

Welcome to the sixth Issue of the Horticulture Committee's Quarterly Bulletin!

Winter Perennial Garden Maintenance

Garden Maintenance

Mulch garden plants with at least two inches of pine needles, straw or chopped leaves once the ground has frozen, especially for fall-planted perennials. Mulching before the ground freezes can delay dormancy. Take care not to pile mulch against the plant's trunks and crowns. Mulch garlic beds with 4-6 inches or chopped leaves or shredded straw to avoid frost heaving.

Broad leafed evergreens, such as rhododendrons, and other marginally hardy deciduous shrubs are especially susceptible to drying out in the winter months. Even in cold weather, buds, leaves, and needles lose water in a process called transpiration. Water loss is greatest during periods of strong winds, and mild sunny weather. When the ground is frozen, water is largely unavailable to roots, and plants are unable to make up the water they've lost. When water is transpired faster than it is taken up, the leaves begin to desiccate and turn brown.

Protect shrubs that are vulnerable to deer and rabbits by adding netting or chicken wire or wrapping in burlap or applying repellents.

Fall Perennial Cutbacks

The first task most gardeners consider when preparing the garden for winter is cutting back perennials. While cutting everything to the ground may give the garden a tidy look, it does a disservice to wildlife species that can make use of some plants in the winter. Leaving perennial seed heads provides natural foraging habitat for native wildlife. In the winter months when food is scarce, gardens full of withered fruit and dried seed heads can provide birds with a reliable food source. Seed-eating songbirds such as finches, sparrows, chickadees, juncos, and jays will make use of many common garden plants. When cleaning up the garden, prioritize removing and discarding diseased top growth, but leave healthy seed heads standing.

Beyond providing habitat, limiting fall clean-up can also provide winter interest in the garden. Dried stalks and leaves add a different dimension to the garden once the snow begins to fall. Ornamental grasses add color, movement, and texture to the winter landscape.

All perennials left standing for the winter should be cut to the ground in the spring before new growth starts.

Wait to Prune

Although it may be tempting to pull out the pruning saw and loppers after the leaves have fallen, it is almost always best to wait to prune trees and shrubs until late winter or early spring. By waiting to prune until late dormant season (February to early April), gardeners avoid a number of physiological and disease issues. Pruning in the fall often causes dieback at the pruning sites, as new growth at wounds is more susceptible to damage from severe winter temperatures.

When apple trees are pruned in the late dormant season, new wounds are only exposed for a short time before active growth starts and healing can begin. Some disease issues can also be avoided by pruning in the late winter or early spring. Trees are much less likely to become infected by pathogens, such as fire blight, when they are dormant because disease causing agents such as bacteria and fungi are inactive at that time of year as well.

Sources: “The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust.

Blog of Univ of New Hampshire Extension. ‘Tips for the Home Gardener’ Emma Erler, Landscape and Greenhouse Field Specialist

www.ladybug.uconn.edu

www.acergardens.com

www.naturework.com

Condensed from Dec 2020 Bulletin articles provided by Judith Tosiello and Judy Whitehead

Holiday Wreath of Evergreens and Herbs

I discovered the following information in a 1968 publication by Adelma Grenier Simmons. She was a fascinating woman who owned Caprilands Herb Farm in Coventry, CT. This text is abbreviated for the purpose of the bulletin.

The circle-shape of a wreath is the symbol of eternity, and evergreens suggest life and hope. Herbs not only add interest but also have specific meanings. Create an unusual holiday wreath intended to be displayed flat on a table.

Use a circular wire “planting frame” (at least 12” across) which will fit a shallow bowl or tray that can hold water. Fill the frame with oasis (Simmons used un-shredded sphagnum moss) that has been soaked in water. Insert and shape pieces of evergreens around the frame, clipping branches as needed. Overlap greens to cover the bowl. Wrap sparingly with florist wire if necessary to keep greens in the circular form. Make indentations in the oasis or moss to hold herb plants’ roots. Add small herb plants around the wreath for dimension, fragrance, varying texture, and another level of symbolism.

According to Simmons, here are some herbs associated with Advent and their significance:

- Lavender – an herb beloved by Mary, represents purity and virtue
- Sage – the herb of immortality and domestic happiness
- Horehound – from Palestine, offers a wish for good health
- Rue – another symbol of virtue

- Thyme – a manger herb, and a symbol of bravery
- Rosemary – for remembrance, and the herb that changed its flowers from white to blue in Mary’s honor.

