

Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers

Gardening is our Passion . . . Education is our Purpose

January 2018

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Coordinator's Corner

By Bill Jones

Here we are beginning another new year and now is the time to plan for our next and best gardening season. Enjoy selecting your seeds and plants from the many catalogs you have found in your mail and be sure to order soon in order to get the materials you want. I have seen a big difference between sources in the amount they charge for shipping, so check this out before ordering. The best deals on shipping are from "Totally Tomatoes," "Vermont Seed Company," and "Pinetree."

Our December meeting was our annual Christmas Potluck and a good time was had by all who attended. Marilyn Beltz and Marjorie Miller along with Marjorie's daughter provided us with a festive party with many goodies from our MGVs and with chicken from Lee's. There was no business discussed at the meeting so we have no minutes to report.

Our next meeting will be held on February 8 at 6:00 PM at the OSU Extension Office. Tim Brugeman will provide our Brown-bag training at 6:00 on the subject of the Colors of the Seasons.

Our Courier article by Linda Casey will be published on January 20 and will discuss the health benefits of gardening. Our February article will be provided by Karla Dennis.

At our November meeting, we were led in a strategic planning session by Karl Farwig. A small group of MGV leaders met in January to review the suggestions for improving our program and are considering how to move forward with them. These will be discussed further at our February meeting. The key areas from the planning session for emphasis in 2018 are as follows:

- Develop Succession Plan for President and Volunteer Coordinator
- Add MGVs at the same rate that they are lost or faster
- Accept New Ideas
- Spread Leadership Responsibilities
- Develop Leadership Team (Develop Leadership Abilities/Develop Leaders)
- Establish Team to Answer Office Questions from the Public
- Host more Community Activities / Diagnostic Clinics
- Assure Leadership to the Phenology Garden Project
- How to Conduct Meetings to not make Volunteer hours a dis-incentive
- Assign mentors to New MGVs
- Increase Diversity (age, ethnicity, economic, etc.)

We have a new intern with us this year, Betsy Martindale DeFrancesco. Let's welcome her at our February meeting and decide who will be the best person to mentor her.

OSU wants us to inform them of any programs we provide to kids. If you plan to give a program where kids are involved, we need to remember that there should always be a parent or teacher present all the time. Even with this, we are supposed to submit a form to OSU informing them of the event. So, if you are planning to provide a kids program, please let me know of the date and location well in advance so we can submit the required form.

Seneca County is offering MGV Training from January through March in Tiffin. If you know of anyone who would like to take this training, please have them contact Karl Farwig as soon as possible. The cost is \$175.00. So keep warm and remember it won't be long before the crocuses are in bloom and we can begin to get our hands in the dirt once again.

Bill

HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS MEETING MINUTES

No December 2017 minutes

2018 Calendar of Events

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST	LOCATION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Jan., 2018	No MGV Meeting		N/A		No January MGV Meeting	
January 15-17	Ohio Green Industry ed/Trade show	3 days	Varie s	Columbus	Sessions by ONLA Landscape contractors & Green Industry	Tim Brugeman info@onla.org 800-825-5862
Sat., Jan. 20, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Linda Casey
Thurs, Feb. 8, 2018	Brown Bag Presenta tion	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Colors in the Seasons	Tim Brugeman
Thurs, Feb. 8, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz
Sat. Feb.24, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Karla Dennis
Wed., March 7, 2018	DAR Presenta tion	1:15 - 1:30	N/A	DAR Meeting at Zion UM Church	Non-chemical weed control	Karla Dennis
Thurs, March 8, 2018	Brown Bag Presenta tion	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Gourds	Bill Lanning
Thurs, March 8, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz
Sat., March 24, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Bob Campbell
Thurs,	Brown	6:00	N/A	OSUE Office	To be determined	Doris Salis

April 12, 2018	Bag Presentation	PM				
Thurs, April 12, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilyn Beltz
Sat., April 21, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Doris Salis
Thurs, May 10, 2018	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Increasing Pollinators	Rose Morrison
Thurs, May 10, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilyn Beltz
Sat., May 19, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Marilynn Beltz
Thurs., June 14, 2018	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	When to pick veggies	Barb Phillips
Thurs, June 14, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilyn Beltz
Sat., June 23, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!
Thurs, July 12, 2018	MGV Picnic	TBD	N/A	TBD	Annual Picnic	
Sat., July 21, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!
Thurs., August 9, 2018	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	To be determined	Volunteer Needed!

