

The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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AMGA



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Roam

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HAPPY HOLLY DAYS



**Santa's Reindeer? Professional Pruner?
Or Uninvited Guest?**



A tranquil winter scene! A common site in many of our neighbourhoods! Should we let the deer roam to prune our plants (perchance to perish), plant "cover crops" entirely for the "dears" or encage our gardens! Tell us how you have dealt with deer or other wildlife!

First Annual Fall Workshop a Success

-By Carol Goodwin

Participants from the three Maritime provinces came together the weekend of October 25th to learn new skills from master willow weaver, Deb Hart. The Atlantic Master Gardeners Association wanted to make their first annual fall workshop something special, so they invited an English willow artist to come to Nova Scotia and share some of her craft secrets with them. The effort was made possible with the organisational support of CADE, The Centre for Art and Design in the Environment. CADE is part of the Writtle School of Design at Writtle College in Essex, England. The two day workshop gave opportunities for individual creations as well as team projects. Participants learned the art of fedging (creating living fences with branches laid in diamond patterns), construction of wattle fences using alder, and the creation of willow shelters in the landscape. The shelters were created in the Butterfly Meadow on the

grounds of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. A range of structures took shape over the weekend, from willow tunnels, tee pees and a giant apple to sculptural pieces and a medieval style turf seat constructed around a tree

In addition to the large scale projects, workshop participants learned the skill of splitting willow, using God's eyes for joining woven sections together, and how to weave using paring or slewing - two popular willow weaving techniques. Using their new found skills, each member of the group made an obelisk for their own garden. The workshop generated a great deal of excitement. There was a lot of discussion of how techniques learned would result in winter decorations, from sculptural angels and reindeer to stars and balls to decorate with lights and place in the landscape. Deb assured everyone that, with practice, they could make an obelisk in the afternoon and give it as a hostess gift in the evening.

First Annual Fall Workshop a Success



Willow Weaving





Christmas Greetings



from the AMGA President

What an autumn! It was cool and rainy – just like the summer. Well, except for the week around the willow weaving course – that was cold! The brush collecting crew was well bundled up and very rosy cheeked during the four solid days it took to gather all the materials. The Town of Truro very generously gave us free access to several properties where willow and birch was growing.

The snow on the first Sunday of the month was a rude awakening, but it did wait until December, and for that I'm grateful! The day before was a gift – warm and sunny. I finished up the last of the garden chores and really felt I had put the garden to bed. The deer fence now completely encloses my back yard. Yesterday I admired their tracks where they had come to see if I had missed a spot. I no longer have to worry about my bird feeders being emptied overnight, disappearing rhododendrons and viburnum, and browsed tulips in spring. Am I too optimistic?

We are looking for summer school program ideas from all of you who may want to attend the level II Summer School. Please send me your ideas by mid January. We do have the opportunity to make the summer school what we want it to be, but we need feedback from everyone to pass on to the organizers!

Your executive has been working in the background during the autumn. We have a team putting together our new web page, and we have put together our thoughts on what we hope to achieve during 2010.

As we move forward on these initiatives, we'll be keeping you informed and ask your opinion regarding changes.

I hope all of you have a happy holiday season. I appreciate the opportunity to slow down and look around at the friends and family who make my life the rich experience it is. Isn't that what Christmas is all about?

– Carol Goodwin

AMGA NOTICES

Emily Miller

Program Coordinator

Reminds us to forward
Volunteer information in-
cluding # of hours to her



AMGA Crests
are available
from **Sue Stuart**

Carolyn Downie , Treasurer

reminds us that Membership
fees are due for 2010.
She will be contacting us with
details

AMGA EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT:	Carol Goodwin	- cgoodwin@nsac.ns.ca
VICE-PRESIDENT:	Janet Elsie	- janetelsie@yahoo.ca
PAST PRESIDENT:	Anita Sulley	- asulley@accesswave.ca
SECRETARY:	Cyndy MacCormack	- cyndy@eastlink.ca
TREASURER:	Carolyn Downie	- cdownie@ns.sympatico.ca
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR :		
	Emily R Miller	- emilyrmiller@accesswave.ca
MEMBER AT LARGE (1):		
	Heather Connors-Dunphy	- hmcd@rogers.com
MEMBER AT LARGE (2):	Sue Stuart	
NEWSLETTER EDITOR		- suestuart@accesswave.ca
WEB MASTER:	Helen Zebedee	- hzebedee@eastlink.ca

