

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

January 21st through February 25, 2020

The objectives of the New Meadows Garden Club shall be to foster knowledge of home gardening, decorative arrangements and an interest in civic projects.



With the holidays now a sweet memory, what to do with the seasonal houseplants you may have acquired in the process? Check out this month's Green Thumb corner for some tips to help keep them well and happy.

There is no regular membership meeting scheduled for January.

February 2



Another Groundhog Day is just around the corner and, as usual, the whole world is waiting for Punxsutawney Phil's prediction for the arrival of spring. But, between 1988 and 2012, Phil, whose full name is "Punxsutawney Phil, Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators and Weather Prophet Extraordinary" has only been correct 39 percent of the time. In spite of this record, instead of living in the traditional groundhog burrow, which consists of about 50 feet of tunnels buried 5 feet underground, Phil lives in a man-made shelter with controlled temperature and light, with folks who see to his, and his wife Phyllis' every need! These days, Phil is truly treated like royalty, which is a far cry from the very first celebrations, which were social parties at which the groundhog was the entrée! Happy Groundhog Day!

February 18

Our next board meeting will be held at the Topsfield Library Meeting Room at 10 am.

February 25

Our February regular membership meeting will a Mid-Winter Social, to be held beginning at 1:30 pm at the home of Horticulture Co-Chair, Donna Ryan. Donna and her Co-Chair, Cheryl Connors, are planning a nice get-together, including delicious treats and a chance for members to visit with one another and hopefully exchange some great gardening tips! ►If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Donna by February 18th! Parking is limited, so please carpool, if you can!

Hostesses: Mary Connor and Jane Cullinan

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

NOTES



► Once again this year, as has been a long-standing custom, our club is providing a small flower design or plant each week for the main desk at the Topsfield Town Library during the months of January, February and March. Co-Presidents Sandy and Jane have been busy compiling a list of volunteers for this public service we do for our club's home town. Thank you so much to those members who have graciously signed up. Your assigned dates are listed below.

For those who are participating, your assignment is very simple...on Monday of your week, just bring a plant, or a simple flower design to the library...the choice is yours and it doesn't have to be too elaborate...then come back to pick it up the following Saturday afternoon. You can even arrange with the member volunteer for the week following yours to pick up your plant or design for you. No lilies please because of their strong scent! It couldn't be easier!

If you find that circumstances have changed making it impossible to follow through with the commitment you made, please swap dates with a volunteer on the list who has signed up for a date following yours.

****For your information, the library opens at 10 am on Mondays and closes at 5 pm on Saturdays!**

Here's the schedule:

January 13	Jane Cullinan	February 24	Pat Durgin
January 21	Judy Donovan	March 2	Linda Flynn
January 27	Shirley Holt	March 9	Linde Martin
February 3	Nancy Emmons	March 16	Donna Ryan
February 10	Gerrie Bunker	March 23	Cheryl Connors
February 17	Joline Yeaton	March 30	Mary Connor

Many thanks to all who have volunteered. ♥♥



Roses are a universal favorite, especially as we approach Valentine's Day. About 250 million will be produced just for this holiday. In case you are planning to surprise your sweetie or BFF with a bouquet, here are the messages each bloom color conveys, according to 1-800-Flowers: white, you're the one for me; pink, I appreciate you; yellow, you're a great friend; red, I love you; purple, I always knew you were the one; and blue, you're special and unique.

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

► *Thursday, March 12, 2020* — Mark your calendars for a very special club meeting, featuring Stories and Gardens from Ireland presented by Irish artist, sculptor and garden designer, Karen Stanley. Prepare to wear something green for the occasion! Please note that this is a change of date from that printed in our program books! Save the date.

► *Tuesday, May 26, 2020* — Mark your calendars for a fun meeting at Valley View Farm in Topsfield. Learn all about the resident goats and the cheese making process. Save the date.