Provided by Denise Forrest

New Books – Great Ideas for Gift-Giving

Decorating with Flowers: A Stunning Ideas Book for All Occasions

By Roberto Caballero and Elizabeth V. Reyes

Published August 2021 Paperback \$8.99

This book celebrates the latest trends in contemporary floral design. Ten designers share ideas and insights behind their dramatic arrangements, with detailed photos. Contains 300 color photographs.

Flower Flash

By Lewis Miller

Newly Released on November 2, 2021 Hardcover \$48.99

Notable floral designer Lewis Miller spreads joy through his spectacular spontaneous floral installations. This book describes 90 public works, the types of flowers used, the emotion that drove the designs, and intimate behind-the-scenes look at the love of flower arranging.

The Nature of Oaks – The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees

By Douglas Tallamy

Newly Released this Fall 2021

This is Doug Tallamy’s newest book. Focusing on one tree, he reveals the fascinating, huge variety of life that relies on *Quercus species* throughout the year. The book showcases Tallamy’s expansive knowledge of ecology and a delightful enthusiasm for his subject. He points out ecological mysteries, while photos provide up-close views.

100 Plants to Feed the Monarchs

By The Xerces Society, written by the Xerces staff

Newly Published 2021 Available at www.xerces.org Paperback \$57

This 288-page book is full of photos, illustrations, and garden plans. In-depth information of the monarch butterfly is accompanied with detailed instructions on how to design and create monarch-friendly landscapes, plus guidance on observing and understanding butterfly behavior.

100 Plants to Feed the Bees

By The Xerces Society, written by the Xerces staff

Available at www.xerces.org Paperback \$57

Protect pollinators by providing the flowers that bees need, using NO pesticides. The book identifies plants that honey bees and native bees – as well as butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds – find most nutritious. It includes flowers, trees, shrubs, herbs, and pasture plants.

Garden Allies: The Insects, Birds and Other Animals That Keep Your Garden Beautiful and Thriving

By Frederique Lavoipierre

Published September 2021 Nook Book [eBook} \$13.99

There is wonder within the greenery and blossoms. Learn how your garden can thrive while keeping its ecology in balance.

Plant Partners: Science-Based Companion Planting Strategies for The Vegetable Garden

By Jessica Walliser

Published December 2020 Paperback \$24.95

Plants interact and influence each other. Learn about specific plant partnerships to solve common problems, improve soil health, control weeds, decrease pest damage, and increase biodiversity.

Native Plants for New England Gardens

By Mark Richardson and Dan Jaffee

Originally published in 2018 Paperback \$21.95

This book describes integral roles native plants play in the ecosystem; identifies pollinators and wildlife that these plants support; and delves into culinary benefits. Compelling descriptions of plant personalities are accompanied by photos and anecdotes that show which plants add dimension and character. With native plants, you can create inviting landscapes full of vitality with less maintenance.

Book List Compiled by Denise Forrest

Fun Facts and Lore

- Cranberries are one of a handful of fruits truly native to North America.
- Some people use the native plant Orange Forget-Me-Not (*Impatiens capensi*) as a mosquito repellent and as a salve for poison ivy.
- According to the CT DEEP, there are 2800 total types of plants in Connecticut – 1800 are native plants, 1000 are non-native plants (97 of the non-native are invasives).
- In some Eastern cultures, walkways are designed as irregular pathways, meant to avoid evil spirits who are believed to only travel in a straight line.

Provided by Denise Forrest

Marcescence

Have you noticed the understory trees that retain their papery, light brown leaves and wondered why the leaves do not drop from these deciduous trees? This trait is called marcescence; where the leaves wither (senesce) and stay on the tree until late winter or early spring. The best known marcescent species are American beech and various oaks. One hypothesis for this leaf retention is that it helps limit browsing of developing buds by wildlife. Hidden by shriveled foliage, the buds are less likely to be seen and consumed by deer and other herbivores.

Provided by Judy van Heiningen from “Native Plants of the Northeast” FB group.

Native Plants Can Provide Food for Birds in Winter

Research shows that native plants that evolved within certain ecosystems do a much better job of supporting birds than non-native ones. Not only do berries and seed heads add visual interest for us, they provide food for birds during the harsh winter. As we enjoy the variety of birds that visit our gardens, it is delightful to watch a songbird's delicate balance to reach seeds at the end of a thin stalk and admire the aerial acrobatics some birds perform to gobble berries along a branch.

