

From: Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>
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Edition 10.50	Paul Parent Garden Club News	December 16, 2010
 <p data-bbox="571 481 833 510">FEATURED QUOTE :</p> <p data-bbox="343 515 1037 593">"Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting and autumn a mosaic of them all." ~ Stanley Horowitz</p> <div data-bbox="531 683 754 716" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 140px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <p data-bbox="215 761 1069 862">As you prepare for the wonderful holiday season ahead of you, STOP for a second and think back about the holidays of the past. I want to tell you about some of my favorite memories, as some of you have just joined my gardening family and I want you to know who I am. Then I want you to use your own memories to make your holidays even better for you and your family.</p> <p data-bbox="215 873 1069 996">When I was 11 years old, my Mom and Dad packed up the car with us five kids, and we headed out to a secluded wooded area in Central Maine in search for the perfect Christmas tree. My dad had a friend who told him he could cut a Christmas tree on his land, so he took him up on the offer. Each of us also wanted to bring home a small tree for our classroom at school--remember when you could do that?</p> <p data-bbox="215 1008 1069 1187">We traveled for about an hour and found the site to cut our perfect Christmas tree. First, we had to find the perfect tree for the family--and it was a beauty. Eight feet tall and no holes all the way around, dark green and with a fragrance I can still remember. My Dad had the five of us carry the tree to the car as he supervised the operation, with the promise that we could soon choose the trees for our class room. Back in the woods we ran and one by one we cut down our own 3 to 4 foot tree. I remember the five of us carrying the trees back to the car and helping my Dad tie them on the roof of the car.</p> <p data-bbox="215 1198 1069 1400">Then it happened, a big man in a pickup truck pulled up beside us and asked us where we got the trees. My Dad told him that we cut them on his friend's land and we had permission to do so. Unfortunately, my Dad's friend's land was on the other side of the road and this man was a bit upset with us cutting trees on his land. He wanted his trees back and was going to call the police on us, until all five of us kids started crying at the thought of going to jail. The big man did not expect that and soon agreed that \$20.00 would cover the cost of the trees. We quickly finished tying the trees on the car and got out of there fast, vowing to never cut down a tree again in the wild.</p> <p data-bbox="215 1411 1069 1545">When we got home I remember my Mother scrubbing our hands with Comet cleanser to get the fresh pitch off our hands--and my sisters had to take a bath, as they had pitch in their hair. When was the last time you had pitch on your hands from a Christmas tree? While my mother cleaned us up, my dad built five tree stands for the classroom trees, and Monday morning, bright and early, the trees were off to school for the celebration.</p> <p data-bbox="215 1556 1069 1736">Now the story is not over and the best part is yet to come--because the big family tree had a vine running up the middle of the tree that we did not see. We decorated the tree with lights, glass balls and tinsel; remember tinsel? How that beautiful silver foil made your tree glisten; I miss that. My brother Bob loved this tree as he showed--he spent much time playing with the tree branches and ornaments. Well...on Christmas Eve, Bob came down with a strange rash on his arms, neck, and face. Yes, Bob had poison ivy--and the doctor told my parents to get the tree out of the house or all the other kids could get it too!</p> <p data-bbox="215 1747 1069 1904">My Dad took the tree apart, with all of us crying, on Christmas Eve but he promised he would find us a new one. Two hours later, Dad returned home with a big box marked Artificial Christmas Tree, as there was not a tree available anywhere. To our horror, we opened the box to find a silver tinfoil tree with branches that we stuck in a big wooden trunk painted silver. It even had a light that turned under it making the tree four different colors. My Dad said it was all he could find everywhere he looked, so it was better than no tree at all.</p> <p data-bbox="215 1915 1069 2072">Now on Christmas morning, the fun really began as one by one our neighbors came to the door to protest that the Christmas tree was thrown on the snow bank in front of the house. One by one, they told my parents how upset they were with them, that they had punished us kids for being bad by taking down the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. What could those children have done that was so bad that you could punish them that way? A quick explanation--and giving them a look at my brother Bob's face and hands--and all was well again.</p> <p data-bbox="215 2083 1069 2139">That silver tree never went up again--and we never cut down our own Christmas tree in the wild again!</p>		<p data-bbox="1125 492 1348 515">Gifts for the Gardener</p> <p data-bbox="1085 537 1380 616">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</p> <p data-bbox="1125 728 1348 750">Contact Information:</p> <p data-bbox="1085 772 1276 828">E-Mail: Click to contact us.</p> <p data-bbox="1085 851 1372 952">Telephone: (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p data-bbox="1085 974 1236 1030">Fax: (207) 985-6972</p> <p data-bbox="1085 1052 1324 1153">Address: Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p data-bbox="1085 1176 1388 1254">Phone Hours: Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p data-bbox="1109 1355 1364 1411">Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</p> <p data-bbox="1085 1433 1372 1489">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</p> <p data-bbox="1109 1590 1364 1646">A Customized Gardening Tour of Ireland</p> <p data-bbox="1085 1668 1348 1747">Join us for a journey to the beautiful gardens of the Emerald Isle.</p> <p data-bbox="1085 1769 1380 1792">Click here for more information.</p> <p data-bbox="1125 1904 1348 1960">Have a Look Around Our Website:</p> <div data-bbox="1125 1960 1348 2105" style="text-align: center;"><p>Home About Paul Paul's Recipes Newsletter Archives</p></div>

