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 <p>FEATURED QUOTE: "A garden is always a series of losses set against a few triumphs, like life itself." ~May Sarton</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="text"/></p> <p>Wreaths are back for the holidays--and better than ever. All wreaths will be made in Maine to your order, to insure freshness. Wreaths are double-faced with fresh picked balsam fir, and are not machine-made. Click here to see and order these wreaths.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="text"/></p> <p>The first United States ambassador to Mexico was Joel Poinsett, appointed under the new administration of President Andrew Jackson in 1828 to build strong ties between the countries. Joel was an avid amateur botanist, and spent much of his free time roaming the countryside of Mexico looking for plants not found in the United States. In December, Joel found a tall, fiery red wildflower growing along the back roads of the countryside where he lived while in Mexico. Joel was enchanted by the unusual flowers found on this plant, so he took cuttings and had this new plant shipped to his greenhouse back to his home in South Carolina.</p> <p>Joel worked to improve the quality of the plant when he was home--and the following Christmas he delivered his special plants to the White House for the president, from the country in which he represented the United States. He called the plant the poinsettia; after all he discovered and grew this wild flower, so why not name it after himself as so many other plants enthusiasts had done before? Because of his early efforts and his work, today over 150 million poinsettia plants are grown and sold in more than 50 countries every year.</p> <p>In the wild, the poinsettia grows like a shrub--8 to 10 feet tall--and the branches are leggy looking but stiff and coarse in appearance. The bright green leaves grow 6 to 8 inches long and drop from the plant during the winter months, then redevelop as spring arrives in May. In early November, the top leaves begin to change color due to the temperature cooling down and the length of the day shortening. This causes a chemical change in the plant which stops vegetative growth and promotes flower development on the plant. The red leaves are called flowering bracts and in the center of the colorful leaves, the small flower buds will develop; they look like button with yellow fuzz on them. The plant will stand out in the wild from November to February and then goes dormant.</p> <p>The Aztecs used this plant for its milky sap in medicine and to control fevers. Clothing merchants used the colorful bracts to make a reddish-purple dye for cotton fabric. The high priests used the plant in ceremonies because its fiery red color was a symbol of purity.</p> <p>In the early 1900's FEAR filled the minds of mothers all over America. A nasty rumor spread that Poinsettias were poisonous and that a child who ate just one leaf could become very ill or even die. Mothers began to avoid this wonderful plant for the holidays and it quickly lost all its appeal. In 1919, things got even worse as an Army doctor circulated an untrue story that a two year old toddler died after eating just one leaf from a plant growing near a playground in Hawaii. Now the media began to label this plant as dangerous and if you lived in a warm climate where the plant grew, they said to pull all plants out for your own safety.</p> <p>Finally in the 1970's, the Society of American Florists asked Ohio State University to test the plant and uncover the truth, poison or not poison. The results were overwhelming and their findings concluded that a 50 pound child or even your pet could eat 500 red bracts and suffer only a mild upset stomach. Also the American Medical Association released a statement of assurance that poinsettias have never been responsible for poisonings or fatalities. The plant was saved from devastation and is today's bestselling Christmas plant.</p> <p>In 1993, a survey was taken about the poinsettia plant and its toxic myth; the results were as</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p>Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Contact Information:</p> <p>E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p> <p>Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p>Fax: (207) 985-6972</p> <p>Address: Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p>Regular Phone Hours: Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</p> <p>(Note: this will not subscribe them to the newsletter, nor retain their email - it will just send them a copy from you.)</p> <p>Your e-mail []</p> <p>Your name []</p> <p>Their e-mail []</p> <p>Their name []</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[Send >>]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden</p>	

follows: 63% of women and 42% of men still believed the plant was toxic, and they got their information from word of mouth, the media and rumors. So this December, be sure to purchase a Poinsettia plant for your home and let it be known it is not poisonous. It is a plant of beauty that was once a wildflower and only came in the color red. Today poinsettias come in red, pink, white, white with pink blotches, spotted color combinations, double-flowering varieties and new varieties every year to help decorate for the holidays.

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As you prepare to decorate your homes for the holidays, I thought you would like to know some fun facts and the history behind the use of holly and ivy. In ancient times people spent more time outside than we do today and these people knew the seasons well. Because they knew when the seasons changed they often celebrated those changes with festivals--and no change was more important than the Winter Solstice. The Winter Solstice is the celebration of the shortest day of the year (fewest daylight hours) on December 21.

