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Edition 10.51	Paul Parent Garden Club News	December 23, 2010
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Featured Quotation:</b></p> <p>"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens--the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye." —Katherine S. White</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 300px; margin: 10px auto;"></div> <p>This holiday story begins in May. It was to be a surprise for Mom, as all she wanted for Mother's day that year was a garden on the island in the center of the driveway turn-around. The island of green grass was nice, but flowers would be much better--so she asked her family for a colorful garden for her special day.</p> <p>Down to the nursery the three kids and Dad went, as Mom would be away all day Saturday and the project must be done while she was away. Dad and the three kids asked for my help to design this special Mother's Day garden. The five of us talked about what Mom would like in the garden, because Dad wanted everyone to be part of the design.</p> <p>One of the children said that Mom loves the pink weeping flowering cherry--and that's a great idea for the center on the island. The next child said Mom loves daisies and tulips, so we planned the garden to have several colors of daisies that would flower all summer long. The tulips could be planted in the fall for spring color. The third child said Mom would like to have a bird bath and bird feeder in the garden so she could watch the birds all year long.</p> <p>Then Dad and I talked about an evergreen shrub border around the garden to frame it and to keep some of the green grass strip around the garden to prevent the soil from washing into the gravel driveway. Dad had been in Colonial Williamsburg several years ago and loved the formal yew hedges around the homes there.</p> <p>We were set and the garden was all planned out. So the kids picked out a flowering cherry tree for Mom, several types of daisies, and a bird bath and feeder--while Dad and I selected 12 spreading yews for the border.</p> <p>A truckload of topsoil was delivered and dumped in the middle of the island to create a mound, and the planting began. All three children worked along with Dad, and before Mom could return, the surprise was completed. Just this is a wonderful family story--but the best is yet to come, because this really is a Christmas story!</p> <p>The children were getting to the age where the thought of Santa Claus was in doubt. On Christmas Eve, Mom and Dad were entertaining family and friends when it came to be time for the children to go to bed. All the adults encouraged the children to go to bed as Santa Claus would be here soon--but only if they went to bed. So the children went to bed with visions of Santa and Christmas morning in their heads. They were restless, like all children, that night and got out of bed several times to look out the window to see if Santa was coming to their home yet.</p> <p>From the children's window, the front yard was all lit up, as the garden they planted for Mom was filled with white lights, making her weeping cherry as pretty as it was in the spring when the tree was all in bloom. Dad had also covered the yew hedge with white lights, making Mom's garden glisten for the holidays. The celebration continued with the adults, and slowly the children fell off to sleep on that Christmas Eve night.</p> <p>Then all of a sudden the thunder of footsteps came running down the stairs and the excitement of the children laughing was everywhere. The startled guests, Mom, and Dad quickly halted the celebration, as the three children talked of Santa, Rudolph, and many reindeer. There was much talking and excitement in the living room but no one could understand what was going on until the children pulled Mom, Dad, and their guests to the window to see.</p> <p>The garden they had planted was filled with <i>eight</i> reindeer. The reindeer had come to the garden to feast on the yew hedge we had planted for Mom that spring. The bird feeder was filled with seed, and one of the reindeer ate all that seed, as another was drinking from the birdbath--as if in a toast to the celebration. But the biggest of the reindeer was what brought all the excitement to all of those who were there. Because---as he ate the yew hedge--his antlers caught in some of the strands of white lights and tiny white lights dangled from his head. That is when the children yelled, "That's Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer!"</p> <p>The deer stayed around for a while, entertaining the family and guests, while enjoying the yew hedge. As much as Dad wanted to chase them away, he knew the children would not want him to chase away "Santa's Reindeer." All were amazed--and that year, the belief in Santa Claus and the reindeer did not disappear.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b></p> <p><a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Contact Information:</b></p> <p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="#">Click to contact us.</a></p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p><b>Fax:</b> (207) 985-6972</p> <p><b>Address:</b> Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p><b>Phone Hours:</b> Monday-Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden Club™ radio stations.</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A Customized Gardening Tour of Ireland</b></p> <p>Join us for a journey to the beautiful gardens of the Emerald Isle.</p> <p><a href="#">Click here for more information.</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Have a Look Around Our Website:</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div>

Merry Christmas!

Paul, Chris, Matthew, Jason, and Patrick

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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. Beautiful scenery, fascinating shops and gorgeous gardens - all in one tour!

