



January 2018



Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! Thank you for your ongoing membership, your wonderful support of our year-end appeal and for all you do to help Mass Hort grow throughout the year. I would like to give a big Thank You for attending or volunteering at the very successful Festival of Trees and Snow Village. We are again grateful to Bill and Ellen Meagher, Gretel Anspach, Penni Jenkins, and Holly Perry for organizing this holiday tradition.

I hope you and your families had a wonderful holiday and are now focusing on what to put in your garden this spring. You will want to consider one of our many classes offered to assist you in planning, designing, and preparing for the garden season ahead. Don't forget to sign up for this year's school garden conference, designed to prepare our members to lead their communities in engaging a new generation in horticulture.

While the staff at Mass Hort may have less to do in the gardens, we are very busy organizing the exhibit and amateur competitions for Boston Flower and Garden Show. Consider participating in one of the competitions managed by Mass Hort at the Flower Show! Please check out the [schedules](#) on Mass Hort's web site. It's fun for all ages.

We are also busy with the ongoing work of the Master Plan. Please assist us by filling out [this survey](#). As a member, your input is very valuable to us. We'll also be rebuilding our website, and now is the time to share your [thoughts](#).

I look forward to hearing from you, and seeing you in the new year!

Warm regards,
Kathy

Upcoming Classes & Events:

[Botany for the Home Gardener](#)

Tuesdays,
Jan 16 - Feb 13
7 - 8:30 p.m.

[Grow Your Own Succulent Containers](#)

Thursday, January 18
7 - 8:30 p.m.

[Designing the Winter Landscape](#)

Wednesdays,
January 17 & 24
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

[Greenhouse Growing and Maintenance](#)

Saturday, January 20
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

[Digital Photography: Botanic Images](#)

Wednesday, January 24
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

[Garden History Symposium](#)

Tuesday, January 30
1 - 5 p.m.

[Find A Full List of Classes in the Course Catalog](#)

Garden Designs to Bridge Culture and Time: A Garden History Symposium

On Tuesday, January 30, Massachusetts Horticultural Society will host several award-winning garden historians for an afternoon

symposium that will lead you on virtual tours through a variety of historical gardens. Spend a winter's day touring iconic gardens from across the world. Our award-winning presenters are Patrick Chassé lecturing on Asian Gardens; Patrice Todisco reviewing trends of New England Gardens; and Marion Pressley discussing Italian Gardens. With stories and images, they will highlight design features that you can apply in your own landscapes.



Landscape architect, educator and landscape historian Chassé will present "Context & Continuity in the Evolution of Japanese Gardens." He will discuss the evolutions of Japanese gardens and the variety they possess, which reflect different economic, political, and philosophical influences of different periods.

Landscape architect and preservationist, Marion Pressley will review Italian Renaissance Gardens. Pressley is renowned for her expertise and service to conserve landscapes such as Boston's Emerald Necklace, as well as her contributions to educate and develop future generations of Landscape architects and historians.

Writer and landscape historian, Patrice Todisco, will present on New England Gardens, beginning from the earliest settlers and highlighting prominent designers such as Gertrude Jekyll. Leading us through this history of New England's gardens, she will explore what makes them so unique and influential over successive generations.

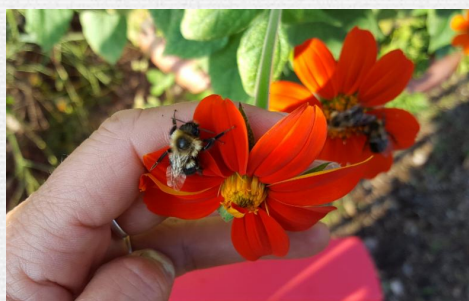
As you spend your winter days planning your garden, come to be inspired by the great gardens of the world! The symposium will run from one to five p.m. For more details and to register please visit our website at www.masshort.org.

Registration is \$40 for Mass Hort members, \$60 for general admission

Fascinating, Captivating, Wonderful Plants!

