



A POSY PICKER'S PAPER

New Meadows Garden Club
Topsfield, Massachusetts

November 27, 2015 through January 19, 2016



December 12th is National Poinsettia Day!

Welcome to our new member, Donna Graves!

November 27—December 13



The Massachusetts Horticultural Society invites you and your family to visit it's annual Festival of Trees. 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 and much more! For more information, go to FestivalofTrees@masshort.org or call 617-933-4988.

December 10



Rose Ann Waite will be pinch-hitting for Garden Therapy Chair, Pat Gagnon, as she conducts a Boxwood Tree Workshop for the Topsfield Council On Aging in the Clubhouse at the Topsfield Fairgrounds at 10 am. This is always a very popular, well attended workshop for the seniors, so Rose Ann is hoping that she will have many helping hands to both prepare materials for the workshop, and also to provide assistance to the attendees as they create their trees. She is requesting that helpers arrive at 9 am to set up so that all will be ready to go at 10 am. Helpers interested in making their own trees at home will be able to purchase kits that day at a cost of \$7.00. Please contact Rose Ann as soon as possible to lend a hand!

December 15



Our Holiday Social will be Brunch and a \$15 Yankee Swap for those who wish to participate at the Bradford Tavern, 87 Haverhill Street, Rowley at 11:30 am. Please RSVP to Sandy Whelan as soon as possible or at least by December 11th!



January 3

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.

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

January 19

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

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

NOTES



*****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. Artistic Co-Chair, Jean Bilsbury, is happy to report that she has a complete 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.**

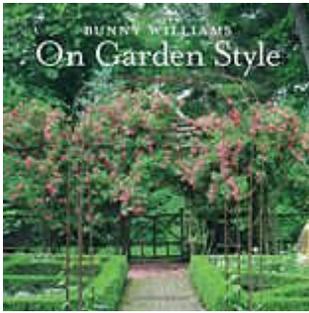
For those who are participating, your assignment is very simple...on Monday of your week, just bring a plant, or a simple flower design to the library...the choice is yours and it doesn't have to be too elaborate...then come back to pick it up the following Saturday afternoon. You can even arrange with 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!

Jean will send a reminder to each participant about a week before it's your turn. If you find that circumstances have changed making it impossible to follow through with the commitment you made, please contact the next person on the list to see if a trade of commitment dates can be arranged. For your convenience here is a copy of the schedule:

Monday, January 4 th :	Janet Hanson
Monday, January 11 th :	Mary Leahy
Monday, January 18 th :	Lorraine Erickson
Monday, January 25 th :	Gerry Bunker
Monday, February 1 st	Rose Ann Waite
Monday, February 8 th	Linde Martin
Monday, February 15 th :	Helen Gaffey
Monday, February 22 nd :	Shirley Holt
Monday, February 29 th	Sandy Whelan
Monday, March 7 th :	Jane Cullinan
Monday, March 14 th :	Barbara Shade
Monday, March 21 st :	Mary Leahy
Monday, March 28 th :	Claudette Poor

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

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



Our dear Honorary Member, Betty Flagg, sadly passed away this year, and we will miss her a great deal. She was an avid gardener, and her warmth and quick wit endeared us to her. There was no one like her! In her memory, as is our club's custom, a book was donated to the Topsfield Town Library. Our club's board has chosen a beautifully illustrated hardcover book entitled "On Garden Style" by Bunny Williams. In case you would like to take a look at this book, it is now in circulation at the library.

Mei Schuster is the 2015 winner of the Georgia McHugh Novice Award!



Mei accepts the award from State President Betty Sanders

Congratulations to our member, Mei Schuster for winning the Georgia McHugh Novice Award for the design she entered in the Standard Flower Show at the Topsfield Fair this year. This is a state award established by Georgia's family in her memory. Georgia would have been so proud!



Here is a description of the award: The Georgia McHugh Award (a plaque) will be given annually to the novice with the highest point score in the Design Division at The Topsfield Fair. An exhibitor who has never won a blue ribbon in a Standard Flower show shall be considered a novice. All classes are eligible.

...more on the following page...

...Bits and pieces...



Our selection of decadent chocolate.

Chocolatefest 2015

Many thanks to those members who supported our fundraising event!



Serving our guests!



Enjoying our guest speaker, Michael Cross.

Decorating the Topsfield Town Library for the Holidays!



Many thanks to Artistic Co-Chair Rose Ann's family for once again being our "wreath-hanging crew!"



The "inside crew."



...the Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

Poinsettia plants in a variety of colors are everywhere this time of year and many of us will bring home at least a few to brighten up our homes for the holidays. So, this month, I've decided to devote our Green Thumb corner to this top-selling holiday plant.



If it wasn't for Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first United States Ambassador to Mexico, we might not have had the love affair we have with this plant at holiday time. Dr. Poinsett discovered the shrub growing by the side of the road in Taxco, Mexico in December 1828, and sent cuttings home to his plantation in Greenville, South Carolina. Most botanists of the time considered the plant a weed. Through the efforts of Dr. Poinsett, the plant gained acceptance despite its very short blooming time. It wasn't until the 1960's that these plants were bred to bloom for more than just a few days. Another problem with the plant was that it grew very tall and didn't branch. In order to keep it at a desirable height, the stems had to be bent back into a loop! Enter Paul Ecke, Jr., who solved the problem at his ranch in Southern California by figuring out a method for getting poinsettias to branch!