Please consider planting native plants and allow seed-bearing varieties to stand all winter. Here are some native perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees that benefit birds in winter:

Fruits/Berries

- **Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)** – in addition to providing protection, shelter and nesting sites, blue/gray fall fruit (berry-like cones) ripen on female trees in fall and persist into winter.
- **Native Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*)** – berry-like fruit, called drupes, ripen in fall and remain into winter.
- **American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)** – in addition to providing protection and shelter in these tall trees, berries on the female trees last throughout winter into early spring.
- **Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)** – bright red berries cover bare branches on this deciduous shrub during winter.
- **Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*)** – berries ripen in late summer and persist into winter.
- **Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)** – an important food source for migrating birds in fall, and the small grayish berries remain into winter.
- **Pasture Rose (*Rosa Carolina*)** – fruit-like hips last into winter.
- **Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)** – fruit-like hips persist into winter.
- **Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)** – (this is NOT poison sumac) bright red female flower cones have berry-like drupes that last through winter.

Seeds

Allow seed-bearing perennials and grasses to stand throughout winter, then trim in spring. Pinecones contain seeds, too.

Perennial flowers:

- **Black-eyed Susan (varieties such as *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Rudbeckia laciniata*, *Rudbeckia triloba*, *Rudbeckia subtomentosa*)**
- **Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)**
- ***Coreopsis verticillata***
- **Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*)**
- **White Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)**

Perennial Grasses:

- **Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)**
- **Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)**
- **Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*)**
- **Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)**

Tree

Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) – in addition to providing protection and shelter, seed-bearing pine cones are available throughout winter.

Provided by Denise Forrest

Pollinator Pathways

I keep on seeing the words “Pollinator Pathway,” what does it mean?

Pollinator Pathways is a movement across the US to join parcels of land, large and small, public and private, to make a continuous pathway for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and birds.

Why do we need pollinator pathways?

Many of our crops and our flowers need to be pollinated in order to reproduce. And pollination needs pollen (the male part) to get to the female part of a flower. There are various ways in which this can happen – pollination by gravity or the wind for example. But many of our crops require help from pollinators. In return, the pollinators get the pollen or the nectar available from the plant.

There has been a significant reduction in the number and variety of pollinators over the years, fewer birds, a reduction in the number of butterflies and native bees.

What has caused this reduction in pollinators?

It is thought to be due to a combination of causes. The use of non-selective chemical pesticides wiped out insects and birds, increasing urbanization meant a loss of wilds habitat, the increasing use of lawns, native plants being replaced by invasive non-native plants which are not assimilated into our area so are not attractive to our native pollinators.

What can I do with my garden to encourage pollinators?

There are 3 main areas of advice

- stop using chemical pesticides on your garden
- get rid of invasive plants
- plant native plants.

And usually, they also add reducing the size of your lawn.

Does that mean I have to stop using every pesticide?

We need to take a look at the labels on what we are using and try to replace them with natural products, or just learn to live with the pests. Some landscape services now offer “natural” services.

Think about whether the tick and mosquito services are killing good insects along with the bad.

What about invasive plants?

First we need to know what they are, and they differ by state. For Connecticut look at

<https://cipwg.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/244/2018/12/CT-Invasive-Plant-List-2018Scientific-Name.pdf> for the complete list.

A good pictorial guide for some of the most prevalent species in our area, and how to deal with them, is

[Invasive guide 2020 web.pdf](#)

Learn how to identify them, how they grow and the best way to get rid of them. Make sure that you don't add any of them to your garden, and discourage your neighbor from buying them too.

(In my garden, I dug up the barberries, have nearly got rid of all the Garlic Mustard, am still grappling with how to control the Japanese Knotweed and advised one of my neighbors against putting in privet hedges.)

What is meant by “native plants” and where do I find them?

One definition is plants which were in the area before the arrival of the settlers. Native plants have been part of our ecosystem for many years and so live in harmony with our native insects and birds.

It is getting easier to find native plants as many nurseries now have labels showing if the plant is a native. Some nurseries specialize in native plants, as do some organizations' plant sales.

For most of us adding natives is a gradual process, as we incorporate this type of plants into our gardens. And we want to make sure that we introduce as many different plants as possible to attract a wide variety of pollinators.

How can I get more information on the Pollinator Pathway?

Madison has its own Pollinator Pathway website

<https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/madison>

Kellie Brady, a member of the club, is the contact.

My garden is small, can I make a difference?

Yes, even plant pots on a balcony can help. But you can make more of a difference if you can get your neighbors involved as well, so the continuous area is larger.

I have already adopted the Pollinator Pathway recommendations in my garden, can I get a Pollinator Pathway placard so I can publicize what I am doing?

Go to the Madison Pollinator Pathway website, given above, for instructions on obtaining a placard.

I'm not ready to give up on my chemical pesticides yet?

