

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 10.48	Paul Parent Garden Club News	December 2, 2010
	<p style="text-align: center;">FEATURED QUOTE:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"A garden is always a series of losses set against a few triumphs, like life itself." ~May Sarton</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>Wreaths are back for the holidays--and better than ever. All wreaths are made in Maine to your order, to insure freshness. Wreaths are double-faced with fresh picked balsam fir, and are not machine-made.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Click here to order online.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<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;">Close-Focusing MacroScope</p> <p>Introducing the world's first Close-Focusing MacroScope.</p> <p>NO MORE CUMBERSOME BINOCULARS. WOW! Unbeatable Brunton optical quality, 7 X 40, with ultra-easy, ultra-smooth, ultra-quick focusing from "infinity" all the way down to an incredible 18 inches! And it only weighs 11.3 ounces.</p> <p>The Brunton MacroScope is both a revolution and a revelation in optical instruments. With its innovative and unique side-mounted focus wheel you can now view all the way from "infinity" to an unbelievably close 18 inches and everything in between. There is simply nothing else like the Brunton MacroScope on the market!</p> <p>□ We promise you have never, ever seen anything like what you will see through your Brunton MacroScope. Everyone, from birders to engineers, geologists, archeologists, forensic scientists, butterfly watchers, hikers, naturalists, and just about everyone else will surely appreciate the new view in town!</p> <p>Tired of hunting for something different for a gift? The Brunton MacroScope would make a great Christmas gift!</p> <p>Click here for more information on this wonderful invention.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<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>Phone Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p>Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Customized Gardening Tour of Ireland</p> <p>Join us for a journey to the beautiful gardens of the Emerald Isle.</p> <p>Click here for more information.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"><p>Home About Paul Paul's Recipes Newsletter Archives</p></div>

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, become 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 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 or Neptune Harvest.



The Beauty of Christmas Cactus

While the poinsettia remains the most popular of the holiday plants, a healthy Christmas cactus in full bloom is a great gift idea for that special gardener. It is easy to care for and can be grown indoors throughout the year. The flowers range in color from yellow, orange, red, salmon, pink, fuchsia and white to combinations of those colors. Its pendulous stems make it a great choice for hanging baskets.

The "Christmas cactus" is a closely related species of forest cacti that grow as epiphytes between 3,000 and 5,000 feet above sea level in the Organ Mountains north of Rio de Janeiro in southeast Brazil, South America. Epiphytes need structural support from the trees where they live to survive, not nutrition, since they make their own food. Similar plants are orchids, ferns and mosses. That is why their slender stems weep over, filling your pot.

We typically think of cacti as being heat tolerant, but Christmas cactuses will keep their blossoms longer in cooler temperatures, 55 or cooler. It is important to keep plants in a well-lit location away from drafts of heater vents, fireplaces or other sources of hot air. Drafts and temperature extremes can cause the flower buds to drop from the plant before they have a chance to open. Over-watering turns the stems purple.

So, if you have a plant without flowers put it in the basement window for about a month and the flowers will soon appear. Christmas cactus, if put outside for the summer, will set flowers for you. As the weather changes in September the cactus will set flower buds all by itself. Cool temperatures, around 55 degrees F., are the trigger, along with short days. If it is in a room that the lights stay on until the 11:00 o'clock news, that could also inhibit flowering. The day never gets short enough to change from vegetative growth to flower bud production. Move it to a north-facing window.

The Christmas cactus is a tropical-type plant, not quite as drought tolerant as its desert relatives and, in fact, may drop flower buds if the soil gets too dry. Water thoroughly when the top inch or so of soil feels dry to the touch. The soil, should be kept evenly moist for best growth. I water about every 2 weeks.

Christmas cactuses will do best in bright indirect light. They do not need to be fertilized while in bloom, but most gardeners enjoy the challenge of keeping the plant after the holidays for re-bloom the following year. When they finish flowering, fertilize every 2 weeks with Miracle-Gro fertilizer, while the plants are actively growing. If taken care of properly, a single plant can last for many years, providing many seasons of enjoyment. If you repeat the cold process in the basement or cool room, it will flower again in February.

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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 antidesiccant 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 an antidesiccant like Wilt Pruf or Wilt Stop before attaching them to railings or walls. Apply and let dry first! If you are thinking of adding greens near a fireplace be *sure* to use an antidesiccant 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. If you do not touch them once placed, they will not drop needles as much. **Keep greens away** from open flames!

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!



Mistletoe

*Nowadays it is mostly used
as an excuse to steal a kiss.*

Every holiday seems to have its own flowers and decorations, and Christmas is no exception. We have greens and pine boughs from our yards, but have you ever wondered how some of these other plants were selected for the holiday?

