

**Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteer Newsletter****KEEP IT GROWING!**

November - December 2020

Volume 17, Issue 6

**Extension Office Is Operating!**

The OSU – Coshocton Extension Office remains open with some restrictions. Limited staff will be available on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; please call ahead if you would like to speak with a specific person. Staff members are still working from home when not in the office. As circumstances change with Covid 19, the office hours may be adapted. Some changes in protocol remain in effect:

- Hand sanitizer (provided) and face coverings (can be provided) are required to enter the office
- The first hour of each day (8:00 to 9:00 am) will be for immune-compromised clients only
- Only one person or family is allowed in the office at one time
- Please ring the doorbell and wait to enter
- Use separate doors for entering and exiting
- Other criteria will be posted on the office door.

Questions can be addressed by calling (740) 622-2265; e-mail addresses for each staff member can be found on the OSU-Coshocton County website at: <https://coshocton.osu.edu/about/staff>

**Covid 19 Effects Continue**

Face-to-face programming has been discontinued, but MGVs are still meeting online via Zoom; our monthly “The Real Dirt” sessions on WTNS continue although they are now conducted by phone instead of in the studio; and this newsletter continues to be printed and posted online every-other month. Since we were unable to meet at our educational gardens for a few months, we are working on “catching up”. Please know that your questions can still be answered by contacting the OSU-Coshocton County Extension Office.

Please let us know what topics you would like to see addressed here – and keep the newsletters for future reference!

**ALERT: Spotted Lanternfly**

Ohio Department of Agriculture has confirmed this invasive pest was found in Jefferson County recently: <https://agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/plant-health/news-and-events/10-27-20-slf-jefferson-county>

We will continue to post info as it is available.

**It's Not Too Late - Start a Few Plants in the Fall!**

There is still time to plant flowering bulbs for spring color, but there are a couple other plants that do best when planted in the fall.

November is a great time to plant garlic to harvest next year; the bulbs will have time to develop roots and have a jump-start on growth in the spring. Select garlic cloves from a nursery or other gardening supply store (grocery store bulbs may have been treated to prevent sprouting so that they will last longer in our kitchens). Plant the individual cloves after the first frost and before the ground freezes and enjoy some fresh garlic next year! A fact sheet for growing garlic can be found at: <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1627>

If you are interested in growing milkweed for monarch butterflies, those seeds should be sown in autumn before the ground freezes. Milkweed seeds need wintery conditions to aid in germination; the freezing, thawing, and moisture help to break down the seed coating so it can start to grow as soon as spring weather permits.

Milkweed is the only host plant for monarch butterflies; the larvae eat the leaves before becoming adults. Planting milkweed is increasingly important to the monarch butterfly population which has decreased by 80% over the past 20 years. We would like to thank Bill Barnes for collecting bags of common milkweed seeds this fall! He has generously left them at the Extension Office for anyone who would like some to plant. Please call the Extension Office at (740) 622-2265 to make arrangements. We will also have a limited number of swamp milkweed and butterfly weed seed available soon. *More info can be found at:*

<https://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/2018/09/24/collecting-and-fall-planting-milkweed-for-monarchs/>

## **‘Tis the Season...**

Our November-December newsletter has contained many articles over the years regarding the more common seasonal topics: fall garden clean-up, gourds and pumpkins, Christmas trees, poinsettias, wreaths, etc. Co-editors Margaret Lowe and Gail Piper thought it would be interesting to explore some lesser-known seasonal topics in this issue, including some with global connections.

Meanwhile, we wish everyone a very happy and safe holiday season – keep your evergreens watered!

### **Christmas Fern**

Ferns are great plants for shade areas. They add texture, form and rich green color to gardens. Ferns are primitive plants that do not produce flowers or seeds. They reproduce from erect or creeping rhizomes; they can also reproduce from spores.

At first glance, all ferns may look alike; however, a closer look reveals ways to easily identify them. The frond shape, the base shape and the rhizomes reveal differences that aid identification. This site may be helpful in identifying ferns: <https://www.inaturalist.org/guides/6588>

The Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) has leathery, often evergreen fronds. Growing from one to four feet tall, they are easy-to-grow ferns. Christmas ferns are hardy in zones 3 to 9 and are native to the eastern United States. This fern derives its common name from the fact that it was once gathered for holiday decorations. The plants can be dug and divided for propagation.

