

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
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Edition 12.51	Paul Parent Garden Club News	December 20, 2012
<p> <b>Featured Quotation:</b> "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> <p>Are you looking for a great gift for a gardener (or yourself)? This garden journal helps make planning and organizing easy. This journal, <i>autographed personally by Paul</i>, makes a perfect gift for gardeners. The cover holds a 5x7 or 4x6 photo and a heavy-duty D-ring binder.</p> <p><b>Also included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· 8 tabbed sections</li><li>· 5 garden details sections with pockets for seeds, tags...</li><li>· Weather records page</li><li>· 6 three year journal pages</li><li>· Insect &amp; diseases page - 3 project pages</li><li>· 3 annual checklist pages</li><li>· Plant wish list page</li><li>· 2 large pocket pages</li><li>· Sheet of garden labels</li><li>· 5 garden detail sheets</li><li>· 5 graph paper pages for layouts</li><li>· 5 photo pages, each holding four 4x6 photos in landscape or portrait format</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Click here to order online.</a></p>	<p><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b> <a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p> <p><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>Regular Phone Hours:</b> Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p> <p><b>Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</b></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>[Send &gt;&gt;]</p> <p><b>Where can I find Paul on Sunday mornings?</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here to find Paul Parent Garden</a></p>	



### **Spider Plant**

This is the best plant for the beginner gardener and makes an excellent house plant. The plant has strap-like leaves that are variegated green and white. Plants with a white center and green outer edge are stronger growing than the green center and white edge. Spider plants are the top air cleaner plants for your home; they remove airborne pollutants. Plants grow best in bright to moderate light windows year round. The spider plant loves a warm to hot room with temperatures 65 to 75 degrees and warmer for the best growth. Fertilize every month all year long and water as needed, keeping the soil moist from spring to fall and watering less from fall and during the winter months when most plants grow very little due to short days.

If your plant begins to develop brown tips you could be on a public water system and fluoride and other minor contaminants could be present in the water. If this is a problem with your plant, fill a container with water the night before watering your plants and let sit out until the morning. In the morning mix the water to release the gas bubbles and water your plants. To start new plants, just pull small spider plants from the long cascading stems and push plant in pots filled with soil. New plants will root in a week or two and quickly begin to grow quickly into large and productive plants. Every home needs to have a spider plant in a window and small spider plants in a glass of water or pot of soil on the window sill.

### **Pothos**

This plant has the reputation as the plant that is easiest to grow in your home! The plant produces long stems that cascade down from the rim of the pot, and that cascading vine has nice shiny heart-shaped leaves covering it. The leaves are 2 to 4 inches long and have a natural shine to them, giving the plant a pleasant appearance. The heart-shaped leaf is often variegated green and white in color and the best plants those with deeper green and less white coloration on them. The new varieties of pothos with more white than green coloration are nice but not as strong growing as the deeper green varieties.

These plants do well in low light to bright light and prefer temperatures of above 60 degrees or warmer for the best growth. Water evenly all year but the plant will tolerate drier conditions during the winter months. Yellow foliage usually means too much water is being given to the plant. Insect problems are minimal; this is another plant to consider for the beginner gardener. The pothos also makes a wonderful plant for your office. If you have cats that play with your plants, damaging the foliage, this plant will stop the damage, as it produces a nonlethal poisonous sap that will cause a burning sensation in the mouth of the cat; the cat will stop playing with your plants quickly.

### **English Ivy**

This is a plant that has hundreds of varieties available to you, with different leaf sizes, leaf textures, leaf coloration and even leaf shapes. The leaves are produced on strong wiry stems that cascade down from the rim of the pot to a length of 2 to 4 feet long. The leaves will grow 2 to 4 inches long and are glossy and colorful. Plants prefer a brightly lit window and moderate light during the winter. The plant will tolerate cool temperatures from 50 to 70 degrees and even a drafty window during the winter months. Fertilize monthly year round and water to keep the soil moist at all times even in the winter months. The vines can also be trained to grow up on a wire frame to create a wreath in a pot or trained to become topiary grown on a wire form. This is an easy-to-grow-plant for the beginner or adventurous gardener who is looking for a challenge to create a unique looking plant.

### **String of Pearls**

Now here is a unique looking hanging plant that has foliage like no other plant out there. The plant is considered to be in the succulent family and resembles a long strong cascading string with pea-like ball-shaped foliage. The lime green foliage looks like peas attached to the side of the cascading string. The plant loves the heat--60 to 80 degrees inside your home--and does best in a full sun window facing south. Water as needed but allow the soil to almost dry out between each watering. Run the plant on the dry side during the winter months. Fertilize monthly all year long when you water the plant. Use the same care as with a jade plant and keep plants away from drafty windows. If a branch of pea-shaped foliage should break from the plant, just lay it on the top of a pot of soil and it will quickly root to the soil and develop new plants from the vine. This is an easy-to-care-for plant as long as you go easy on the watering, especially during the winter months. Perfect for the experienced gardener or one who needs a plant that will do real well in a hot and dry room that has a wood stove.

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## **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 diffused 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 Phalaenopsis offer up.

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## A F R I C A N

## V I O L E T S



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 transportation from the grower to the homeowner. Today, plants are trucked in, flown in by plane and even 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 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 once 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. Keep 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 the plant is in bloom and chilled with cold water, it will have flowers that develop spots also. Fertilize with a 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. 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 a new plant. The African violet was easily traded from gardener to gardener with just a leaf or two.

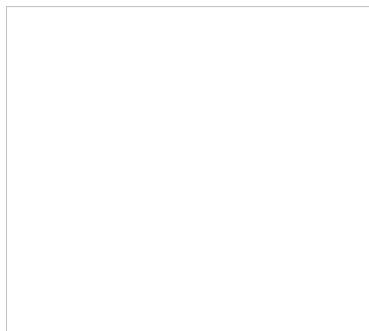
Avoid misting the foliage of the plant as it could encourage insect problems. Aphids and mealy bugs are the main problems--but never a real problem. Go back in time and see why your grandmother loved her African violets so much.

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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.



[Click here for more information.](#)



### **Trivia is taking a holiday and will return soon!**

#### **Last Week's Question:**

What is the benefit of pinching back plants?

- A. It encourages the plant to branch out.
- B. It stops the plant from branching out.
- C. It makes the plant bloom.
- D. It makes the plant stop blooming

- E. It makes the plant stop growing.

**Last Week's Winner:**

Janet M. Horton

**Last Week's Answer:**

A. It encourages the plant to branch out.

**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!



## Featured Recipe: Holiday Bread Bowl Dip

Makes an attractive--and delicious--centerpiece for the table!

**What You'll Need:**

- 8 ounce cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup ranch dip
- 1 cup shredded cheese of your choice (whatever you like best works for this)
- 1 teaspoon horseradish sauce (if using raw horseradish, use 1/2 teaspoon)
- 1/4 cup chopped/diced black olives
- 1 round bread loaf

**Step by Step:**

- Remove the center from bread loaf, leaving 1/2" thickness all the way around the sides, making a bowl out of the loaf.
- Combine cream cheese, sour cream, ranch dip, and horseradish sauce together until smooth (beat on medium in a mixer).
- Gently fold in the shredded cheese and black olives.
- Place inside the bread bowl, cover with foil and chill 1 hour.
- Serve with veggies, crackers or chips!



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