

# A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

## New Meadows Garden Club Topsfield, Massachusetts

*November 16, 2016 through January 10, 2017*

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



*In Victorian times, the Amaryllis was most commonly given by a man to a woman he admired, as the red flower was meant to symbolize radiant beauty. A properly cared for plant can live for 75 years!*

*Welcome to our new member, Noreen Cousins!*

**November 25—December 11**



*The Massachusetts Horticultural Society invites you and your family to visit it's annual Festival of Trees at Elm Bank, Wellesley. You will see beautifully decorated trees and a display of model trains winding through a captivating snow village. Enjoy the hayrides, holiday workshops, live music, Santa visits and much more! For more information, go to <https://www.masshort.org/Festival-of-Trees>*

**December 8**



*Our Garden Therapy Committee will hold a Boxwood Tree Workshop for members of the Topsfield Council On Aging at the Emerson Center, Topsfield at 10 am. Please stop by if you would like to assist Rita Galvin and her team at the workshop.*

**December 13**



*Our Holiday Social and Yankee Swap will be held at the Bradford Tavern, 87 Haverhill Street, Rowley at 12:00 pm. Each guest will order from the menu and pay individually. If you would like to participate in the Yankee Swap, please bring a wrapped gift valued at \$15.00*

***\*\*Please RSVP to Linda Flynn no later than December 5th!***



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

**December 15**



Our club will supply table arrangements for the Topsfield Council On Aging Holiday Dinner, as has been our custom for several years now. At our Holiday Social at the Bradford Tavern, Artistic Co-Chair Rose Ann will be looking for volunteers to provide 16 of these arrangements. Rose Ann will have a sample arrangement available for us to see and will have containers for those interested in helping. You can drop your arrangements off at her home on Wednesday, December 14th or the morning of the 15th. As an alternative, you may drop your arrangement off directly at the Emerson Center on Thursday, December 15th, by 2 pm. These are always a big hit with the seniors! Many thanks for your help!

**January 10**

**Our next board meeting will be held at the Topsfield Town Library Meeting Room at 10 am. \*Please note that this is a change of date.**

***\*\*Please note that there is no regular membership meeting scheduled for January!***

## NOTES



## *Art In Bloom at the Museum of Fine Arts*

### **Great News!**

***Vice President, Jane Cullinan, has graciously volunteered to represent our club once again this year in the very prestigious event, Art In Bloom, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Our club has participated in this show every year but one since 1984, so it is good news indeed that Jane will help us continue the tradition! Linda Flynn has volunteered to be her assistant. A great team! The dates of the event are April 28th through May 1, 2017. Mark your calendar, gather some friends and plan to take in the show and perhaps enjoy lunch out!***



*Since voters in several states passed initiatives legalizing the sale of marijuana this past Election Day, stock in Scott's Miracle-Gro has soared to all-time highs!*

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

**\*\*\*As many of you know, it has been a long-standing custom for our club to place a small flower design or plant each week at the main desk at the Topsfield Town Library during the months of January, February and March. Our Artistic Co-Chairs are 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 already graciously signed up.**

**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. 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 contact the Artistic Committee Co-Chairs who can provide the name of the next person on the list. Perhaps you can arrange a trade of commitment dates.**

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

*...Bits and pieces...*

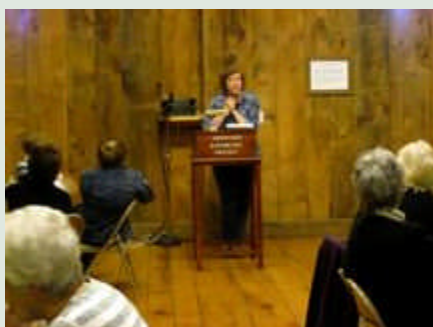


*Donna and Cheryl, the kitchen crew!*

*Donna Ryan's Herb  
Cooking Class & Dinner  
October 25, 2016*



*Helping ourselves to Donna's feast!*



*Donna gives us a herbal biology lesson!*



*Designer of the month, Barbara Shade.*

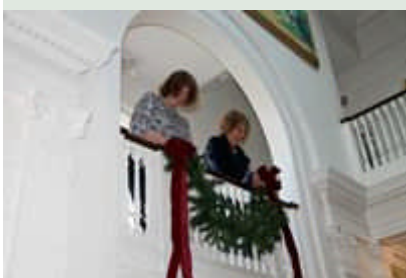
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*This year's Joint Meeting of the five area garden clubs held on November 15th and planned by the Topsfield Garden Club was a very elegant evening, featuring delicious food and a special program presented by Maine's Snug Harbor Farm. Our fundraising table is pictured here and members Lorraine Erickson and Claudette Poor were the big raffle winners of the evening, winning the Garmin Tracker and the beautiful quilt made and contributed by Linda Mann!*

### *Decorating Topsfield for the Holidays!*



*Perfection from Joline & Judy!*

*The Topsfield Library*



*Some of the crew!*



*Linda Flynn's holiday urn at the Steward School*



*Sometimes husbands and grandchildren help too!*

*...the Green Thumb Corner follows...*

## Green Thumb Corner

### Easy Orchid Varieties for Beginners!



*Phalaenopsis*



*Paphiopedilum*



*Cattleya*

*So, you've purchased your orchid and have arrived home with your new "baby." Now what? First and foremost, remember that if you put a little effort into adjusting your growing environment to help your orchid plant settle in, you will be rewarded with a healthy plant that will provide plenty of flowers!*