The Christmas Plant

- By Anita Sulley

Love them or hate them the *Euphorbia pulcherrima* or better known as the Poinsettia are here to stay. They have been gracing our homes at Christmas since Joel Roberts Poinsett an American Minister to Mexico and a botanist first introduced them in 1828. Originally considered quite exotic and only for the privileged few they are now available for as little as a few dollars from every grocery or department store around.

The poinsettia is actually a wild shrub and is native to Mexico and Guatemala.



**Growing Wild
In Guatemala**

When I first saw it growing in the wild in Guatemala, I didn't recognize it. The plant grows quite large, about 3 meters and the red bracts are considerably smaller than those of the cultivated varieties that we are so accustomed to seeing. The plant itself was nearly leafless as it typically blooms in the dry (winter) season.

The brightly colored parts of a poinsettia are not the plant's flowers. They are actually bracts, or modified leaves surrounding the real flowers, which are tiny, yellow and not very showy. The bracts attract pollinating insects to a poinsettia's true flowers. The plant's association with Christmas goes back to the 16th century in Mexico. In Mexico it is called *Flor de nochebuena* or *Christmas Eve Flower*.



**Cultivated Poinsettia
The 'Christmas' Plant
*Euphorbia pulcherrima***

Today it is used to celebrate the holidays around the world and there is even a National Poinsettia Day in the USA Dec 12th. Even though it was chosen as a Christmas plant for its bright red color, thanks to plant hybridizers they come in many different colors ranging from pinks, white, mixed and a very un-Christmas-like peach colour.

The Christmas Plant

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In order to keep your Poinsettia vibrant and showy through the Christmas season there are some very basic rules to follow:

- After purchase, make sure it is wrapped properly because exposure to low temperatures even for a few minutes can damage the bracts and leaves. The short trip home from the store can result in disaster.
- Poinsettia prefers indirect light. Six hours of light daily is ideal. If you want to display the plant in a less than ideal darker location, moving it after it has absorbed the sunshine might be the solution.
- Keep poinsettias away from warm or cold drafts from radiators, air registers or open doors and windows.
- Poinsettias thrive with daytime temperatures of 18 to 20°C and nighttime temperatures around 13°C. If your house is kept at normal room temperature 24 hours move the plant to a cooler room at night, if possible.
- Water when soil is dry. Allow water to drain into the saucer and discard excess water. Do not allow it to sit in water.
- Weekly half strength feeding with a liquid fertilizer will promote good coloring

The Holidays are over but the plants are still here! Many people like to keep poinsettia after the holidays. If you follow the routine above the plant can stay quite showy well into February .

To induce bushiness and promote good color for the following year, the plant should be cut back by about a third in April and again in September. The poinsettia is a succulent so there will be a white sap when you prune it. To seal it simply mist with water. The cuttings once they have been sealed can easily be rooted. When you do the April pruning the plant should be repotted with fresh potting soil. Remember to water only when it is almost dry and apply a weekly half strength fertilizer. In September after it is pruned the potted poinsettia will require 12 hours of total darkness for about 8 weeks. Even a night light will prevent blooming so some people have found simply placing it in a closet works best.

I have to admit I have not tried this as I am typically away for some of the winter and can't care for them, but my Dad had great success following this routine.

Sources: Simpson, Ron ,
 "Poinsettia"
 Florida Garden Winter 2004

 "Poinsettia"
 The Green Pages.
 Montreal Botanical Garden



Johanne Robertson reports finding an article concerning a disorder that should be of interest to all Master Gardeners. In fact many Master Gardeners may be susceptible to the disorder as well!