*By Hannah Traggis,
Senior Horticulturist*

Why are plants so fascinating? It is no secret that anyone reading Mass Hort's monthly Leaflet extracts great joy from plants. We strive to cultivate them in our yards and, especially when the land is frozen around us, within the comfort of our homes. Seeing them, touching them, pruning off old leaves and coaxing new growth, and a general fussing over them brings us satisfaction. To reward us, they shine back brightly, selflessly offering up new blossoms, branches, and fruits.



We are not alone, nor are we the first, to share this love and, and I dare say obsession, with plants! The allure of plants to humans as a luxury, a pastime, and intellectual pursuit is centuries old, leading to the very birth of modern biological science. The development of modern botany, the scientific study of plants, in the 16th and 17th centuries, sprang from the innate human desire to understand the intimate workings of how plants do exactly what it is that they do. Botany has its earliest roots with the ancient Greeks, which is why the language of botanical science includes so much Greek in addition to the Latin we commonly associate with scientific communications.

Endeavors to study and make sense of the botanical world, lead to many important discoveries and philosophical methodologies that are now fundamental to biological science today. Botany led to advances in medicine, genetics, systematics and taxonomical nomenclature, agriculture, ecology... the list goes on! It was Robert Hook, studying cork from an oak tree in the 1660s, who discovered cells. Matthias Schleiden and colleague Theodor Schwann proposed in 1849 the theory that cells are the fundamental unit of all life. Carl von Linné, in his obsession to identify and organize plants,

invented the system of binomial nomenclature published in his *Species plantarum* in 1753.

This winter, while plants outside our windows lie dormant beneath the snow and frozen earth, we are pleased to offer a 5 week home botany course, including a hands-on component. In this course, we will explore how plants do exactly what it is that they do, and we will reach a deeper understanding of how to more intuitively provide them with the care they need in order to thrive. Topics we will cover include: Plant structure and physiological function; Systematics; Plant reproduction and floral biology; and the ecology of plants and how they relate to one another and their environment. [Sign up today.](#)

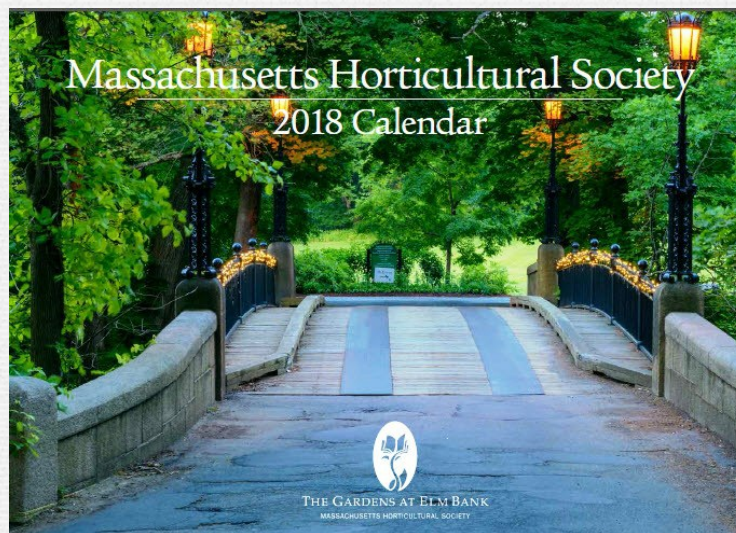
Pre-registration is required and space is limited. \$150 per member. This class runs for five weeks, Tuesday, January 16 through February 13, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Save 50% on Mass Hort's 2018 Month-by-Month Calendar

There's still time to purchase our 2018 Month-by-Month Calendar! This beautiful calendar features images of The Gardens at Elm Bank and the Elm Bank Reservation taken by photographer John Harmon, and sales support the gardens.

Each month also contains horticultural tips for gardens, lawns, houseplants, and more-- advice from our horticulturists and intended for growers in our region!

[Get yours today](#) for the reduced cost of \$13.13
(includes tax and shipping, offer good on new sales only)



January Classes at Mass Hort



Mass Hort has a number of classes and workshops scheduled this winter. We hope to see you at one of our [upcoming classes](#)!