► *Here's your first hint: be sure to provide your plant with enough light. The three orchid varieties pictured above don't need super-high light levels, but they do need some light. As you already know, this is always a challenge for us in the Northeast, especially during the winter months. Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilum can do well with a low level of light, which you can easily attain on a windowsill. Cattleya needs a bit more light, but can also be grown on windowsills. **But, beware that all windowsills are not created equal.** The direction the window faces does make a difference. East-facing windows provide morning sunlight, which is bright, but not too hot. West-facing windows receive as much light as east-facing windows, but because they receive the afternoon sun, this is a much hotter exposure, and you will have to make sure your orchids don't dry out! South-facing windows are the brightest, so this is a good location for orchids that demand high light. Those that require less light, can be placed a few feet back from these windows. And lastly, north-facing windows just don't provide enough light to sustain healthy orchids at all. In addition, consideration also must be given to the size of the window, whether there is an overhanging roof, whether the glass is tinted, and whether the glass is clean. For the orchids pictured above, an east-facing window should be a good place for your orchid. But, remember that in winter, you don't want your orchid too close to or actually touching the window!*

*Listen to your orchid as it settles into its new environment.* As time goes on, the leaves will tell you if they're getting enough light, too little or too much. If your orchid is getting enough light, the leaves will be a medium to light green, and the new leaves will be the same size and shape as the mature leaves. The foliage will be compact and stiff and not floppy. As time goes on, if your orchid's leaves get dark green with no flowering, inadequate light may be the culprit. On the other side of the coin, if your orchid's leaves turn a yellow-green color or take on a reddish cast, the plant may be getting too much light. Orchids do get sunburned just as we do, and will exhibit circular or oval spots on their leaves under those circumstances.

► *Here's your second hint: when setting up your watering schedule, be sure to consider factors such as potting material, environment and the type of orchid you have purchased. Unfortunately, the answer to the question "how often should I water my orchid" is a bit complicated. Many people mistakenly assume that since orchids are native to tropical rainforests, they should be watered several times a week. Watering this frequently will very quickly kill the roots of any orchid. The easy part of establishing a watering schedule is to consider the guidelines for your particular type of orchid. Phalaenopsis orchids like to be kept nearly dry between watering. The Cattleya likes to be kept evenly moist when it is actively*

*...more on the next page...*



growing and allowed to dry out between watering when it is not. Paphiopedilum orchids like to be kept evenly moist at all times, but not soggy or wet. That's the easy part.

Here are some other considerations: the type of pot your orchid is planted in will affect the frequency of your watering. Plants in plastic pots do not dry out as fast as those planted in clay or ceramic. The bottom line is that you will be watering less often if you are using a plastic pot. Next to consider is the potting material and its age. Many orchids come planted in bark, which retains very little water. Fresh bark requires much more frequent watering until it gets properly moisturized. As it gets older, it will retain water longer. Some orchids come planted in sphagnum moss, which is a highly water absorbent plant that is harvested from bogs. Obviously, you will have to be careful not to over-water if your potting material is sphagnum moss. I have lost about a handful of orchids that were planted in moss merely because I kept them on the same watering schedule as my other orchids, which were planted in bark. Now, if I buy an orchid that is planted in moss, the first thing I do is change the potting material to bark. I can do bark...moss not so much!

Your next consideration should be your growing environment...is the humidity high or low? If you will be growing your orchid in low humidity, it will dry out more quickly. \*\*If your growing environment is low in humidity, a trick that will increase the humidity around your orchid is to set the pot on top of a saucer filled with some kind of gravel and water. Make sure that the bottom of the pot is not sitting in the water, but on top of the gravel. I do this with every single orchid I have. Since orchids prefer 50 percent humidity levels and above, misting with water also helps. Fill a spray bottle with water and leave it out so the water stays at room temperature. The bottle should have an adjustable nozzle so that you can spray a fine mist on your orchid. Spray the leaves and roots in the morning by holding the nozzle about a foot from the plant. Spray around all sides until the leaves and roots are covered with a fine mist. Do not saturate the leaves. This can be done each morning to keep the humidity up, especially in the dead of winter.

Yet another consideration when settling on a watering schedule is temperature. Warmer temperatures increase water evaporation meaning that your orchids will require more frequent watering under these circumstances.

All of this said, most of my two dozen orchids are Phalaenopsis, and I keep them pretty much on a weekly watering schedule. After a week, the pots feel lighter because they are dry, and the potting medium feels dry about an inch down. They're ready for water! And, no, I do not water my orchids with ice cubes! It just doesn't make any sense to do that. Phalaenopsis orchids in particular are from Southeast Asia, an area that has probably not seen ice since the last Ice Age! Most orchids grow in tropical conditions, and their preferred water temperature is tepid. Ice coming in contact with the roots or any part of an orchid will damage the cells and plant parts.

And finally, some watering techniques:

- use tepid water...cold water can cause root and bud shock.
- water thoroughly...the water should pour out from the bottom of the pot.
- it is best to water in the morning to give the moisture on the leaves time to dry during the day.
- if any water remains in the crown (where the leaves join in the center) use a paper towel to blot the water to avoid crown rot. (I learned this the hard way!)
- after watering, do not allow standing water to come in contact with the bottom of the pot.

► Here's your last hint for today: orchids need to be fed regularly! You can use fertilizer specifically formulated for orchids, which is what I do, or any "balanced" fertilizer you would use on your other container plants, such as 20-20-20. Just make sure that what you plan to use contains little or no urea, which many growers consider bad for orchids. Since orchids are very prone to fertilizer burn, follow the instructions on the package very carefully. Orchids will do far better with too little fertilizer than with too much. Many growers recommend the "weakly, weekly" approach, applying a 1/4 diluted strength fertilizer each time you water, rather than applying a full dose once a month. This is my approach as well.

*Time's up for this issue! Next time pruning orchids, transplanting and whatever else I can think of!*

*Best wishes to all for a beautiful holiday season, and all good things in the new year!*