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[Click here for details.](#)

## The Fragrant World



## of Gardenias

You should try to grow the most fragrant flowering plant--the gardenia--in your home this winter. It will not be as easy as African violets but the extra work will be worth the effort. The gardenia has beautiful dark green foliage and in the southern part of the country, it is considered evergreen. The leaves are glossy like a leather couch. The flowers have double petals that are creamy white in color but the fragrance is the "winning trait" of this plant! When in bloom, it will quickly fill a room with a fragrance that you will never forget, like the lilac does in springtime.

Gardenias originated in Japan and China. They love a very bright to sunny window all year. They will do well on the patio or deck for the summer but put them back indoors in September. Hot during the summer and warm indoors during the winter--65 degrees or warmer.

Never water the plant with cold water but keep the plant moist at all times. This plant LOVES acid soils like the rhododendron plant does. Be sure to never add lime to the plant soil. Fertilize with acid base fertilizer such as Mir-Acid liquid plant food monthly or Holly Tone granular plant food a couple times a year.

When you purchase a plant, look at the pot carefully as it will tell you by its shape if it needs to be transplanted. New plants from Florida will be shipped to your greenhouse in straight-sided pots! These new plants are grown in special benches with timed controlled watering and feedings. They grow fast, full, filled with buds but they need to be transplanted to a larger pot when you get home. Use real-soil potting soil, not artificial soil, as it will dry up too fast. This is the first important thing to do for your new plant. Keep moist until the roots grow into the new soil you use when potting.

When the buds appear, your work has just begun. High humidity around the plant foliage is necessary and daily misting of the plant is necessary. Measure the spread of the foliage and buy a saucer as large as the plant is wide. Now fill the saucer with small stones like marble chips. Place the plant on the stones and every morning add water to the saucer to the bottom of the pot. During the day, the water will evaporate and the moisture will help to create moisture around the leaves, humidity. Keep a mister bottle filled with water near the plant and every time you see it, spray the foliage and the buds.

Finally and most important, gardenias will not survive in homes with forced hot air heat, wood stoves or drafty windows. They are worth all the work when those flowers pop open.

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As we prepare for the New Year, let us think of growing some easy-flowering plants for the house. The first, and once the most popular, flowering plant is the African violet. It was not long ago that gardeners were lucky to find color for the winter indoor garden. The selection of flowering plants was slim, due to slow transportation from the grower to the homeowner. Today, plants are trucked in, flown in by plane and overnight delivery is available--even on those minus degree temperature days.

I can remember when I was a child, my mother was so excited to find African violets at the F. W. Woolworth Store, right after the holidays--it was a real treat. Back in the 50's, F. W. Woolworth was the first store to sell glass ball decorations for the Christmas tree and the first store to sell plants from Florida in New England.

Today the African violet is grown in many greenhouses throughout New England and is readily available. The once delicate African violet is now as tough as silk flowers and will thrive in most homes. If you have never grown this plant, why not begin this January?

The African violet comes with single, double, ruffled and even wavy flowers. The flower color selection is wide and wonderful, with shades of white, purple, blue, pink, and red. Some of the new hybrids will have spotted, streaked or even two-tone flowers.

The foliage is HEART shaped and this plant was a very big seller for Valentine's Day. These heart-shaped leaves grow in a rosette around the stem and are smooth, ruffled, variegated or wavy but always covered with tiny hairs. Today, there are many new hybrids that are miniatures and do well in terrariums as well as potted for the sunny window,

Grow them in a bright semi-shade window, put in sunny windows only during the winter. They grow best in a room that has temperatures 65 to 75 degrees F. all year round. Keep them evenly moist at all times and always water with warm water, so as not to spot foliage with cold water. The leaves will develop brown spots if the leaf is chilled with cold water. If they are in bloom and chilled with cold water, they will have flowers that develop spots also. Fertilize them with an African violet fertilizer monthly. My mother always used Hytrous but it is no longer made--too bad, it was great stuff.

As flowers fade, remove them to keep the plant clean; repot in the spring if necessary. Increase pot size by no more than 2 inches and repot every 2 to 3 years, when the plant becomes root-bound. Another reason this plant was so popular was that if a leaf broke off you could just stick it in a glass of water and in just two weeks the stem made roots and began a new plant. The African violet was easily traded from gardener to gardener with just a leaf or two.

Avoid misting the foliage of the plant as it could encourage insect problems. Aphids and mealy bugs are the main problems but never a real problem. Go back in time and see why your grandmother loved the African violets so much.