From my family to yours--Have a Merry Christmas!

Paul, Chris, Matthew, Jason, and Patrick

Still looking for a great gift for a gardener? 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.

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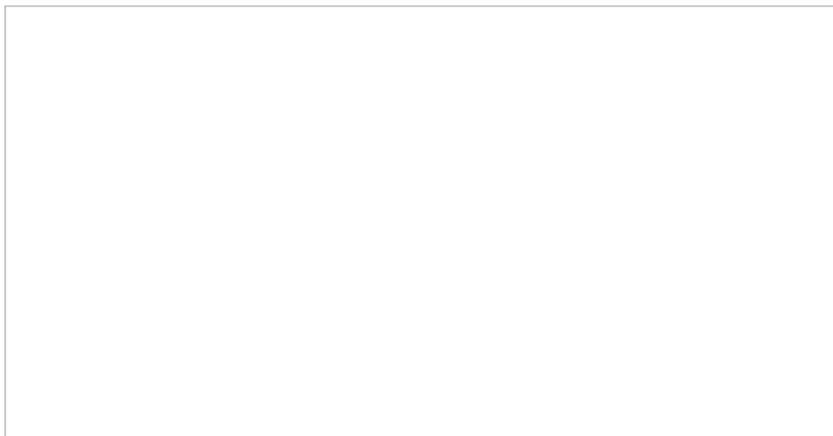
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This is one of my favorite flowering tropical plants and it makes a wonderful Christmas present for a friend--or even you. There are over 150 different varieties to choose from. They grow like a vase, with the leaves arranged in a rosette that forms a cup to hold water and the flowers inside the middle of the leaves.

The leaves can have smooth edges or small spines that will grab you, so be careful. The leaf color will range from shiny green to silver, yellow, red, purple, orange and more. The plants will grow from 6 to 18 inches tall and just as wide, depending on the variety.

This plant likes to stay warm, always above 65 degrees F. Select a window with morning or late day sun as it does not like hot summer direct sun. It will do great on the dining room table as long as the room is bright. This plant loves moist soil, so you will have to keep the vase filled part way with water all the time. If you put it outside during the summer, place the plant in the shade. Fertilize in the spring and summer but not during the fall and winter.

The bromeliad flowers only once in its lifetime but the flower will last several months. The flower color will range from blue, to pink, white, red, yellow and orange. Once the flowers have faded, remove them when possible. The plant has achieved its goal and now all its energy will go to make new shoots, known as "PUPS." Once the pups have matured, the mother plant will slowly die and the new shoots will take over. Remove the mother plant with a sharp knife and the new plants will soon fill the pot.

