



Backyard Views

The Backyard Gardeners

Winter, 2010

The Backyard Gardeners, Inc. was established in 2007 as a non-profit organization to provide free education to homeowners in the Hampton Roads area on gardening and horticultural practices, designs and techniques in order to encourage conservation of our natural resources, the enjoyment of gardens, garden-related activities and creative garden art.

In the Garden...Winter

You might think getting your garden ready for winter is as simple as Robert Frost's line to his apple trees: "*Goodbye, and keep cold.*" But, not if you want your gardens to be their healthiest in the spring. In our area, now is the prime time to do a few things to insure a healthier and happier garden.

Here's a few tasks that will make your garden shine!

1. Prune correctly & only when needed.
2. Grow winter vegetables.
3. Plant trees and shrubs.
4. Divide and transplant perennials.
5. Mulch if needed for winter protection.
6. Look for plant deals at garden centers.
7. Read catalogs and plan next year's garden.

"I'm not really a career person. I'm a gardener, basically."

George Harrison

Calendar of Events

Garden Talks

7-8:30 pm

Chesapeake Library
298 Cedar Road

January 19

"Composting With Worms"
Bill Jowers, Chowan County,
NC Master Gardener

February 16

"To Prune or Not To Prune..."

Mik Lestyan, Chesapeake
City Arborist

March 16

"Spice Up Your Life"
Elizabeth Meska, Lifestyles
by Elizabeth

April 20

"Theme Gardens"
Ginny Moritz, Local Garden
Maven

Plant Profiles

Leatherleaf Mahonia (aka Oregon Grape)

It can be hard to find shrubs that provide winter interest in shady gardens. Luckily, the Leatherleaf Mahonia (*Mahonia bealei*) is becoming more widely available at garden centers. These low maintenance, evergreen shrubs are often confused for holly due to their tough, barbed leaflets. In January, the plant will produce multiple racemes of tiny yellow flowers, attracting bumble bees when there are few other sources of nectar. When pollinated, the resulting fruit resemble strands of grapes which birds love. The plant grows from multiple vertical stems and can slowly get up to 10 feet tall, but stays fairly narrow. The flowers are produced at the top of each stem. Good drainage is required and leaves can burn easily if positioned in too much sun. For those gardeners who are looking for something different, the Mahonia may be for you.



Hellebore



The best-known feature of the hellebore, also known as Christmas or Lenten Rose, is the winter blooms that appear through winter and very early spring, often with snow still on the ground. Cup-shaped blooms are generally maroon, pink, and white or reddish tinted and sometimes fade to a cream color as they age. New cultivars and hybrid hellebores may have large double blooms, upright facing or gently nodding. The Hellebore is a great plant with a lot to offer gardeners at a time when not much else is going on.

Hellebores are wonderful plants that help fill an important niche in the garden and there are several forms and cultivars accessible to home gardeners. *Hardiness Zone:* Zones 4-8 *Plant Category:* Perennial.

Spotlight on Gardens

Think there is nothing to see in gardens in the winter...think again. There are a variety of gardens at the Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) that are best seen in winter.

Hofheimer Camellia Garden contains over 750 of the NBG's total 1700 camellias and is named in memory of Alan J. and Aline F. Hofheimer. In 1992, the Norfolk Botanical Garden and the Virginia Camellia Society worked together to create the garden. It contains 500 different types of *Camellia japonica*, 30 different types of *Camellia sasanqua* and more than 150 other species and hybrid camellias. The collection has won numerous awards and national and international honors.

Another winter jewel, the **Winter Garden**, is situated between the Colonial Herb Garden and the Annette Kagan Healing Garden. This area is marked with plants that have an interesting fragrance, showy flower or foliage or an interesting branching pattern apparent in the winter. It is quite a treat to walk along the shady paths

and enjoy the sights and scents of the season.

The **Conifer Garden** is located along the canal and the varied textures, colors and forms of conifers that grow well in this region are reflected in the water. Many of the varieties available to gardeners from dwarf to very large are showcased in this garden.

Established sixty years ago, the **Holly Garden** contains 121 varieties of hollies including different types of American, Asiatic and English hollies grouped by geographic region. The colorful red, orange and green berries offer breathtaking displays in the NBG's winter landscape and provide food for wildlife. Bronze sculptures of native wildlife by William and David Turner and are placed throughout the garden.

So, as you can see, winter is the perfect time to explore the varied landscapes of the **Norfolk Botanical Garden**. For more information, www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org.

Tool Box

Ergonomic tools are a boon to avid gardeners as well as the hobbyist. **Gardeners Supply** offers a great selection of tools that will make your life in the garden easier and less painful. Use the ingenious **Pot Lifter** to move planters, trees or rocks to make the job easier. The straps are self-cinching and will adapt to objects up to 6 feet in circumference. The handles allow 2 people, even if they are different heights, to easily lift up to 200 pounds.



Pruning is another garden task that takes its toll physically. The **Powergear Bypass Loppers**, make tough pruning jobs easier. The unique gear design multiplies your hand strength and allows you to prune for hours without hand or arm fatigue. The precision sharp blades and lightweight design make cutting through branches up to 1½" in diameter a snap! They also have a nonstick coating on the blades to help prevent sap build up. These loppers will make easier work of all



the pruning jobs in your yard.

For more labor saving tools check out,

http://www.gardeners.com/Labor-Saving/GardeningTools_LaborSaving,default,sc.html

"God gave us memories that we may have roses in December."

J.M. Barrie

Garden Hints

- ✿ Now is the time to test your soil so you can be ready to make any adjustments for the next growing season.
- ✿ Don't panic! Emerging spring bulb foliage has an "antifreeze" that protects the plants from cold.
- ✿ Turn over the vegetable garden now and cover with chopped up leaves. In the spring you can plant through the mulch and skip the tilling!
- ✿ Leave some dead perennials in your flower beds to feed the birds and animals in the winter. It also protects the plants crown and/or roots.

You may request to be added to the newsletter mailing list at www.thebackyardgardeners.org or by emailing gardenguru@thebackyardgardeners.org.