You can spend a Saturday with our Gardens Curator, David Fiske, to learn about [Greenhouse Growing and Management](#). He'll explain how to best use your greenhouse and indoor growing spaces to grow specific plants and starts, and he will also review maintenance

needs that should be on your seasonal checklist. Saturday, January 20, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. \$25 per member.

We have a two-day course on [Designing the Winter Landscape](#) on Wednesdays, January 17 and 24, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Garden designer Maria von Brincken will help you design an outdoor space that uses texture, color, and mass planting to create visual interest throughout the winter and as a backdrop for seasonal perennial flowering. Using our Bressingham Garden, her designs and those of others, Maria will introduce you to layout and plant lists to create perennial combinations and color

palettes that will inspire your garden planning through these cold months. *Pre-registration required.* \$135 per member.

Learn to manage important elements of photography: line, texture, shape, space, and color. Understanding how to use them will add “wow” to your garden photography. **Digital Photography: Capturing Botanic Images** is back due to popular demand. This program is ideal for novice photographers as they use tablets, phones, and basic cameras. Melissa Pace, Mass Hort's Garden Educator, artist, and photographer, will lead this workshop on Wednesday, January 24, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. \$75 per member.

On January 18, 7 - 8:30 p.m. Thursday Night at the Hort will feature the program, **Grow Your Own Succulent Containers**, co-hosted by Carrie Waterman of the Noanett Garden Club and Barb Rietscha of Stow Greenhouses. Waterman will bring a selection of plants to show the diversity of succulent plants. She will discuss the best species to keep in containers and how to care and propagate your own succulents. Afterward, Rietscha will provide materials so every student can create a long-lasting, low-maintenance garden. *Pre-registration required* \$40 members. Please sign up early!

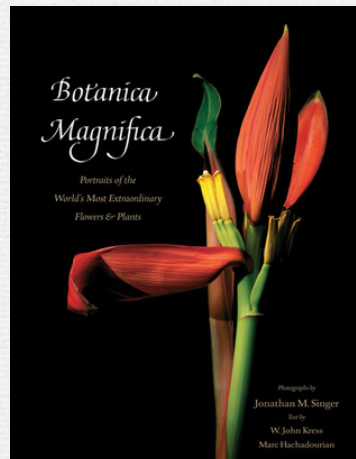
From the Stacks:

*By Maureen O'Brien,
Library Manager*

I hear the question "Why does Massachusetts Horticultural Society need a library?" An apt response is that the Library at the Society is an "anti-library." What is an "anti-library"? It is a term coined by scholar Nassim Nicholas Taleb that describes a library of unread books to be a research asset—a place for discovery. We don't expect anyone to read all the books we maintain, but they are here for reference. Our intention is to preserve our collective history in horticulture. Unlike the web—a place where ideas and information are often unreliable, fleeting and erratic, and will likely disappear, our library is a permanent collection that documents scientific, historic and artistic knowledge of horticulture that will nourish the future.

Featured Book

We are fortunate to have received a copy of the beautiful book *Botanica Magnifica, Portraits of the World's Most Extraordinary Flowers & Plants* (2009), with photographs by Jonathan M. Singer and text by W. John Kress and Mark Hachadourian. It is a wonderful contemporary complement to our **Edwin Hale Lincoln Collection** that contains plant portraits from the early 20th century. Both comprise outstanding scientific and artistic works depicting our natural world.



Botanica Magnifica is a baby-elephant folio of 251 captivating photographs that reveal the essence of its subjects in exquisite detail. It is arranged by subjects that include *Orchidaceae*, a Florilegium, *Proteus*, *Zingiberaceae* and *Botanicus*, the latter being a selection of beautiful yet bizarre specimens from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Each plant is accompanied by a description of its botany, geography, folklore, history and conservation.

The Library's long range plan is to acquire exhibit cabinets so we can share the treasures of our Collections and Archives with the public. Until then, you are welcome to visit the Library to peruse this beautiful book.