It will take about a year for the new shoots to mature and then the fun starts for you. It is now time to make the new plant flower. All you need to do is place the plant in a large clear trash bag in a bright room but not in the sun. Now take an apple and bruise it by banging it on the table. Place the bruised apple in the bag and tie a knot in the top of the bag. As the apple rots, it will produce an ethylene gas that will motivate the plant to make flower buds. Leave the plant covered for a couple of weeks so the gas can get into the leaves. After 2 weeks move the plant back to its normal place in your home and then get ready to watch flowers appear in the next 3 to 4 months.



If you are looking for a great houseplant for that special gardener, look no further than the Chinese Evergreen (Aglaonema). This tropical plant will thrive in low-light homes as long as the house stays warmer than 60 degrees F. The foliage has silver markings on all forms of these plants. The foliage will have silver--green striped, spotted, or dotted foliage. My two favorite varieties are 'Silver King' and 'Silver Queen.' The plant grows 18 to 24 inches tall and just as wide. The leaves are 12 to 15 inches long and 4 to 6 inches wide.

The plant, which originated in Southeast Asia, will grow in shade to semishade but remember to keep it warm. Water when needed for the plant to stay moist but never wet. Make sure the pot has drainage holes. If the plant sets in a saucer filled with water for long periods, the roots will rot. Fertilize monthly with Neptune Harvest fertilizer or twice a year with Osmocote pellet fertilizer.

Repot every year, as this plant will grow quickly and fill the pot with many new shoots. Use a general purpose potting soil--never garden soil. When repotting, move the plant to a new container 2 inches larger each time. The plant does not like to be misted; the foliage will get brown spots on the leaves.



Phalaenopsis

Everyone who loves to garden will be enchanted by orchids, particularly the Phalaenopsis, more commonly known as the moth orchid. Having a single spray in a thin vase on your desk at work can make you feel as if you are still on that tropical vacation you were on so long ago. Yet, we hesitate to spend the money on them because we always thought that they needed special care and pampering to thrive. Perhaps it's all those gardening programs we watch on TV, showing ladies and gentlemen in their glass conservatories taking great pains to grow them for entry in the next flower show!



Au contraire. All this lovely needs is to be hung in diffuse sunlight near a window (not in too bright a light or it will scorch the plant), preferably in a tray with pebbles so that sufficient humidity is provided, with temperatures that are consistent with an average household. The ideal night temperature is 62 to 65 degrees F. with daytime temperatures of 70 to 80 degrees F. Water your Phalaenopsis in the morning with rain, distilled, or reverse-osmosis water about once every 4 to 7 days; never use water that has been softened by a water softener. A light shade should be provided, such as a sheer curtain, but allow your plants a bit more light from the beginning of December throughout the middle of February.

Fertilizer must be provided on a regular basis because most potting media have little. A good general rule is to use a balanced fertilizer, 10-10-10 or 12-12-12, and as the pros say, fertilize "weakly, weekly."

In other words, fertilize every week at one-quarter to one-half of the recommended dilution.

These orchids were indeed popular with Victorian growers, but because common "parlor plants" were grown either in the front rooms, or parlors, which usually lacked heat, especially during the winter, or in the back parlors, which were typically overheated during the day and unheated during the night, the Phalaenopsis did not fare well inside.

Many of the modern potted plants that we consider "new" were common houseplants during the mid-late 19th century. As over 50% of the homes in London during the Victorian era had attached greenhouses, it was there, under highly controlled conditions, that the Phalaenopsis thrived. Here in the United States, greenhouses were extremely expensive and rarely found, hence the comparative newness of the popularity of this orchid.

This elegant beauty makes the perfect Christmas gift, as the blooms will last up to 6 months before falling. Just as we carry the spirit of Christmas in our hearts all year 'round, now we can enjoy the symphony of design and color the various Phalaenopses offer up.



Living Christmas Trees

Are you tired of purchasing a cut Christmas tree every year--just to throw it away after the holidays are over?