Find more info here: <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=a710>

### **Christmas Island**

Do you know there are two Christmas Islands and the United States once claimed one of them?

Christmas Island, now officially known as Kiritimati Atoll, is one of the largest islands formed by coral in the Pacific Ocean; it lies south of Honolulu. On Christmas Day, 1777, James Cook became the first European to reach the island. The United States claimed the island in 1856 and Great Britain annexed it in 1919; in 1979 the island became part of independent Kiribati. American forces built an airfield there during World War II and the atoll was used in nuclear weapons testing in the ‘50’s and ‘60’s.

Another Christmas Island exists in the Indian Ocean; it was named on Christmas Day in 1643. It covers fifty-two square miles and became a territory of Australia in 1958. One of the most mysterious events of this tiny island is the amazing annual migration of approximately one-hundred twenty million red crabs. Each year the males dig burrows, wait for the females to arrive, and both genders head for the surf to dispense eggs in the ocean. Their journey plus the story of various other migrations can be found on a DVD entitled “Amazing Journeys”; it is available for loan at the Coshocton Public Library. While we often hear and read about the migration of monarch butterflies, hummingbirds and other birds, it is worth noting that many other species migrate such as whales, zebras, birds, wildebeests – and even human beings.

More info about the two Christmas Islands can be found at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kiritimati-Atoll> and <https://www.britannica.com/place/Christmas-Island>

### **American Mistletoe (*Phoradendron serotinum*)**

Many of us hang some mistletoe during the holiday season – the tradition of kissing someone who stands beneath it stirs a bit of romance or laughter and sometimes avoidance! Historically, the Druids considered it a holy plant because it rooted closer to heaven than other plants; the Scandinavians considered it a plant of peace.

Did you know that American (or oak) mistletoe is really an evergreen parasite? Although it doesn’t grow in Ohio, it can be found from New Jersey to Florida and west to Texas. There are as many as 900 other species of mistletoe that grow throughout the globe. It roots into tree bark and infiltrates the growth layer, thus stealing nutrients from the host tree. In the United States, it grows on several species of deciduous trees including oaks, elms, hackberries, wild cherries and sycamores. Mistletoe does provide food in the wild for several bird species and small mammals and is host for a butterfly, the great purple hairstreak.

Take care when using mistletoe as a decoration – it can be toxic to children and pets, so keep it out of their reach. The bunches should be kept moist and away from heat – they can be fire hazards if allowed to dry out.

Find more information online: <https://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/resource-library/plant-week/mistletoe.aspx>

## Frankincense and Myrrh

Gold, frankincense and myrrh are named in the Bible as the gifts the three wise men brought to the newborn baby Jesus. We all know what gold is and may even own some, but frankincense and myrrh are not as common.

Both are resins and come from trees. Frankincense has a citrusy aroma and comes from the resinous sap of several varieties of the *Boswellia* tree. Myrrh has a pine-like aroma and comes from the resinous sap of varieties of the *Commiphora* tree. The shrubby trees that produce them are native to the Arabian Peninsula and regions of northeast Africa. Both resins are edible and were used historically in incense, medicines, cosmetics, perfumes, oils and even in the embalming process. Once heavily traded to parts of Europe, frankincense and myrrh lost value with the fall of the Roman Empire and the start of modern medicine. Known to have anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, they are now being studied in labs to see if they can again be valuable in the medical field.

More information can be found at: <https://www.history.com/news/a-wise-mans-cure-frankincense-and-myrrh>

## Yule Log

The custom of burning the Yule log began with the ancient Scandinavians. The log was burned to honor their god Thor. They made the Yule log an important part of their Christmas ceremonies. The log, a great block of oak (and sometimes other types of wood), was brought in on Christmas Eve and lighted with a piece kept from the Yule log of the year before. It was considered good luck to keep an unburned piece to light the new log and to protect the house from fire and lightning during the year. Some parts of this tradition were observed throughout Europe and were later brought to America.

Oaks are deciduous trees that bear acorns which are major sources of food for wildlife such as deer and squirrels; they also are one of the most important timber trees because the wood is heavy, hard, useful and valuable. Here in Ohio we have many kinds of oak trees: there are white, scarlet, bur, blackjack, yellow, pin, willow, post and more varieties all over the state. Finding a piece of oak to bring into the house for a Yule log or a piece for good luck should be very easy to do.