We can all decide what works best for us, and make some type of effort. For example if we all left the first dandelions in our lawns until after they flowered, we would benefit the early insects who have few flowers available for pollen.

Provided by Catherine Ferguson

Invasive Species and Native Alternatives

What is an invasive species?

Invasive species are non-native plants whose introduction to a new home negatively impacts native plants and wildlife. Invasives have a long history in New England, having been brought by the first Europeans for food and medicine. Because they have no natural enemies to control their rapid spread and reproduction, invasives crowd out natives, and subsequently deny food and shelter to native insects, birds, and pollinators. Invasives and habitat loss are considered the leading factors in the decline of natives. Lastly, it costs millions of dollars each year to control and manage non-native species.

Common invasive plant species in Connecticut

- Garlic mustard (seeds can survive for 5 years in soil)
Native alternatives: Rue-anemone, wild ginger
- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) (all prohibited for sale in CT)
Native alternative: Trumpet honeysuckle
- Burning bush (aka winged euonymus) (sale is not prohibited. A seedless variety exists and was developed at UCONN)
Native alternatives: Red chokeberry, highbush cranberry, silky dogwood
- Japanese barberry
Native alternatives: Northern bayberry, winterberry, mountain laurel
- Purple loosestrife
Native alternatives: Cardinal flower, fireweed, purple coneflower
- Norway maple (leafs out early and shades out competing species)
Native alternatives: Sugar maple, red maple

Many of these invasives were introduced as ornamentals for landscaping.

References: www.todayuconn.edu, www.ladybug.uconn.edu, www.ctaudubon.org, www.ctwoodlands.org

Provided by Judy Van Heiningen

Winter Walks

We don't typically think about touring each other's gardens in the winter. However, I'm sure we all appreciate a garden designed with winter interest in mind from specific shrubs with great structure to all the seed heads and grasses standing in the snow. Winter walks are a great time to look at native plants in the wild/in nature and observe the habits they create and the creatures they support. To enjoy the beauty of nature in the winter, here is a list of some local trails you might enjoy:

Top Hiking Spots Near Madison

[Hike Madison Hammonasset Trail](#)

Madison, Connecticut

3.3 mi / 36 ft gain

[Hike East River Preserve Loop Trail](#)

Guilford, Connecticut

3.2 mi / 164 ft gain

[Hike Meig's Point](#)

Madison, Connecticut

1.4 mi / 36 ft gain

[Hike Hammonasset Beach State Park Walk](#)

Madison, Connecticut

3.4 mi / 32 ft gain

[Hike Papermill Trail](#)

Killingworth, Connecticut

1.4 mi / 95 ft gain

[Hike New England Trail \(Net\)](#)

Guilford, Connecticut

207.3 mi / 31 ft gain

[Hike Brook, Laurel Ridge And Princess Pine Trail Loop](#)

Clinton, Connecticut

1.2 mi / 160 ft gain

[Hike Bougie, Laurel Ridge And Princess Pine Trail Loop](#)

Clinton, Connecticut

1 mi / 124 ft gain

[Hike Lost Lake White Trail](#)

Guilford, Connecticut

6.7 mi / 800 ft gain

For more information and maps go to...

[The best Trails and Outdoor Activities in and near Madison ...](#)

www.theoutbound.com/.../connecticut/madison

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Two good online course sites

[A Calendar of Gardening Talks & Events Held Via Zoom or Online](#)

<https://www.pumpkinbeth.com/2021/11/calendar-gardening-talks-events-online/>

[10+ Best Online Gardening Courses In 2021 \(Free & Paid\)](#)

www.skillscouter.com/online-gardening-courses

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Horticulture 2020-2021 Challenge - Gourds

Here are some pictures from this year's Gourd Challenge:



Handout:

<https://gcmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GCM-Ornamental-Gourd-Challenge-Handout-April-2021.pdf>

Horticulture 2021-2022 Challenge - Bulbs

This year we gave out 26 bags of 8 Snowdrop (*Galanthus elwesii*) bulbs and 40 bags of 5 *Allium* 'Purple Sensation' bulbs. The Horticulture Committee will include bulbs in the March, April (Tri-Club) and July Horticulture Exhibits to broadly include any bulb your gardens might have.

Future Issues

If you would like to submit information for a future Horticulture Bulletin or have a topic you would like us to include in a future Bulletin, please send them to Sue Kelley, at kelleys4@gmail.com.

Issued by the Horticulture Committee: Sue Kelley (Chair), Catherine Ferguson, Denise Forrest, Marleen Pacelli, Judith Tosiello, Judy Van Heiningen and Judy Whitehead.