

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club

Topsfield, Massachusetts

December 10th through January 21, 2014



*He knows who's naughty
or nice!*

December 10



Holiday Social 2012



Our Holiday Social will be held at the Gould Barn, Topsfield at 6 pm. Members whose last name begins with the letters A—H are requested to bring an appetizer. Those whose last name begins with the letters I—Z, please bring a dessert. Each of our board members is requested to provide a bottle of wine for the festivities. Please RSVP to Claudette Poor, if you haven't already. And, I am told that Jean Bilsbury will once again present her Mr. and Mrs. Right Swap. Please be sure to bring a wrapped gift valued at \$10.00 for this fun event. Hope to see you all there!

****President Judy reminds us that members will be asked to approve the revised club bylaws at this meeting.*

December 16



Our club will again provide holiday centerpieces for the Topsfield Council On Aging Christmas Party to be held at the Emerson Center. Rose Ann Waite is coordinating this community service, and will have oasis-filled containers available for pickup at our Holiday Social on December 10th. Centerpieces are requested to be delivered by members to the Emerson Center by 3 pm on the 16th. Please call or e-mail Rose Ann to volunteer, and, as President Judy reminded us last year, no previous experience is required!

January 5

Time to pack away our holiday decorations at the Topsfield Library for yet another year! Please meet us at the library at 1 pm. The more the merrier, and the job will be done in a jiffy, too.

January 21

Our next board meeting will be held at the Topsfield Library Meeting Room at 1 pm.

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

NOTES



***You will soon have an opportunity to participate in our club's annual three month service to the Topsfield Library by bringing a small flower design or plant to adorn the library's main desk. **Artistic Chairs Rose Ann Waite and Jean Bilsbury will be looking for volunteers at our Holiday Social for each week for the months of January, February and March.**

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 complicated...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. No lilies please because of their strong scent! It couldn't be easier! If you are not able to attend our Social, please give Rose Ann a call to participate.

***Sunshine Chair, Tammy Glasser, requests that you let her know about any member needing some club sunshine to brighten her life!

Farewell, Nat. We shall miss your smiling presence.



November 16, 2013 was a sad day for the Anderson Family, our club, Topsfield and the World because it was the day we lost our dear member and friend, Nat Anderson. Words cannot express how much she will be missed by those who knew and loved her. How lucky for us that we have walked through the flowers with her in this life.



As many of you know, as part of our holiday decorations at the Topsfield Library this year, we are including a special tribute to Nat Anderson, who served as librarian in the Children's Room. A beautiful display has been placed at the table beneath the Gould portrait near the entrance to the library. Fresh flowers, which were a favorite of Nat's, are there, and will be changed each week during the month of December. Members of the club have graciously volunteered to participate in this remembrance for Nat, but a volunteer is needed to place a design of fresh flowers for the week of December 30th. Please contact Rose Ann Waite if you would like to help.

...more on the following page...

...Bits and pieces...



A barrel of monkeys at our October fund-raising meeting at the Pretty Poppy, Newburyport.



Here are President Judy, and Treasurer, Shirley, tending our fund-raising table at the November Joint Meeting.



Busily doing fall cleanup at the Prospect Street Island!

Memories...



A photo from our past...our bus trip to Art In Bloom 2007. There's Anne Mahen at the right in the foreground, and Jane Cullinan must be in the background, don't you think?



Helen Gaffey's shopping spree at our November Joint Meeting!



The fall cleanup crew after a job well done at the Pine Grove Cemetery.

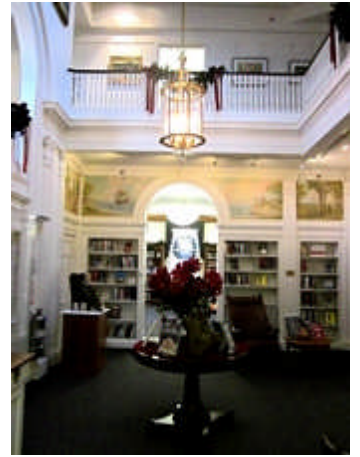


Our reward at the Main Street Market following hard fall cleanup work at the Prospect Street Island.

...more on the next page...



Angels at The Topsfield Library at Christmas



Green Thumb Corner

Since December 12th is National Poinsettia Day, I guess today's lead story should feature Poinsettias! This date commemorates the death of Joel Roberts Poinsett, our first ambassador to Mexico, appointed by John Quincy Adams in the 1820's.




*Poinsett was interested in botany, and during his stay in Mexico, he discovered a beautiful shrub growing along the road, took some cuttings and brought them back to his greenhouse in South Carolina and thus, introduced the plant named for him to the United States. He is also credited for introducing the American Elm into Mexico. The botanical name for the Poinsettia Plant is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, which means "very beautiful."*

As a matter of interest, the Aztecs called Poinsettias "Cuetlaxachitl," and during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries the sap was used to control fevers and the bracts were used to make red dye.