► *June 9, 2020* — Our Annual Meeting and Banquet will be held at the Ipswich Country Club at 12 pm. Save the date.

► *June 13, 2020* — Our club's fundraiser at Topsfield's Strawberry Festival. Save the date.

...Bits and pieces...



This year's Holiday Social at the Bradford Tavern



Glad to see Ann Moorman and Honorary Member Jean Hampton!



All ready for the Yankee Swap!



Joline Yeaton helps Co-President Jane with her selection.

...more on the following page...



A full house!

Topsfield COA Boxwood Tree Workshop



*Workshop leader,
Mary Connor*



*COA ladies very happy with their
creations.*



*Topsfield COA Holiday Party table designs
provided by our members!*

Other Holiday Projects Around Town



*Linda Flynn's Steward
School Urns ready for the
Holidays!*

Decorating the Topsfield Library for the Holiday Season



*Many thanks to Topsfield Fire
Fighters Matt and Connor for their
invaluable help with wreath duty!*



...Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

With the holiday season behind us now, unless you are headed south, it is definitely time for comfort food, cozy blankets, several long winter's naps and, if you have purchased or received seasonal flowering houseplants you'd like to keep flourishing and blooming, perhaps a bit of indoor gardening. Some holiday plants are relatively easy to keep growing, others not so much. So, if you are up for it, and would rather not prematurely end the life of these poor innocent specimens of the plant kingdom, by all means, read on...



Before we chat about some of the specific needs of some of these plants, let's first talk about general indoor plant care. Most flowering houseplants require moist, but not wet, soil. Watering your plants first thing in the morning with room-temperature water is a perfect plan. Indoor temperatures of between 55 and 70 degrees are ideal for most flowering plants. That said, in order to set their buds, plants such as holiday cactus like temperatures between 60 and 65 degrees. Be careful not to place your plants near cold windows or sources of heat. And then there's light...it is tough around here to provide good light for our plants in winter. The best that you can do in the dead of winter is to find a place with filtered light from a south-facing window. Once spring arrives, you can move your plants to other places in your home. Humidity is another problem during the winter. We all know that the humidity falls in our homes at this time of year...your crinkly skin and fragile nails will tell you that! Ideally, humidity levels should be about 40 percent...that is hard to come by in most of our homes in the winter months.. To help with this problem, it is good to stand your plants in a saucer filled with small rocks or pebbles...I actually use clean fish tank gravel...and, when you water your plants, let the water run through to the pebbles and remain there. If the level of the water is above the bottom of the pot, remove a bit of the water. You don't want your plants standing in water! The evaporating water in the saucer will help keep the humidity higher around the plant. And, as for fertilizer, most flowering houseplants like time-release types, which supply nutrients to the plant every time you water. Follow the directions on the package. Now that you are armed with these general tips to keep your plants alive and kicking, let's look at some of the plants you might have acquired during the holidays more closely and talk about their specific requirements...



I suppose a good place to start is with the most popular holiday plant, the Poinsettia. These plants like daytime temperatures between 65 and 75, and 60 to 65 at night. While getting them to rebloom is not that easy, it is not impossible. For the remainder of the winter, place your plant in a place that gets a half day of direct sun, and water only when the soil feels dry. When side shoots grow in

spring, prune back the old branches to where the new growth starts. You might want to repot at this point. Also, start fertilizing with all-purpose houseplant food. Once the danger of frost has passed, bring your plant outdoors to a place where it will get morning sun. Be sure to keep your plant well watered and well fertilized. If it is difficult to keep the soil from drying out, you can sink the whole pot into the ground. Twice a month, prune off growing tips. This will create a bushier plant. In fall, be sure to bring your plant back inside before the first frost. To encourage blooming, in early October, place your plant where it will get good light during the day and about 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness each night. I place my plant in a room that I don't use or light at night to insure it gets the uninterrupted darkness it needs. At this point, keep the soil moist, but stop fertilizing. You should begin to see color in about six to eight weeks once you start this process.