Thurs., August 9, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz
Sat., August 25, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Ann Woolum
Sept. 2018	No MGV Meeting				No meeting due to fair	
Sat., Sept. 22, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!
Thurs., Oct. 11, 2018	Brown Bag Presenta tion	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	To be determined	Volunteer Needed!
Thurs., Oct. 11, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz
Sat., Oct. 20, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!
Thurs., Nov. 8, 2018	Brown Bag Presenta tion	6:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	To be determined	Volunteer Needed!
Thurs., Nov. 8, 2018	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 PM	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz
Sat., Nov. 24, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!
Thurs, Dec. 13, 2018	Christm as Potluck	6:00 PM	Bring a dish		MGV Christmas Party	Barb Sherman, Marge Miller, Marilynn Beltz
Sat., Dec. 22, 2018	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article	Writer Needed!

Grow herbs indoors for a winter garden

. For a triple bonus of good looks, good flavors and good scents, consider growing herbs inside to chase away the winter doldrums and get your winter garden fix. Even just a few pots of herbs indoors can supply you with wonderful scents and flavors.

There are some caveats to growing herbs indoors in the winter. They are sun-lovers, and will need a good, south-facing window with at least four hours of direct sun each day to do well. If you do not have a window with these specifications, try growing your herbs under lights.

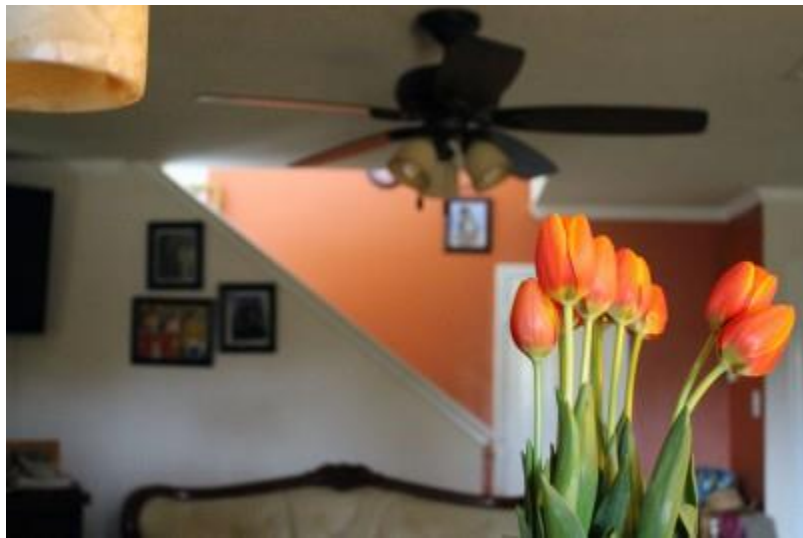
Some herbs are better suited for indoor winter cultivation than others. Below are a few tried and true performers with consistent and compact growth:

- ‘Grolau’ chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*): Strong flavor and thick, dark green leaves that were developed for forcing. They grow eight to 12 inches tall and seeds germinate in 10 to 14 days at 60° to 68° F.
- ‘Fernleaf’ dill (*Anethum graveolens*): Dwarf form of dill that only grows 18 inches tall and is the ideal type of dill weed for indoor conditions because the standard varieties grow too tall and bolt too soon. They are easy to grow from seeds and germinate in 7 to 14 days at 60° to 68° F.
- ‘English’ mint (*Mentha spicata*): This is perhaps the best-behaved spearmint variety because it is not as invasive as others and the leaves are broader and a deeper green.
- ‘Spicy Globe’ basil (*Ocimum basilicum minimum*): Dense, compact form of basil that grows 8 to 10 inches tall and has good flavor. It should be grown from seed and germinates in 6 to 12 days at 68° to 77° F.
- Greek oregano (*Origanum vulgare hirtum*): The true oregano for Mediterranean cooking has excellent flavor and white flowers. Watch out for the imposter, called wild marjoram, with pink flowers and no flavor. Greek oregano grows well in pots, reaching 8 to 12 inches. It is easily grown from seed in seven to 21 days at room temperature.
- Broadleaf thyme (*Plectranthus amboinicus* or *Coleus amboinicus*): Also known as Spanish thyme and Cuban oregano, this plant has broad, fleshy leaves unlike those of ordinary thyme. It never goes dormant and reaches 10 to 12 inches tall.
- Vietnamese coriander (*Polygonum odoratum*): Not true coriander, but it makes a good substitute. It regrows after cutting, unlike true coriander, which must be reseeded after harvest. It grows to be four to eight inches tall.
- ‘Blue Boy’ rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*): This more compact and diminutive variety of rosemary compared to regular rosemary, reaches only 24 inches tall. It flowers freely and has excellent flavor.
- Dwarf garden sage (*Salvia officinalis* ‘Compacta’): With smaller leaves and a more compact habit than regular sage, this variety grows only 10 inches high with the same sage flavor.