When you consider mistletoe, most people think of kissing. At Christmas, mistletoe is as identified with the holiday as the wishbone is to Thanksgiving tradition. Mistletoe is a parasite plant; that means it lives on tree branches and steals what it needs from that tree. It does make its own food but relies on the host tree for water and other minerals. Mistletoe only dies when the tree dies. It loves to grow on the top branches of trees. It prefers mostly leaf trees but when those are not available, evergreens will do.

The foliage of the mistletoe is leathery and the fruit resembles a cluster of tiny pearls. Be warned, the seeds in the fruit are very poisonous! If you have small children, decorate with the plastic berry type. Mistletoe is nearly indestructible, thriving under difficult growing conditions. Wind, rain and drought do not affect its growth. Insects do not like or bother with this plant.

Because the plant grows on the top branches of trees it is not easily harvested for the holidays. Long poles with hooks are used to pull it off the tree. In rural areas, the tree branches that mistletoe grows on are shot off by experienced hunters. This method is much faster and less time consuming--and it's a lot safer than climbing each tree to harvest the plant.

Scandinavian mythology includes the tradition of hanging mistletoe as a cure-all for many ills. Ancient Greeks considered it an antidote to poison. It was also thought to protect from fire and keep out evil spirits and witches. Swiss hunters used bow and arrows to shoot down the plant, and if the falling mistletoe was caught in the left hand, it was believed the hunter had a panacea for all his children's diseases. Generations of farmers used it in the fields to protect their crops from insect and diseases.

Today, this plant has only one purpose: keeping the Christmas spirit alive with hospitality, fun and merriment throughout the holiday season. This Christmas, you can have fun with this plant that grows in high places: Be sure to obey the rules of kissing under the mistletoe. Pick a berry, kiss once; two berries, two kisses. When the berries are gone, stop until next year. So, you'd better stock up for the holidays!



Join Paul Parent for a garden tour of the Emerald Isle!

Tour includes the Cliffs of Moher, Connemara National Park, Brigit's Garden, Muckcross Gardens, Bantry House & Gardens, Kilravock Garden, Garnish Island, Annes Grove Garden, Lakemount Gardens, Waterford Crystal Visitor Centre, Heywood Gardens, Powerscourt Gardens, Dublin Castle, Dillon Gardens and much more.

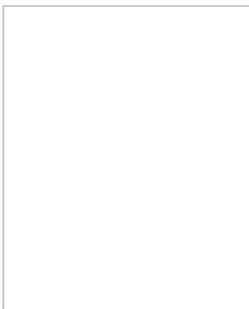
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This Week's Question:

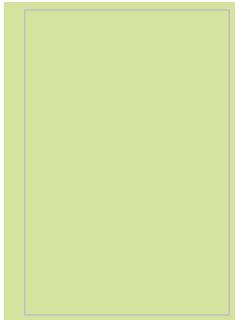
What is the flower of the month for December?

This Week's Prize: *Healthy Garden, Healthy You*, by Milo Shammass



Milo takes us through a storytelling journey of soil health, plant health, animal health and how they directly relate to human health.

BONUS: 100 easy-to-grow plants, their growing instructions, and their direct human health benefits and disease prevention properties.



[Click Here to Answer](#)

Last Week's Question:

While we are on the subject of phobias--and just for fun--what is meleagrisphobia?

Last Week's Winner:

Liz Leonard

Last Week's Answer:

Meleagrisphobia is a fear of turkeys.

Last Week's Prize:

Healthy Garden, Healthy You, by Milo Shammass

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!

FEATURED RECIPE:

Caribbean Christmas Ring



Try this delicious Bundt cake topped with an orange sugar glaze.

- 3 tablespoons vegetable shortening
- 2 1/2 cups finely chopped walnuts (split)
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 cup softened butter
- 1 1/3 cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup sour cream or plain nonfat yogurt

- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 2 tablespoons orange liqueur (cointreau, triple sec)

Orange Sugar Glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar, sifted
- 2 tablespoons orange juice

Step by Step:

- Thoroughly grease a 10 to 12-cup microwave-safe bundt pan with shortening; sprinkle with 1/2 cup of the chopped walnuts to coat evenly.
- Sift flours, baking powder and baking soda.
- Cream butter and sugar until fluffy; beat in eggs, one at a time.
- Stir sour cream or yogurt, banana and liqueur into egg mixture.
- Fold flour mixture into banana-egg batter; stir in remaining walnuts.
- Spoon into prepared pan and place on top of microwave-proof bowl in microwave, bringing cake up to center of oven.
- Cook on medium 10 minutes, then on high 5 to 7 minutes until cake tests done, turning twice. Let cake stand 15 minutes. Turn out onto serving plate.
- Let cool.
- Mix sifted powdered sugar and orange juice until smooth. Pour glaze evenly over cake and serve.

Yield: 20-24 servings



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