Next, let's talk a bit about the Kalanchoe plant. These plants are actually thick leaved succulents, and need short winter light periods like Poinsettias to bloom. So, let's see what it takes to be successful with this plant. First of all, they like temperatures of 70 to 75 in daytime, and 50 to 60 at night. During winter they do

...more on the following page...

well with at least a half day of bright and direct sun. Kalanchoes thrive in dry air, and prefer their soil to dry out between watering. In spring, your plant can be repotted if needed and pinched a bit to encourage new leaves to grow. Fertilizing is good now too. These plants can summer outside in a partly shaded location, and should continue to be fertilized and watered. In fall, move indoors before the first frost, and to encourage bud set, allow the plant to go dormant for two months by providing cool temperatures...about 50 degrees...and 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness each night. Cut back somewhat on watering as well. And then begin the seasonal cycle once again!



Next up is the Cyclamen plant, which has become very popular at holiday time. They enjoy daytime temperatures between 60 and 65, and between 45 and 50 at night! During winter, an east-facing window with bright, indirect light is ideal. Water this plant only from the bottom because its crown is very susceptible to fungal rot. Be sure not to let the pot stand in water though! To keep your plant blooming, promptly cut stems of dead flowers near the base of the plant, and remove yellow or dead leaves. After the flowers

fade, gradually withhold water until the foliage withers. Then, store your plant in a cool, dry location for the spring and summer months. It may look like your plant has met an untimely end, but in fact, as long as the tubers remain hard, the plant is only resting. Begin watering again in early fall, and place your plant back into a cool, bright window to begin the cycle once again. When new growth begins, fertilize with an all-purpose houseplant food.



The beautiful Amaryllis plant is sometimes referred to as the Christmas flower, but is greatly overshadowed by the Poinsettia plant. Amaryllis loves temperatures between 65 and 70 during the day and 50 to 60 at night. If you have one from the holidays that is still blooming, a bright location out of direct sun is the best place for it. At this point, keep the soil evenly moist. Be sure to stake the stalk if it is taller than 18 inches! Once the bloom fades, cut the dead flower stalks about 2 inches above the bulb. Hold back

on the watering a bit to let the soil dry slightly. After the last frost in the spring, bring your pot outside to a place that receives morning sun. I keep mine on my deck, but you can also bury the bulb in the ground, pot and all. No need to repot your bulb since Amaryllis flowers best if pot bound. The leaves should continue to grow and the plant will appreciate regular fertilizing over the summer. In September, bring your plant back inside and place it in a cool (about 50 degrees), dry place. No light necessary. My basement is the perfect place for my plants at this point. Do not water. The idea is to let your plant go dormant for a little while, so expect the foliage to die. Six weeks before you want your plant to rebloom, perhaps in the middle of November, clean the dead leaves from your plant and bring your pot into a warm, bright room. Check your plant daily, and when new leaves start to emerge, resume watering. Then, start taking care of your plant as you did when you first acquired it and you should be rewarded with more beautiful blooms for the succeeding holiday season!



And, finally, a little about Holiday Cactus...temperatures above 70 in daytime and between 55 and 65 at night are perfect. In winter, a spot with indirect sunlight is exactly what the plant needs. Keep the soil moist. In spring, add some all-purpose fertilizer to your routine. After the last frost, if you wish, you can move your plant to a shady location outside. Keep watering and fertilizing. In fall, bring your plant back in before the first frost, and let soil dry slightly between waterings. To encourage your plant to

bloom, provide cool temperatures...about 50 degrees...and 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness each night. This is basically the same routine as with Poinsettias and Kalanchoes! As I mentioned previously, I place my plants in a room I do not use at night and do not light! Once buds form on your plant, move it to its regular spot and resume regular watering.

I hope these tips will help you and your holiday plants enjoy each other for a long time to come! ♥