And now a little about the plant itself...first of all, did you know that the poinsettia's main attraction is not its flowers, but its leaves? The flowers are pretty insignificant, and are the yellow clustered buds you see. If possible, when you buy your plant, make sure that the buds are not yet open. Red is the most popular color, followed by white, and then pink. Now you can find poinsettias in many colors, some of them not natural, but dyed. I must admit, the orange and blue ones just do not appeal to me at all! Poinsettias are by far the highest selling flowering potted plant. Easter Lilies and then orchids are very distant second and third sellers. California remains the top producer.

Because the poinsettia in its natural habitat is a small tropical tree belonging to the Euphorbia plant family, it can reach heights of 12 feet with leaves measuring 6 to 8 inches across! A native of southern Mexico, the poinsettia blooms in December. The Aztecs used the leaves to dye fabric for clothing and used the sap for medicinal purposes, which many of you might find surprising. For a long time, the Poinsettia plant had the reputation of being poisonous, but this was just a nasty rumor! The plant has been tested repeatedly and has been cleared by both the National Poison Center in Atlanta, Georgia and the American Medical Association. That being said, it is still not a good idea to ingest the leaves. You may wind up with a tummy ache! And for some people, contact with the white sap when cutting the branches may cause skin irritation.

And now, some very general tips on how to make your Poinsettia plant happy when you bring it home! Above all, protect your plant from exposure to wind or cold on the way home from the store. These plants are highly sensitive to cold temperatures and even a few minutes of exposure to 50 degree temperatures will cause them to wilt. Once home, you must take care to find the perfect place to prolong the life of your plant...hopefully this will be the same place you would like to use the plant to decorate for the holidays! Avoid hot or cold drafts, and keep the soil moist but not soggy. A bright room with temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees is ideal. Be sure to water when the soil begins to dry out, because once the leaves wilt too much, the plant may be history!

And now the hard part. I know many of you just throw the plant away once it has gone by, but we are garden club members, after all, and our plants should have a better future than that! Believe it or not, it is possible to get your poinsettia to re-bloom the following year, but it does require some work. If you want to do this, keep in mind that flowering for this plant responds to short day lengths and long nights. The plant needs daylight for no more than 10 hours a day beginning around October 1st. Some suggest to place the plant in a closet from 5 pm to 7 am daily for 8 to 10 weeks. Then the plant must be taken out into the daylight for the remainder of the day. Since our number of hours of daylight are so close to this schedule at this time of year, I just place my plants in a room that I do not use after dark and are not lighted. This does bring my plant into bloom, maybe not at Christmas time exactly, but at least they didn't wind up on my compost pile! And, I have some pretty nice-sized plants now.

On the following page is the best outline I have found for caring for Poinsettia plants year round!



While there is no guarantee that your poinsettia will bloom again, and at the right time, if you are the kind of person who likes to nurture and coddle your plants, here's where to start. First be sure to follow the suggestions I have already mentioned about when to water your plant and where to best place it in your home. And then, thanks to Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor at the University of Vermont, these seasonal tips will help you along with your adventure: "a good way to remember when to provide extra attention to your poinsettia is by tying your care schedule to specific holidays. Here's how:

NEW YEAR'S DAY--Fertilize with an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer at recommended rates. Continue to provide adequate light and water for prolonged bloom for several weeks.

VALENTINE'S DAY--Check your plant for signs of insects such as white fly. If your plant has become long and leggy, cut back to about five inches tall.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY--Remove faded and dried parts of the plant. Add more soil, preferably a commercially available sterile soil mix. Keep the plant in a very bright interior location.

MEMORIAL DAY--Trim off two to three inches of branches to promote side branching. Repot to a larger container using a sterile growing mix.

FATHER'S DAY--Move the plant outside for the summer; place in indirect light.

FOURTH OF JULY--Trim the plant again. Move it into full sun. Continue to water and fertilize but increase the amount to accelerate growth.

LABOR DAY--Move indoors to a spot that gets at least six hours of direct light daily, preferably more. As new growth begins, reduce the amount of fertilizer.

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX--Starting on or near Sept. 21, give the plant 13 hours of uninterrupted darkness (put the plant in a closet, basement, or under a box) and 11 hours of bright light each day. Maintain night temperatures in the low 60 degree F range. Continue to water and fertilize. Rotate the plant daily to give all sides even light.

THANKSGIVING--Discontinue the short day/long night treatment. Put the plant in a sunny area that gets at least six hours of direct light. Reduce water and fertilizer.

CHRISTMAS--Enjoy your "new" poinsettia. Start the cycle all over again."

Good luck, gardeners. Be of good cheer!



**"Christmas gift suggestions:
To your enemy, forgiveness.
To an opponent, tolerance.
To a friend, your heart.
To a customer, service.
To all, charity.
To every child, a good example.
To yourself, respect." –Oren Arnold**

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