DISORDER DESCRIPTION:

An uncontrollable desire to acquire plants either by purchase, particularly during sale season or by trade. There are several forms of this disease the most common being:

PPAD-Perennial Plant Acquisition Disorder

APAD - Annual PAD and

BAD - Bulb PAD

ETIOLOGY AND PATHOPHYSIOLOGY:

Unknown. Known to be worldwide although less prevalent in the southern hemisphere.

SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS:

Patient spends inordinate amounts of time at every greenhouse and plant facility within reach purchasing huge numbers of plants.

In the Calgary, Alberta area where this disease was initially described the disorder reaches

its peak in May, PPAD starting a few weeks earlier than APAD depending on the part of the country.

BAD is at its peak in September when greenhouses receive their fall orders of bulbs.

Attendance at plant shares and trades with other gardeners are also common symptoms. The beginning of plant sales also exacerbate this disorder and the sufferer is compelled to share with other gardeners where the best sales are located thus enabling the disorder in others.

In an attempt to hide the disorder patients will usually endeavour to plant all acquisitions immediately after returning home in the hope that other family members will not notice the new plants. Pots will be bagged and put in the garbage immediately and plant tags hidden.

DIAGNOSIS:

Examination of financial records will usually reveal large amounts being spent at greenhouses either using debit or credit cards.

The patient may also withdraw large amounts of

PLANT ACQUISITION DISORDER

Cont'd from page 4

cash from the bank account at the time of year when the disorder is most prevalent in an attempt to hide purchases. It may be necessary to follow the patient from time to time to establish the greenhouses visited, the amount of time spent therein and how many plants are purchased.

PROGNOSIS AND TREATMENT:

The prognosis is very poor. Persons with this disorder will always find someplace to buy plants throughout the year although the disorder will usually go into dormancy in the winter months. And they will always find someplace to plant the plants although the actual acquisition is apparently the more satisfying part of this disorder.

Results of CAT and MRI scans and extensive blood work have not revealed the area of the brain, which is responsible for this disorder. There is no known treatment other than to

remove the sufferer to an environment where no plants are for sale or trade and the weather conditions are such that none will grow. This may however necessitate the use of antidepressants to control the depression that will inevitably result.

A major drug company is working on a drug treatment, which can be administered without the knowledge of the patient since they will never knowingly take such treatment.

The drug would obliterate the desire to acquire plants. There is apparently considerable opposition to marketing such a drug from the major growers, wholesales and retailers of plants.



A GARDENER'S CHRISTMAS EVE FANTASY

- Adapted from *The Night before Christmas* by Clement Clarke Moore or Henry Livingston



'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Melissa Gardner was ready with help from her spouse

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The grandchildren were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of video games danced in their heads;

And Melissa in her nightgown, and the cat in her lap,
Was ready to settle down for a Christmas Eve nap,

When she looked out the window, snow swirled all around
Her Gardens were covered, no sight of the ground

That she had so tenderly nurtured to blossom – now gone
A wistful reflection of gardens that shone!

Melissa loved Christmas, but Gardening more
"If only the winter seemed less like a chore!

"Could I find something useful to do with my time
That would help other people in this community of mine?"

A sound on the roof made her suddenly turn round
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.

A bundle of gifts he had flung on his back
He reached in and pulled out a book from his sack.

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A GARDENER'S CHRISTMAS EVE FANTASY

Cont'd from page 10



When, what to her wondering eyes should appear,
On the book – 'To M.G. from Santa' – So c lear!

She couldn't resist , she just had to know
The title "Help Your Community 'Grow'" !

With a flick of her finger she whirled through the pages
When her eyes caught the answer she'd needed for ages.

"That's it , I've found it, I know what to do
Oh Dear Santa it's all Thanks to You.

I'll become a Master Gardener through NSAC
And help fellow neighbours and kids plant a tree

Community Gardens to make local folk keen
And help Mother nature keep our world green."

Santa smiled as he filled all the stockings with care
Since Melissa had finally learned how to share

And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But she heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,

**"MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL
MAY 2010 GARDENING BE A DELIGHT!"**