Many folks are familiar with a culinary version of the Yule log - Bûche de Noël or Yule log cake. This dessert is a thin cake rolled up with a creamy filling that is often frosted or decorated to resemble a wood log. Search online for a recipe or check your local bakery.

This website lists several European Yule log traditions: <https://www.scandinavianchristmastraditions.com/yulelogtraditions.html>

## Wassail Bowl

Drinking from the wassail bowl is an old English Christmas custom. The name comes from the Saxon greeting, "your health". The bowl contains ale mixed with spices and the mixture is a delicious hot drink. Some of us use cider instead of ale and place cinnamon sticks and cloves in the cider. Sometimes whole cloves are pushed into an orange to cover the surface and then floated in the cider.

We use cinnamon and cloves in cooking and as flavoring, but do you ever wonder what they are or where they come from? They are both spices and certainly do not grow in Coshocton County or even in the United States. Both are imported to us from tropical areas and grow on trees that most of us will never see.

Cinnamon is made from the bark of branches of the cinnamon tree (*Cinnamomum verum*), a member of the laurel family which grows in Sri Lanka, India and Myanmar. The tree grows as high as thirty feet and is often kept small or dwarfed for easy access. The bark is peeled, dried to a light brown color, and packed in bundles.

Cloves are dried buds of the clove tree (*Syzygium aromaticum*). These evergreen trees grow in Indonesia, Madagascar, Tanzania and the West Indies. The tree grows from fifteen to thirty feet tall and belongs to the myrtle family. The buds are hand-picked before they can open and then dried.

To read more about cinnamon, go to: <https://www.britannica.com/plant/cinnamon>

More info about cloves is here: <https://www.britannica.com/plant/Myrtales/Economic-and-ecological-importance#ref595374>

## Christmas Rose (*Helleborus niger*)

The Christmas rose (*Helleborus niger*) is native to Europe but does grow in the United States; it is in the same family as the Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*). This plant has evergreen leaves and a white, cup-shaped bloom with five petals. Native to Europe, it is hardy in Zones 4 to 8 and will often bloom in December in southern zones. It blooms later in winter or early spring in more northern zones like Coshocton County.

For more info: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=c990>

## November Garden Check List:

- ❖ Cut down perennials after foliage browns.
- ❖ Plant spring bulbs until ground freezes.
- ❖ Inspect euonymus and lilacs for scale.
- ❖ Rake lawn to remove fallen leaves and debris.
- ❖ Remove fallen leaves from beds of ivy, pachysandra, myrtle or euonymus.
- ❖ Drain gas and oil from mower before storing.
- ❖ Prune grape vines.
- ❖ Stay off frozen grass.
- ❖ Make sure hoses are drained, disconnected and stored to prevent winter freezing.
- ❖ Clean and sharpen tools before storage.

## December Garden Check List:

- ❖ Set Christmas trees securely in a holder that will hold water and **fill daily**.
- ❖ Start pansy seeds under grow-lights.
- ❖ Brush heavy snow and ice off trees and shrubs.
- ❖ Prune grape vines
- ❖ Stay off frozen grass.
- ❖ Page through garden catalogues and fill out a wish list.



**Master Gardener Volunteers will be donating to the WTNS/Salvation Army Christmas Castle project again this year!**

*“Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle.” – Luther Burbank*



## Upcoming Events

November 13	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
November 26	Happy Thanksgiving!	
December 11	The Real Dirt on WTNS 99.3	9:00 – 10:00 am
December 25	Merry Christmas!	
January 1	Happy New Year!!!	

Watch for **FREE** copies of “Keep It Growing” bi-monthly at: OSU Extension Office, Coshocton Public Library, West Lafayette Library, Sprout Garden Center, Garden Patch Greenhouse, Auer Ace Hardware, Tractor Supply, Clary Gardens, Buehler’s, and Warsaw ShopWise. Available **FREE** via e-mail or the OSU-Coshocton County Extension website <https://coshocton.osu.edu/> Subscribe for home delivery via USPS for \$5.00 per year.

Have a suggestion or question for “Keep It Growing”? Contact Margaret Lowe and Gail Piper, Coshocton County Master Gardener Volunteers, in care of the Coshocton County Extension Office.

### Coshocton County Extension

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