In the early 20th century, Albert Ecke, a German immigrant, and his family grew Poinsettias outdoors in southern California for use as landscape plants and as a cut flower. Eventually, these plants were grown in greenhouses, and four generations of the family have made the Poinsettia one of the best selling flowering potted plants in the country, accounting for more than 85 percent of all holiday plant sales. Today the family is recognized as the leading producer of Poinsettias in the United States.

And now, Poinsettia's are no longer limited to red, but can be purchased in shades of pink, orange, peach, white, burgundy and even variegated. You might see some blue ones out there, but they are the



result of the application of watercolors to white bracts, and the new growth will not retain that color. The same is true of the blue orchids you may have seen in your travels. Breeding advances have also made Poinsettias much longer lasting. You may enjoy your blossoms for months after the holiday season is over.

*Now for the anatomy of a Poinsettia...*The showy colored parts of the plant that you might think are the flowers are actually colored bracts, or modified leaves. The true flowers are very inconspicuous...the yellow structures in the middle of the colored bracts. The plant drops its bracts (the colorful part) soon after the yellow flowers shed their pollen. So, for the longest lasting Poinsettias, be careful to choose plants with little or no yellow pollen showing. Another tip about purchasing a good plant is to make sure that the leaves are deep green, and aren't yellowing, wilting or dropping. Look for a plant that is full and pretty from all sides. Leave behind plants that are crowded in their display, or encased in plastic sleeves, since plants held in sleeves will deteriorate quickly. Also, do check the undersides of the leaves for insects like whitefly and aphids. And since Poinsettias are not tolerant of very low temperatures, when you take your plant home, be sure to tuck it inside a large bag, even if you will only be outdoors for a short period of time.

Okay, now the plant is home...what to do next? Be mindful that the length of time your plant will give you pleasure will depend on the maturity of the plant you buy, when you buy it and how you treat it. Here are a few tips: unwrap your Poinsettia very carefully, and find a place for it in indirect light. Be sure the spot is away from cold windows and cold or warm drafts. The spot should receive about 6 hours of indirect light a day. Room temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees during the day, and 55 degrees at night are ideal. High temperatures will shorten the plant's life. And how much water? Check the soil daily. Water when the soil is dry, and allow the water to drain into a saucer. Then discard the excess water. If the plant is in foil, punch holes in the bottom so the water can drain into a saucer. Too much water will not be a good thing, believe me! If you plan to keep your Poinsettia past the holiday season, apply a houseplant fertilizer once a month, but do not fertilize while the plant is in bloom.

Want to take on the re-blooming challenge? This is not an impossible task of us amateurs. Just keep your Poinsettia in good light and continue to water as described above. Then in late March or early April, cut the plant back to about 8 inches, and begin fertilizing every few weeks. In the beginning of June, repot your plant in a container no more than 4 inches bigger than the first, and place in light shade outside after all danger of frost is past. Pinch your plant regularly during the summer, and then bring it back inside in the fall. Remember the room temperature requirements I've mentioned above. Once October 1st arrives, your Poinsettia will need to be in 14 hours of continuous darkness every night in order to set buds and cause the bracts to color. I accomplish this by finding a place for my plant in a room that receives no light in the evening. Or, as an alternative, you can place your plant in a closet at night, but this sounds like a lot of trouble! Do continue to fertilize during this period, but do stop when the plant begins to bloom.

And just a word about the rumored toxicity of Poinsettias. According to many respected studies, the toxicity of Poinsettias seems to be overrated. That being said, the latex sap of this plant is a mouth and stomach irritant to both dogs and cats that can sometimes cause vomiting, but no mortality. A 50 pound child would have to ingest 500 to 600 leaves to have any side effects. The leaves are not very tasty, so that circumstance may be very unlikely! One tip though...if you have a latex allergy, it might be a good idea to wear gloves when handling your plant to protect yourself from the sap, which may cause a skin reaction. As an aside, other common holiday plants such as Amaryllis, Cyclamen, Clivia, Kalanchoe and Azalea are all on the list of plants toxic to dogs and cats. And that's all you hopefully wanted to know about Poinsettias!

Want to make a quick homemade gift? How about a scented spray to promote rejuvenation and relaxation? Here's how: combine 1/2 cup distilled water, 1 teaspoon vodka or witch hazel, and 5 to 6 drops of essential oil in a nice spray bottle, and you that's it! The scents of peppermint and grapefruit are invigorating, so they are great for freshening the air in your home or car. Lavender promotes relaxation and rose is calming, so these are good for misting bed linens. The vodka or witch hazel is a preservative. Vodka is best for room sprays because it doesn't irritate the eyes, and is odorless, unlike witch hazel.

Best wishes to you and those special to you for a beautiful and safe holiday season.