In the Windows

We have a rotating selection of books displayed in the Library windows at the Main Entrance to the Education Building. This Month's theme is "The Winter Garden." While you will note that some of these titles are older volumes, you will discover new ideas and the truth of the adage "everything old is new again." Drop by and become inspired with "old" ideas.

We are Still Collecting

Since its inception in 1829, the Library relied on the generosity of its members to build its collections. We continue to rely on the generosity of our donors. We receive books from authors, individuals and from donors to the Society's Amazon [Wish List](#). This year, we are happy to report that the Library added 197 books to its collections as well as periodicals, pamphlets and ephemera.

We were very fortunate to have received books from the library of the late Rodney Barker, former Board Member of the American Primula Society and Chair of the New England Chapter. Along with books on his favorite plant, *Primula*, Mr. Barker's library contained many books published in Great Britain that were not in the Library's Collection.

In the past, the Library published its recent acquisitions in the [Transactions](#). We are reinstituting that practice with the list of our new books found [here](#).

Save the Date

Want to add to your own anti-library or get inspired? The Library will be holding a Book Sale of duplicate titles at *The Gardeners' Fair* on May 12, 2018, here at the Gardens at Elm Bank. All the books and periodicals will be bargain priced. Plan to pick up a book or two along with your plants.



Cold Hardiness

by Wayne Mezitt

Surprising as it may seem, the recent period of extended cold temperatures we've been through may actually be beneficial for our full enjoyment of flowers next spring. As challenging as we may perceive winter has been, all the weather we've experienced still falls pretty much within the expected "normal" range for this region. Plants are affected by absolute temperatures; they can become dehydrated by winds, but plants do not experience the "wind-chill-factor" we see so often on the weather reports.

How well the trees, shrubs and plants in our landscapes tolerate winter is affected by their winter hardiness physiology. Plant cold-hardiness differs among individual plants; it is determined genetically for each variety and cultivar. Most landscape plants used in this region are well adapted to tolerating cold temperatures within their hardiness rating. Referring to the [USDA Hardiness Zone Map](#), our region is in Zone 6A where average annual extreme minimum temperatures are minus 10°F to minus 5°F.

Researchers tell us that each winter plants develop their optimum tolerance for cold temperatures with gradual acclimation. "Cold hardiness requires that the plants have acclimated properly through the natural process of lengthening nights and cool temperatures to become dormant. This is an active metabolic process requiring adequate moisture and proper nutritional balance." With the welcome rainfall last November and the normal progression into winter weather we went through in December, these weather conditions have been met.

Flower buds are generally less cold-hardy than growth buds on the same plant. The actual flower bud hardiness of each individual plant is determined by "the relationship between the degree of cold hardiness (supercooling ability of florets) and the

acclimation intensity in flower buds.” Buds are at their most-hardy condition when full dormancy conditions have been reached.

Since Christmas Day, recorded maximum temperature for the Hopkinton area never rose to freezing (that’s <32°F continuously for more than 2 weeks), and in that period, seven consecutive days recorded a maximum temperature below 20°F. The minimum recorded temperature briefly touched minus 13°F on January 2, only slightly below what’s considered normal for our Zone 6A hardiness rating. Leading up to this extended cold period was a gradual cooling period, so no sudden temperature changes occurred. Another beneficial factor is that since the start of this cold period, snow has covered the ground, albeit minimally for much of the time: this helped insulate roots from extreme cold.

Based upon all of this, it’s reasonable to conclude that winter is progressing normally, plants have properly acclimated for their full winter hardiness and should perform normally in spring. The rhododendron flower buds I tested today for winter damage are still fully viable. Of course how each plant actually turns out depends upon other factors where it is growing, as well as what winter will be bringing going forward.

Wayne Mezitt is a 3rd generation nurseryman and a Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist, now chairman of Weston Nurseries of Hopkinton and Chelmsford, MA, and owner of “Hort-Sense”, a horticultural advisory business; he currently serves as Trustee chairman for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society at Elm Bank in Wellesley MA.