One of the most exciting parts of the holiday season is selecting the family Christmas tree. This year for a change, how about a selecting a Christmas tree that you can plant in your yard after the holidays? You can decorate it inside this year and outside in the yard next year.

Today a good cut tree will cost you \$30 to \$75 dollars--and when the holiday is over, you have nothing left for your investment. You can purchase a living tree with a root ball for \$50 and up.

If the north wind is a problem, now is the time to start planting the first of that hedgerow of evergreens to break the wind. This is the fun way to get the job done. Each tree will have its own special memories of past holidays while performing an energy-saving task.

The proper care of a living tree is as follows:

- Choose a tree that you can handle, since the dirt ball or pot will be heavy.
- Pick out the tree while the weather is good and the moving is easy.
- Your living tree can only stay in the house for 7 to 10 days. So, plan for the time that the tree will be in the house and out.
- Living trees must be kept away from fireplaces, wood stoves and heating ducts. The tree is now dormant and if you wake it up it will start to grow in the house. Then, once you take it back out, the cold weather could hurt the new bud.
- Keep the room cool and the root ball wet so the plant does not dry up.
- To prevent damage to floor or carpet, place the root ball in a tub. A child's flying saucer sled will work great.
- Try to bring the tree inside when the outside temperature is no colder than 25 degrees from the inside temperature.
- If you have a garage or barn, keep the tree there until you are ready to bring it indoors. If not, keep it as close as possible to the door for easy access during periods of heavy snow.
- When you are ready to bring the tree indoors, place a scatter rug by the door and the container on it. The scatter rug will allow you to slide the tree along the floor without damage to the floor and it will save you extra lifting.

• Do not fill the container full of water--a quart at a time will do. To help keep the tree dormant, spray the foliage with Wilt Pruf or Wilt Stop. This will keep the moisture in the tree.

• Use the new LED lights on the tree, as they produce little to no heat and that helps keep the tree dormant.

• Mist the tree daily with water.

After the holidays, if the weather is stormy or very cold, place the tree in the garage or barn. If that is not possible, put it up against the house or fence to keep it out of direct sun and the wind. Cover the root ball with bark mulch, straw or soil until spring.

You can plant the tree in the yard if the weather is good, but you will have to dig the hole before the ground freezes and bring the soil into the garage so it does not freeze. You must also fill the hole with leaves in a trash bag just in case it snows or you will never find it (or worse, find it by falling in it). I wait until spring...it's easier!

The living tree is more work than the traditional cut tree but you will not be sorry when you see the results.



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

Tour includes the Cliffs of Moher, Connemara National Park, Brigit's Garden, Muckross 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.

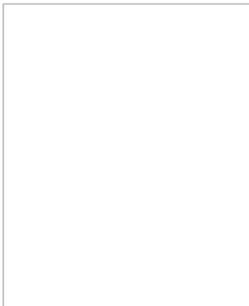
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This Week's Question:

If you make a notch in the trunk of a tree, will it rise as the tree grows or will it remain the same distance from the ground?

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:

The Carolina Cherry laurel (*Prunus Caroliniana*) has some very dangerous leaves, an effective defense against leaf-chewers. What makes them dangerous?

Last Week's Winner:

Andrea DesJardins

Last Week's Answer:

They contain prussic acid (cyanide), which is toxic.

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!



FEATURE RECIPE Gingerbread Men

What You'll Need:

- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 cup margarine, melted
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup unsulfured molasses
- 3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3/4 teaspoon lemon extract
- 4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Step by Step:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Lightly grease cookie sheets.

In a large bowl, stir together the sugar, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda.

Mix in the melted margarine, evaporated milk, molasses, vanilla, and lemon extracts. Stir in the flour, 1 cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. The dough should be stiff enough to handle without sticking to fingers. If necessary, increase flour by up to 1/2 cup to prevent sticking.

When the dough is smooth, roll it out to 1/4 inch thick on a floured surface, and cut into cookies. Place cookies on the prepared cookie sheets.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven. The cookies are done when the top springs back when touched.

Remove from cookie sheets and cool on wire racks.

Yield: 5 dozen cookies



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