agnes Salvatore checks out her gift
under Joline Yeaton's watchful eye!*



*Sandy Whelan loves her scarf.
Hopefully she got to keep it!*

Packing the Holiday decorations away for another year!



*There's always time for a big wave
from Rose Ann Waite while busy at
work!*



*Here are Rose Ann's son and
hubby manning the ladder!*



*Rose Ann's daughter-in-law, Tina, and
Linde's hubby packing the car!*

...the Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

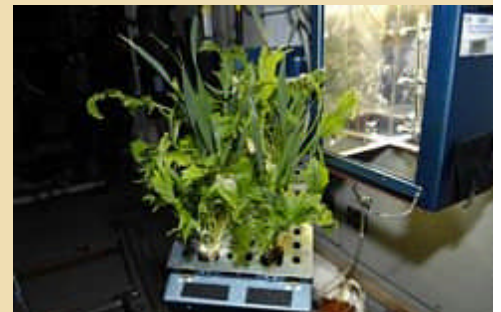
Introducing the first flower grown in Space! For those of you who are challenged to grow plants from seed on Earth, imagine what it must be like to grow them in Space! Well, here it is...the very first zinnia grown from seed aboard the International Space Station!



The International Space Station

Astronauts aboard the space station have been experimenting with plant growth in micro-gravity (weightlessness) for many years. **A greenhouse called "Lada" has been on the space station since 2002.** Why the push for farming in space? With long-term trips such as a future trip to Mars in mind, the ability to grow food in space becomes key, since packaged food can only last a maximum of two

to three years. Mastering space farming will make future spacecraft much more self-sustainable in regard to food supply. There are also additional benefits to the astronauts. The pleasure of gardening may provide a psychological means of de-stressing, and the fresh foods will be a good source of antioxidants, which may have a positive impact on their moods and also could provide some protection against radiation in space. Atmospheric recycling could



Lada Greenhouse aboard the space station

also be a benefit. There may even be implications here on Earth because of the breakthrough in artificial light technology used on the space station. Places where water is scarce may be able to apply some of the knowledge being gained toward alternative ways of growing food for themselves.

As you might suspect, learning how to space farm can be, and has been, a challenge! Here's a little about what has already transpired. **The growing system used on the space station is called "The Veggie Plant growth system."** It was developed by Orbital Technologies Corporation in Madison, Wisconsin and delivered to the space station in April 2014. It consists of red and blue LED lights that are efficient in stimulating plant growth. Green LEDs were added to make plants green in color, and not purple as they would be if only red and blue lights are used. Amazing, don't you think? **Astronaut Scott Kelly has emerged at the space station's "Master**



Space red romaine lettuce

Gardener." He has been on the space station for almost a year now, and is due back to Earth in March of this year. He planted red romaine lettuce on July 8th and as a result of his tender, loving care, the plants were harvested 33 days later, after consistent watering on his part. **Since there are no soil beds on the space station, the Veggie Plant growth system provides collapsible, pre-made seed pillows, which are then lit with the LED lights.** This system successfully produced plants

some time ago, but they had to be brought back to Earth for testing to ensure that the plants were safe for consumption. The harvest this past August was the first enjoyed by the astronauts, after the leaves were wiped down with citric acid sanitizers to protect from any space contamination.

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And now...the zinnia. Why choose that plant? After all, zinnias sometimes come with their own set of problems, susceptibility to various fungal and bacterial diseases, and stem and root rot among them! These plants are very different from lettuce plants. They are more sensitive to environmental and light conditions, and they have a longer growth period. Well, there is method to NASA's madness! Although the zinnia plant is not edible, it was chosen specifically because of its properties. Growing zinnias will help advance the knowledge of how plants flower when grown in the Veggie growth system on the space station. The hope is that knowledge of growing fruiting plants such as tomatoes will be the result.

The experiment, however, was not without some very anxious moments. In December 2015, the leaves on the zinnia seedlings were starting to bend down and curl...a definite warning sign that things were not good. It was thought that this was a result of too much water on the roots. So, the fan that provides air circulation to the greenhouse was switched from low to high. Not the solution, though! Moldy plant tissue appeared, prompting Scott Kelly to don a dust mask and cut the tissue away. The fan speed was left on the high setting in hopes that it would keep the air drier and stop the mold in its tracks. This created another problem...the surviving plants were drying out! So, NASA's formal watering schedule was "thrown out the window" (of course, not literally considering we are in space here), and judgment for watering was placed fully in Scott's hands. Shortly after Christmas, two plants died and were clipped, while another two lived on. Then on January 16th, the reward...the first flower in space makes its debut.

According to NASA, more crops will be heading to the space station soon aboard SpaceX-8. On the list are two sets of Chinese cabbage, and more of the ever-popular red romaine lettuce.

How fortunate are we to be observing the infancy of this very important procedure. I wonder what the future will hold for "orbiting agriculture?" Is the sky really the limit? No, the universe is. Stay tuned. ♣

And now, back to Earth. It's mid-winter, so let's talk about helping our houseplants survive, as we try to survive ourselves! It's sometimes not as easy as it sounds. Days are shorter, so plants receive less light, and temperatures and humidity are lower. First of all, I hope you have placed your plants in the brightest part of your home. It is best to have sunlight on your little darlings at least part of the day. Make sure you keep your curtains or blinds open as much as possible during daylight hours. Not enough windows? Perhaps artificial light is for you. Any kind of light is better than none at all. Maybe spotlights might do the trick, and highlight your plants at the same time. They'll think they are on Broadway!

Optimum temperatures for your plants during winter are between 60 and 70. Above 75 degrees is too warm and below 55 degrees may not go over very well either. Winter heating in your home, especially if you have forced hot air, can dry out your plants more than they like. Try setting your plants in saucers or trays with a layer of pebbles. Keep the pebble tray filled with water almost to the top of the pebble layer. Your skin will thank you as well for the extra moisture this creates in the air!

Watering routines should change in the winter as well. It is best to allow your plants to get almost dry between waterings, rather than keeping them wet. Use tepid water rather than cold water. Be careful not to over-water if your pot does not have drainage holes! Since plants aren't actively growing, reduce your fertilizing program as well.

And, if you really want to give your plants a treat, shower them in your sink or tub with tepid about once a month! It's like giving them a facial...their pores will be cleansed, and they will look beautiful. For a plant too big to move, simply wipe the individual leaves with a soft cloth and tepid water.

On an optimistic note, it will be spring before you know it, and your plants will again thrive, as will we! ♣



*When destiny forgets to tie some people in blood relations,
it corrects its mistake by making them true friends.
Happy Valentine's Day to one and all.*