Mass Hort's School Garden Conference

Thursday, February 22, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We have organized a full day of workshops and presenters for our fourth annual school garden conference! Presenters from environmental education organizations, garden educators, and more will explore best practices for our region that will lead to success in planning and running a garden. Workshops will address educational goals, as well as programs that teach gardening and life skills. Attending educators will develop practical gardening skills that will increase their confidence and ability to teach in and from a garden.



Workshops will support interested parents and volunteers, teachers and administrators—those who have established gardens and those just breaking ground. **New this year:** we will offer an older-student track, with workshops designed to address needs of gardens in middle and high schools.

Pre-registration required, space is limited, so please register early. [Register here.](#)

Registration is \$40 for Mass Hort members, \$60 for general admission

Winter Reading for Gardeners

Head Gardeners

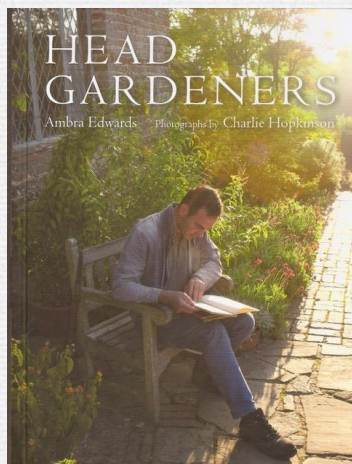
by Ambra Edwards

My Life with Plants

by Roy Lancaster

The Royal Horticultural Society with Filbert Press, 2017

Reviewed by Pamela Hartford



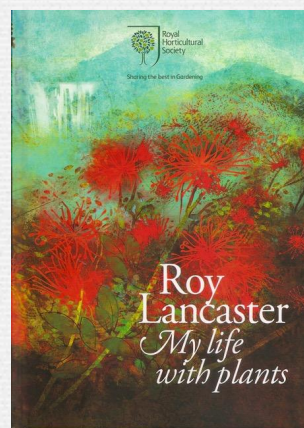
Two recent publications from the UK provide some delightful garden reading to augment the nursery catalogs in the hibernating days ahead. A glass of sherry or smoky spirit would be the accompaniment of choice.

Each book offers insight into the world of those who labor enthusiastically at opposite ends of the horticultural spectrum: from taxonomy and plant introduction to performance gardening.

In her introduction to *Head Gardeners*, Ambra Edwards provides some history on the evolution of head gardeners' responsibilities, and observes that the key choreographer of a majestic contemporary estate garden is largely unseen and unsung. The subjects of her thirteen profiles reveal the career trajectories and personalities of head gardeners at Trust estates (Sissinghurst, Packwood House and The Weir) and private estates (Great Dixter, Garden of Cosmic Speculation, Trentham Gardens, Lowther Castle and Waltham Palace), as well as unexpected gardens, such as Oxford's Merton College, Headley Court, a non-profit garden used for rehabilitating wounded veterans, and the Roof Gardens at Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall, managed by a recovering heroin addict who employs young students, other recovering addicts, goats and his terrier as his labor force.

The consistent thread for all these gardeners is passion, enthusiasm, love of plants and gardens, but above all, commitment, long term vision, and sensitivity in taking on historically freighted mantles of responsibility. Edwards teases out each gardeners' thoughtfully developed philosophies which allow them to succeed in their challenging environments.

Roy Lancaster is one of the twentieth century's great plant geeks. Lancaster's life in plants began at fifteen. He was attracted to an unusual plant spotted in a field near his Bolton, Lancashire (which of course necessitated climbing a fence for closer inspection). His teacher sent the plant to the University of Manchester Botany Department, which then forwarded it to the British Natural History Museum in London. Lancaster was stunned to receive a letter from London identifying it as a tobacco plant (*Nicotiana rustica*), only the second instance in which it had been seen in the wild in the British Isles. Given its origins in the Andes, it was a significant discovery, and Lancaster was quite taken aback by his headmaster's reaction (a reading of the letter at a school assembly) and the attention his discovery. This set him up for a lifetime passion for plant exploration.