In the days of the Druids, holly was worn in their hair as they celebrated this holiday, because of its magical power--they believed it gave them protection against evil spirits through the coming year. Holly branches were also brought into their homes at this time of cold weather as they believed it would give shelter to the Fairies, those tiny spirits who lived in the forest who protected them from wild animals.

The Romans used the holly to honor Saturn, their god of agriculture, during this celebration to help insure a bountiful crop for the coming year and to thank the gods for what they were able to produce during the past growing season. The early Christians used cut holly branches in their celebrations to avoid ill treatment by non-believers and, as these celebrations became more popular, the holly became a very important symbol of Christmas.

Another Christian legend says that one night the holly miraculously grew leaves out of season to hide the Holy Family from Herod's soldiers--and since then, it has been an evergreen plant. Holly was also hung on doors and windows to prevent the entry of evil spirits and witches, and to keep lightning strikes away from the home.

In England, holly had strong distinction between male and female due to the shape of the holly leaf. The holly that would protect the male would have prickly thorns on its edges while the female would be better protected with holly leaves with a smooth surface. On Christmas Eve, English virgins hung holly on their beds to protect their virtue from the Christmas goblins. Also, British homes always welcomed fairies and elves, so bunches of cut holly were hung in special hiding places in the home to protect them during the winter months.

The ivy plant soon joined the holly as part of the celebration of the Winter Solstice, as it was also an evergreen plant that helped to freshen the air in the homes during the winter months, and it reminded the people that spring was coming. The cold and icy winds during the dark nights of winter were believed to be ghosts and demons. Decorating your home with these two plants, holly and ivy, together would ward off these evil spirits during the winter months.

Ivy symbolized eternal life, rebirth, and the new spring season. Ivy was also a symbol of marriage and friendship. In ancient Roman times ivy was associated with Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry. Holly was thought to bring good luck to the man of the house while ivy would bring the same good luck to the woman of the house. It was thought that whoever brought the first sprig of these plants in their home during the celebration would "wear the pants in the house" for the New Year.

Today holly and ivy are still used in our celebration of Christmas. Both plants are used to create a holiday wreath for the front door, potted plants for the window sill, and fresh-cut plant tips to decorate the dinner table as we celebrate the holidays. The folk lore and legends may be forgotten but the beauty of the evergreen foliage will make your home festive for this wonderful time of the year. Enjoy!

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Kalanchoe (*Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*) is a naturally blooming succulent that offers up an array of blooms in many festive colors. Kalanchoe [kal-an-KO-ee or kal-LAN-cho] is a perky little plant that is easy to care for. Whether planted in a decorative basket or grouped together in a basket on the kitchen windowsill, kalanchoes will not disappoint you. In Florida, they are also called "Palm Beach Bells."

Kalanchoes, becoming increasingly popular as a gift plant, feature dark-green succulent leaves topped by masses of miniature, brightly colored blossoms in shades of red, orange, yellow, or salmon-pink. In their native Madagascar, the plants bloom only during the spring months, but with a little attention, they can produce blooms in any season. Bright light all year, and warmth during the summer, cooler during the winter.

Kalanchoes are similar to poinsettias and chrysanthemums, which initiate their flowering in response to short days. Growers pull opaque shade fabric over their plants for 14 hours each

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night until the plants initiate flower buds. You can accomplish the same thing by placing a box over your plant for the same "short day" period. I put them in the basement window like the Christmas cactus and they will bloom again. Normal flowering time is 6 to 8 weeks if kept cool.

Kalanchoes prefer to be watered deeply, but like to dry out between waterings. Keep moist in the spring to fall, and almost dry during the winter. Feel the soil with your finger and if it is moist leave it alone.

If leaves start to yellow, you are overwatering. If they look like they are shriveling up, your plant might be dehydrated and in need of water. If this happens, remove spent foliage and water thoroughly. Kalanchoes look best when fed every two weeks with a water-soluble plant food like Miracle-Gro.

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It is now time to decorate the house inside and out for Christmas.

Let us begin outside:

If you are planning to place evergreen roping around the front door and around the lamppost, you will need 7 yards for the average front door. The lamppost will need 3 yards.

Most nurseries sell roping by the yard or by the roll. Most rolls of roping come in 10 yard length and is cut to your order. It will be cheaper to buy the roll if you plan to do both. Now, the softer the evergreen you select, the more pliable it will be and easier to attach to the house. Use aluminum nails when attaching to the house; that way it can be left up for next year without rusting and staining the house.