- Creeping savory (*Satureja repandra* or *S. spicigera*): Flavor identical to that of winter savory, but easier and faster to grow indoors, this savory reaches only two to four inches in height, but fills the pot with a dense mat of foliage.

Other herbs that are not good candidates for winter indoor growing include full size cilantro (coriander), dill and garden cress; these herbs do not regrow when cut for harvest. You can grow parsley from seed indoors, but do not expect it to get as big as when you grow it outdoors.

Forcing Spring Bulbs to Bloom Indoors



Fall is a beautiful time of the year, but as we enjoy the last warm days and bright colors of the season, we know winter is lurking just around the corner. One way to add a little color and brightness to the dreary winter is to bring a little piece of spring into your home by forcing spring bulbs to bloom indoors. This is a simple activity you can easily do together with youth. You can even include a little science exploration while planting the bulbs. Michigan State University Extension recommends encouraging youth to make observations, ask questions and discover answers while exploring and learning about their world.

Tulips, narcissus (daffodils), hyacinths and crocus can easily be forced into bloom in late winter. Just follow these simple steps.

Only use good quality, healthy and unblemished bulbs. You can purchase these in any garden supply store at this time of year. It works better not to mix varieties in the same container since they have different bloom times.

Place the bulbs in a clean container partially filled with potting soil, then loosely cover with soil so that the tips of the bulbs are still exposed and water thoroughly. You can use any kind of container—plastic or clay is fine. If you have young people helping you, have them estimate how many tulip bulbs might fit into the container, or how many crocus bulbs? Plant your bulbs close together. Usually, you should get about six tulip bulbs, three hyacinth bulbs or 15 crocus bulbs into a 6-inch container.

Keep some bulbs out and help your group of young people cut the bulb in half from top to bottom. Have them observe and describe what they see. Did you find the flower bud, scales (thick, fleshy leaves) and basal stem holding it all together and the short, stubby roots? What might the function of each of these parts be and how does the bulb survive the winter?

Next, your bulbs will need a cold treatment of 35-48 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 12-13 weeks. You can do this by putting them into an unheated basement or attic, or simply putting them in the vegetable section of your refrigerator. In the refrigerator, cover the pots with plastic bags that have some ventilation holes punched into them.

If planted by Nov. 15, you can start taking your bulbs out of cold storage by the end of January. You may want to discuss and explore with your youngsters why the bulbs need to be in cold storage. What happens if you take the bulbs out of cold storage after four, six or eight weeks? Will they still grow and bloom?

When taken out of cold storage, place the pots in a cool, sunny location in your home for about a week. The plants need some time to acclimate and adjust to the new conditions. When shoots and leaves begin to expand, you can place your flowers into a warmer location, like your living room. Avoid direct sunlight. Your bulbs should bloom about three weeks later.

Insa Raymond, Michigan State University Extension

Bah-humbugs!

The feel of a warm fire crackling in the fireplace and the sight of a fully decorated Christmas tree complete with lights and tinsel can really make for Christmas memories. There also is something about the smell of firewood burning together with the nostalgic scent of pine from a freshly cut Christmas tree to induce those memories. Unfortunately, these may be the very things that caused your unpleasant episode with bugs.

Either your firewood or your fresh Christmas tree can be the source of the bugs crawling around your home.

The term hibernation generally refers to a period when an animal reduces its metabolism and suspends all but it's very essential life-sustaining activities as a way to pass the winter. In mammals, we think of bears or groundhogs that sleep through the cold winter in a semi-dormant state.

Insects also suspend their usual activities and enter a dormant state to pass the cold winter months, but they do not hibernate like mammals do. Insects are ectothermic, which means that their body temperatures reflect the temperatures of their surroundings. They do not have the ability to self-regulate in the same way that mammals can. Like mammals, insects can lower their metabolism way down, but they do not burn fat reserves. Instead, they produce a substance called glycerin in their blood supply that prevents freezing.

Glycerin is similar to ethylene glycol or antifreeze that you put in your car. Glycerin, in insect blood, does not change the ambient temperature but, like antifreeze, it gives the insect body a “super cooling” ability that allows its body fluids to drop below freezing without permitting ice crystallization. Ice crystals can rupture cells and tissues and injure organs. In other words, by lowering the freezing point, insects become cold-tolerant.