After a stint at the Bolton County Parks Department, two years in Malaysia with the National Service and a two-year fellowship with the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, Lancaster arrived in 1962 at Hillier and Sons Nursery, which was internationally regarded for the number and variety of plants being grown and made available to the public in the 60's and 70's. In 1972, Lancaster transformed their catalog into a manual with detailed descriptions and cultivation requirements of over 8000 plants (576 pages, no illustrations), touted by reviewers as the "catalog to end all catalogs," and "making gardening history."

Lancaster's lifetime of carrying a notebook and religiously recording observations served him well in the penning of his autobiography, which is rich with anecdote, details of plant discoveries and of the many, many horticulturists with whom he became 'fast friends.'

Read in tandem, these books complement each other. For all, mentoring was the most valuable in

the building of their careers, with passion for gardens the driver. The reward: a life spent outside and engaged in the growing world, and in giving back by mentoring, teaching and nurturing the generation under their tutelage.

Pamela Hartford is a landscape historian and preservation consultant. Contact her at bookbosk@covad.net



All Praise the Common Houseplant

*By Neal Sanders,
Leaflet Contributor*

“All the leaves are brown and the sky is gray...”

- California Dreaming, John Phillips and Michelle Phillips

The winter of 2017-2018 will be remembered as the one when the leaves forgot to fall from the trees. It wasn't the trees' fault, of course, it was a combination of a too-warm October coupled with copious rain that caused trees to produce too little of the chemical that tells leaves it's time to decamp for their golden future as compost. As a result, the view out my window, since early November, has been a sad blend of browns and grays. Welcome to winter in eastern Massachusetts, a condition that will persist in some variation for the next three months.

Which is why this essay is all about houseplants and why they're treasured in this household.

I grew up with year-round outdoor greenery and flowers. Nominally, I appreciated that subtropical splendor. In reality, it was part of a background that I took for granted and too often found inconvenient. When periodically ordered to cut back the hibiscus hedge or grub out the *aracea* palms that were spreading into the lawn, I piled imaginary term papers on top of one another as excuses not to sully my hands with such chores.



This morning, I marveled at our multiple crotons (formally, *Codiaeum variegatum*) that provide a rainbow of reds, yellows and greens in each leaf, yet tolerate the weak light of January and February. Back in Florida, they were just one more thing on my to-do list of plants to be clipped back before they overflowed onto the sun porch.

There are cultivars of begonias in many rooms, each an adventure to be appreciated. A Rex Begonia 'Paso Doble' that bloomed prolifically on our screened porch all summer still provides a wonderful palette of reds and pinks in its leaves as it brightens our bedroom. How many plants can make that claim?

A houseplant need not be exotic, or even in bloom, to provide visual enjoyment. Ferns occupy ledges and shelves in several rooms. A single peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*) received as gift a decade ago has begat dozens of offspring that populate not only our own home but those of friends. They are cheerfully green the year round. This time of year, their regal white flowers – plain by the standards set by many other plants – are welcome additions to rooms' color.

We purchase houseplants that appeal to us. Some have lofty pedigrees from famous nurseries. Others are commoners. There is a *kalanchoe* next to me as this is written. It is one of the most ordinary of houseplants, yet it is budding up in yellow for its umpteenth annual display of winter color atop leather-tough, dark-green leaves.

A few of our plants are snowbirds. The cyclamen in our kitchen window spent six months last year planted in our garden, where it strengthened its root system and bulb even as its foliage needed to be shaded from the sun. Dug in October, it is now in the early stage of a winter bloom of majestic

purple. Thanks to tissue cultures, the availability and variety of orchids has proliferated even as their price has plummeted. Nor are houseplants necessarily greedy. *Philodendron* and cacti seem to thrive with minimal attention (a *Sanseveria* trifoliate, better known as 'Mother-in-Law's tongue', survived in my Aunt Virginia's house for decades with little more than periodic dusting).