If your house faces south and you live where it does not get so cold during the winter, you may want to use needle evergreen foliage over broadleaf foliage as broadleaf foliage could dry up faster. If it's a must for you, hang up the roping and spray with Wilt-Pruf or Wilt-Stop antidesicant to prolong the life of the evergreens.

The most common evergreen roping materials are mountain laurel and boxwood for broadleaf evergreens. White pine, princess pine, and balsam fir are the best for needle evergreens. Some nurseries have combinations that are very nice also.

If you have whiskey barrels, window boxes or planters you want to fill with cut greens, your selection is endless. The most popular is balsam fir and when mixed with other types of evergreens the various textures make them stand out in your yard. Look for white pine, red pine, black pine, blue spruce, mountain laurel, boxwood, native holly, and cypress. Now for a little color with the greens, add Italian ruscus or red alder berries. When pushed into the container filled with soil, the moisture in the soil will keep it fresh until almost spring.

Now indoors:

Any cut greens must be sprayed with a antidesicant like **Wilt Pruf** or **Wilt Stop** before attaching to railings or walls. Apply and let dry first! If you are thinking of adding greens near a fireplace be *sure* to use a antidesicant or they will fall apart quickly. Needle evergreens or princess pine do best inside. For mantels, I suggest that you use west coast greens such as noble fir or silver fir, as these greens dry up BUT will not shed. KEEP AWAY from open flames! If you do not touch them once placed, they will not drop needles as much.

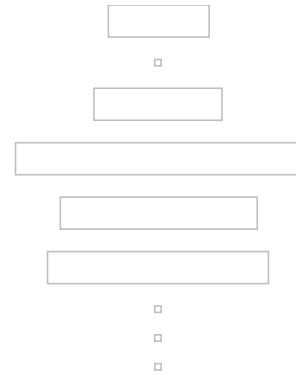
Keep away from the spruce family, as they dry up very quickly. Spruce needles dry up and become very pointed and sharp. Norway and blue spruce are the best for indoor use of the family if you want to use them. KEEP AWAY from white spruce, as once in your home it will produce an odor that resembles cat urine--very unpleasant. Don't forget the mistletoe!

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Alaska trip

Paul Parent will be hosting a tour that includes:

- Vancouver, BC
- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!
- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point



- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising
- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

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This Week's Question

Which of the following countries is the world's top producer of tomatoes?

- A. China
- B. Italy
- C. Mexico
- D. Russia
- E. USA

This Week's Prize:

Wilt-Pruf®...The Safe Way To Reduce Moisture Loss When Plants Are Under Water Stress due to:

- winter kill
- windburn
- drought
- transplant shock

[Click here for more information about Wilt-Pruf.](#)

[Click Here to Answer](#)

Last Week's Question:

Which of the following do NOT have any species that pollinate flowers?

- A. Bats
- B. Beetles
- C. Birds
- D. Flies
- E. They all have species that pollinate flowers

Last Week's Winner:

Joleen Rice

Last Week's Answer:

E. They all have species that pollinate flowers.

Last Week's Prize:

Wilt-Pruf®

One winner per question - we choose winners from the list of those who answer correctly. Winners must be newsletter subscribers. We'll ship you your prize, so be sure to put your address in the form in case you win!

Are you looking for a great gift for a gardener (or yourself)? This garden journal helps make planning and organizing easy. This journal, *autographed personally by Paul*, makes a perfect gift for gardeners. The cover holds a 5x7 or 4x6 photo and a heavy-duty D-ring binder.

Also included:

- 8 tabbed sections
- 5 garden details sections with pockets for seeds, tags...
- Weather records page
- 6 three year journal pages
- Insect & diseases page - 3 project pages
- 3 annual checklist pages
- Plant wish list page
- 2 large pocket pages
- Sheet of garden labels
- 5 garden detail sheets
- 5 graph paper pages for layouts
- 5 photo pages, each holding four 4x6 photos in landscape or portrait format

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Featured Recipe: Yellow Squash Casserole

What You'll Need:

- 5 medium yellow squashes
- 1 cup grated Pepper Jack cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons butter

Step by Step:

Directions here

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil.
- Slice yellow squash in thin rounds [be certain to discard both ends].
- Place squash in boiling water for 15 minutes or until fork tender.
- Remove squash from water, drain in a colander.
- In a baking dish, mash squash with a potato masher.
- Fold in grated cheese, butter, salt and pepper.
- Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 20 minutes, or until brown and bubbly on top.



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