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The oldest house plant in the home today dates back to the dinosaurs; this plant, called the fern, was around long before man was gardening. There is a fern for every home in America today. Ferns grow all over the world in trees, on the ground, in cracks on rocks, on sandy hills, and there are even varieties that grow in the water. Ferns are one of very few plants that do not flower. Ferns reproduce by producing spores on their stems, like fungi.

Your choice is unlimited, as botanists have counted over 9000 species. The fern grower of today will concentrate on fewer than 50 varieties for your home, and most of us know only a handful of them. The ferns that do best for our home will grow in bright light, morning or late day sun. They will not tolerate blazing sunlight and do not like cold temperatures or drafty windows during the winter. When you water, always use warm water or you will chill the foliage and it will turn brown. The foliage does not like to be misted but the plant loves a humid growing environment. If you have forced hot air heat in your home, this is not the plant for you!

When you repot the plant be sure to use a potting soil with a lot of organic matter such as peat moss. You can add peat moss if your potting soil is not soft and earthy. Twenty-five percent organic matter or more is best for these plants when repotting. In addition, use shallow pots rather than deep pots as the roots stay near the surface.

Where do you think the best or ideal locations would be to grow ferns? If you think the bathroom, you're right. The kitchen is another good choice if you always keep a pot of water for tea on the stove. They will also do well in humidity-controlled green house windows, terrariums or greenhouses. Ferns are wonderful plants for the home but can be one of the shortest lasting plants. But if they like where they are, they will live for years.

The most popular fern is the Boston fern or sword fern. These ferns love bright light and will tolerate winter sun. Keep the plant warm and damp all year, and house temperatures 65 degrees or warmer. Always water the plant with warm water and fertilize monthly. I use the Osmocote pellet time release fertilizer. That way, every time I water the plant it is fed. You can put the plant outside during the summer in the shade. Ferns love to grow in hanging baskets, and to be hung in a window with morning sun.

If you like unusual, extraordinary, and remarkable looking ferns look no further than the Staghorn fern. The unusual character of the plant is that it resembles the antlers of a deer. The branches are long, flat and often drooping down from the pot, so plant this one in a hanging basket to enjoy its unique appearance. They grow best in a bright but not sunny window or room, with temperatures 60 degrees or warmer. Water with warm water and fertilize monthly.

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RECYCLING  
CHRISTMAS

The holidays are over, the tree was beautiful. But soon it will be time to take it down and recycle it. However, recycle it how? Here are a few ideas for you this year--and none of them involves the town dump.

If you live near the seashore, check with the town, as some towns will take the tree and place it in the sand dunes to catch the sand when the wind blows or to prevent storm erosion by the waves.

If you have blue hydrangeas, roses or tender perennials, cut the branches from the tree and place them around the plants to help cut the force of the wind on them during the winter. This will also block the sun from drying out the delicate branches. (Like a teepee around the plants.)

For newly planted evergreen ground covers like English Ivy, pachysandra and small junipers lay the branches over them for the winter. It will help to keep foliage green and prevent dehydration.

If you cut the branches into small pieces, you could add them to a compost pile. It will take time but they will break down to beautiful soil.

If you feed the birds during the winter, place the tree near the feeder and it will give them shelter when those big snowstorms arrive. The tree will also give them a place to hide and check out the area for the neighbor's cat before they go to the feeder.

If you do crafts, then cut the branches from the tree and place them in a black plastic trash bag. Put the bag in a sunny location outside and make sure water does not get inside the bag. In just a few weeks, the needles will all fall off. Now you can use them to make those fragrant balsam pillows that will keep any room fresh smelling like the great outdoors.

Some towns will accept the trees and chip them into mulch, to be used around the town to cover flowerbeds. It takes time to rot but the tree will not fill the landfill site. Never try to burn the tree outside! The tree will be dry and it will almost explode into flames with all the pitch in the needles!

You enjoyed the tree for the Christmas season; now let's put it to good use and help Mother Nature keep the planet healthy.

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**This Week's Question:**

In the poem *A Visit From St. Nicholas* (more commonly known as "The Night Before Christmas"), the cheeks and nose of St. Nicholas were compared (respectively) to flowers and fruit. Can you name both the flowers and the fruit?

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

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:**

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?

**Last Week's Winner:**

Lucette Musica

**Last Week's Answer:**

It will remain the same distance from the ground.

**Last Week's Prize:**

*Healthy Garden, Healthy You*, by Milo Shammas

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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