We have more than thirty houseplants this winter, a happy mix of the ordinary and the extraordinary. There is no rhyme or reason to what we have. Each plant came to us through serendipity; each remains because it has thrived in our home.

I don't often offer unsolicited advice, but here is some: if you're here in New England or some place with a 'real' winter, this weekend, take a trip to a nursery with a selection of blooming houseplants. If one (or more) strikes your fancy, take it home with you.

And, if you happen to be reading this from a subtropical climate, stop complaining and go out and trim back the hibiscus like you were told to.

Neal Sanders is the author of eleven mysteries. His most recent, 'A Whiff of Revenge' was published in March and is available on Amazon and at bookstores.



January Horticultural Hints

*by Betty Sanders,
Leaflet Contributor*

Watering houseplants? Fill containers the night before so the water is at room temperature and, if you leave caps off, some chlorine will evaporate into the air. To provide higher humidity, group plants or use pebble trays. While watering, look for any pests such as spider mites that may have infested plants that have dried out. Washing houseplants in a sink or tub (except for hairy leafed varieties such as African violets) is a good first step in pest control. Rotate plants a quarter turn every week to prevent them leaning to the light.

Ordering seeds? Once you've planned your gardens for the coming season, check with friends to see if they are planning to grow the same varieties of vegetables or flowers. While you may use all of some seeds, I usually find myself at the end of the season with a number of half-full packets, especially of things like squash and pumpkins. Save money by planning ahead and sharing with other gardeners.



Deer dining? Deer are at their hungriest right now. Re-apply deer repellents to evergreens and any other plants they have favored in the past, but only when the temperature is above 40 degrees.

Bird watching? Remember each bird will eat pounds of insects next spring, summer and fall. Feeding them now not only enlivens your landscape, it helps protect your plants during the growing season.

White on white? Is your landscape a little bland at this time of year? Make a point of photographing it every month. Make note of what you'd like to see out your windows, do some research and, put it all in your gardening journal. Next spring and summer, plant trees or shrubs that add more winter interest. Leaving sturdy perennials up also makes the landscape more attractive — both to you and the birds.

Your Christmas tree can have a second life. When it's time to take down your tree, cut the branches from your tree (making it easier to remove from the house) and add them (or additional mulch) over the top of perennial beds and any plantings put in during the fall. This will protect the plants during freeze and thaw cycles.

Are you starting seeds indoors? Begin by first cleaning up seed-starting pots and trays. Then disinfect them before planting so your work and seeds are not in vain. Start seeds early this month for herbs such as parsley, oregano, thyme and chives as well as pansies so they are ready to set out in early spring. Start seeds for onions and leeks at the end of the month for a great summer harvest.

Time on your hands? Read a gardening book, work your way through gardening magazines you didn't have time for last summer. Look for upcoming classes that interest you. All your growing should not take place in soil.

Forced bulbs—gone but maybe not dead. If you forced tulips, daffodils or crocus for the holidays, save them in a cool dry place and put a reminder on your calendar to plant them in the garden as soon as the ground thaws. Those forced in water, such as paperwhites, cannot be saved and should go in the compost.

You can see more of Betty Sanders' gardening suggestions at www.BettyOnGardening.com.

Mass Hort Tool Swap!

When your garden chores are complete, consider donating your used tools to Mass Hort. We'll be hosting a Tool Swap at the 2018 Gardener's Fair in May!

Whether you're replacing them with something new, downsizing, or just cleaning house-- we'll take them! Call 617-933-4973 or email kfolts@masshort.org for details!



Upcoming Partner Events



Announcing: Kerry Ann Mendez to lead a garden tour of England next July 2 - 11, 2018. The tour will include magnificent gardens and the world's largest Flower Show, the Hampton Court Flower Show. Information about the tour including package prices can be found at www.pyours.com.



Celebrating Herbs Symposium, April 7, 2018

Save the date for "Celebrating Herbs" a symposium sponsored by The New England Unit of the Herb Society of America. On April 7th, 2018 come and enjoy captivating speakers, delicious lunch, demonstrations, and silent auction!