Insects also use other strategies to survive winter extremes. Chief among these is “diapause,” a biological mechanism used to endure predictable, unfavorable environmental conditions. Diapause is a physiologically induced delay in development or a dormancy that is most often observed in arthropods and especially insects. Diapause often occurs in either the pupal or egg stage, but may also occur in the more active stages such as adults or even larval stages such as when woolly bear caterpillars curl up in leaf litter, stop growing, eating, or even moving for extended periods.

To pass the winter, many insects use both strategies. They go into diapause or a suspended growth and development period and chemically change their internal body fluids such that they cannot freeze even though temperatures are below freezing. We call this behavior overwintering rather than hibernation.

Even before the insects begin diapause or produce glycerin, however, many of them seek out a semi-protected area in which to overwinter. Favorite among these are under loose bark or attached to tree limbs and branches. An old log that laying in the forest provides ideal shelter for beetles, flies, centipedes, and millipedes. They burrow into or squeeze up under the bark in protected nooks and crannies where they are safe from predators and moisture.

The onset of colder fall temperatures trigger insects to seek protected places as well as diapause. Conversely, warmer spring temperatures signal the insects to awake from their dormancy. Eggs begin to develop and hatch, adults emerge from pupae and larvae begin growing again. Although it may take some time, the bugs eventually return to do . . . what bugs do.

Here is the kicker: It takes some time. This process does not just happen overnight. One warm day will not be enough — it only begins the clock. But if temperatures remain warm for several days, these somehow accumulate within the insect until a specific threshold is reached (unique for each species).

An insect’s overwintering survival strategy is fascinating, but not always foolproof. It works exceptionally well out-of-doors, in nature, but if we accidentally bring insects into the house where temperatures are warm, their little bodies are tricked into believing that springtime is almost here.

A praying mantis is a typical scenario — and incidentally this is a true story. One year I found several praying mantis egg cases attached to weeds and tree limbs during the late fall and early winter, and then then did what any other red-blooded, insect-loving, entomologist would do. I collected them, put them in a cereal bowl and stashed them in the back of my wife’s cupboard thinking that they would be

tucked away out of her sight and that I would take care of them before she ever noticed. Well, as you probably guessed, I forgot about them.

Once inside the warm house, the eggs reached the proper temperature threshold that restarted their development clock. They broke diapause and after the required number of warm days, bingo, the eggs began to hatch.

Unfortunately, their timing could not have been worse — for them and for me. The tiny mantids began to emerge by the hundreds from the cupboard. One mantid egg case contains several hundred eggs, and being the expert entomologist that I was, I had collected several egg cases.

The bottom line is that thousands of hungry, baby mantids began pouring out of the cupboard all at once. Like in your case, they began crawling all over the walls, ceilings, countertops, dishes, and even down into the utensil drawer. They were everywhere.

It just so happened that I was away on a business trip at the time. I received a very curt telephone call from my irate wife that began with “WHAT THE ___ blank ___?” followed by her announcing my immediate physical ban from the kitchen and from touching any of her dishes for the rest of my life. She hung up on me when I tried to answer her next question about why I could not just have become a librarian or an engineer.

Suffice it to say that my wife does not share my sense of wonder and awe about insects and their overwintering strategies. In fact, as I remember, she terminated our discussion even before I got to explain the difference between hibernation and overwintering.

I hear similar stories nearly every year from unsuspecting people who bring a freshly cut Christmas tree into their home — unaware that a mantid egg case, or a mass of pine aphid eggs, are attached to a branch or a needle. Several days after the tree has been decorated and trimmed, eggs hatch, tiny bugs appear by the hundreds, and begin crawling everywhere. Then along comes a letter, similar to yours, asking why insects are emerging in the middle of winter?

I suspect you brought hitchhiking insects into your home on a Christmas tree, but firewood is also a common vehicle. Many wood boring beetles, spiders, lady beetles and even millipedes and centipedes are attracted to dead logs and stumps where they find protected places, in cracks or under bark, to hole-up for the winter. They go dormant in the firewood piled outside but reawaken in warm cozy homes stacked next to the hearth. I imagine that they are just as surprised to find themselves indoors as is the homeowner and when they see the calendar they probably say to themselves, “shouldn’t I be overwintering?”

Unfortunately for them, springtime has not yet arrived, no flowers blooming no leaves breaking bud, no other insects out yet, so there is nothing for them to feed on. Eventually they will die ... and all because they were brought inside, out in the cold.

So, what can you do to prevent such surprises? Two things come to mind right off.

1) When you purchase your next Christmas tree and the attendant there asks if you would like it shaken — just say yes. The vibration not only shakes off dead needles and other debris, it might also shake off insect egg masses or other overwintering insects.

2) When it comes to firewood, store it outside in the cold until just before you intend to burn it. That way the insects don't have time to come to life and crawl all over your home.

Timothy J Gibb, Clinical Professor, Purdue University

Getting Christmas Cactus to Re-bloom



Holiday cactus in bloom (Photo credit:Rosie Lerner, Purdue Extension)

A little extra care will help bring your Christmas cactus back to full bloom next year. Although a Christmas cactus can adapt to low light, it will produce more abundant blooms if you know how to manipulate the light they receive.

For now, keep your plants in a sunny, indoor location away from drafts, heat vents, fireplaces, and other sources of hot air. Water them thoroughly when the top half of the soil in the pot feels dry to the touch.

You can move Christmas cactus plants outdoors in summer, but keep them in shady or semi-shady locations. Too much direct sunlight can burn the leaves. When it's time to bring the plants back inside in the fall, help the plants to slowly adjust to life indoors by gradually increasing the number of hours they spend indoors each day.

Christmas cactus plants bloom when you give them long, uninterrupted dark periods. Begin the dark treatments about mid-October to have plants in full bloom by the holidays. Christmas cactus plants will also bloom if they are subjected to cool temperatures of about 50 degrees to 55 degrees at night. Start these cool treatments by early November to have plants ready for the holidays.

For more information about caring for/ re-blooming holiday cactus, visit www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/yardandgarden/christmas-cactus-faqs

IT'S TIME TO.....

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Check houseplant leaves for brown, dry edges, which indicates too little relative humidity in the house. Increase humidity by running a humidifier, grouping plants or using pebble trays.
- Extend the lives of holiday plants such as poinsettias and Christmas cactus by placing them in a cool, brightly lit area that is free from warm or cold drafts.
- Houseplants may not receive adequate light because days are short and gloomy. Move plants closer to windows, but avoid placing foliage against cold glass panes. Artificial lighting may be helpful.
- Because growth slows or stops in winter months, most plants will require less water and little, if any, fertilizer.
- If you are forcing bulbs for the holidays, bring them into warmer temperatures after they have been sufficiently precooled. Bulbs require a chilling period of about 10 to 12 weeks at 40 degrees F to initiate flower buds and establish root growth. Precooled bulbs are available from many garden suppliers, if you did not get yours cooled in time. Then provide two to four weeks of warm temperature (60 F), bright light and moderately moist soil to bring on flowers.
- When shopping for a Christmas tree, check for green, flexible, firmly held needles and a sticky trunk base - both indicators of freshness. Make a fresh cut, and keep the cut end under water at all times.
- Evergreens, except pines and spruce, can be trimmed now for a fresh supply of holiday greenery.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prevent bark splitting of young and thin-barked trees, such as fruit and maple trees. Wrap trunks with tree wrap, or paint them with white latex (not oil-based) paint, particularly on the south- and southwest-facing sides.
- Protect shrubs such as junipers and arborvitae from extensive snow loads by tying their stems together with twine. Carefully remove heavy snow loads with a broom to prevent limb breakage.
- Protect broadleaves, evergreens or other tender landscape plants from excessive drying (desiccation) by winter sun and wind. Canvas, burlap or polyethylene plastic screens to the south and west protect the plants. Similarly, shield plants from salt spray on the street side.
- Provide winter protection for roses by mounding soil approximately 12 inches high to insulate the graft union after plants are dormant and temperatures are cold. Additional organic mulch such as straw compost or chopped leaves can be placed on top.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- To protect newly planted or tender perennials and bulbs, mulch with straw, chopped leaves or other organic material after plants become dormant.
- Store leftover garden chemicals where they will stay dry, unfrozen and out of the reach of children, pets and unsuspecting adults.
- Once the plants are completely dormant and temperatures are consistently below freezing, apply winter mulch to protect strawberries and other tender perennials. In most cases, 2 to 4

inches of organic material such as straw, pine needles, hay or bark chips will provide adequate protection.

- Check produce and tender bulbs in storage, and discard any that show signs of decay, such as mold or softening. Shriveling indicates insufficient relative humidity.
- Clean up dead plant materials, synthetic mulch and other debris in the vegetable garden, as well as in the flowerbeds, rose beds and orchards.
- Make notes for next year's garden.