

# Master Gardener Newsletter

Utah State UNIVERSITY | COOPERATIVE extension

## Upcoming Events!

- Next Master Gardener Club Meeting will be January 14 at 12:00 noon at the Wasatch County Services Building. Bring a lunch.
- Adrian Hinton will be teaching a seminar on diagnosing plant diseases. Date and time TBA.
- The 2008 Master Gardener class will begin February 14 at 1:00 and will meet every Thursday until April 24.

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Volume 1, Issue 1

Newsletter Date

## Master Gardener Club Organized

The Master Gardener Club was organized on November 13, 2007. The club is open to anyone who has completed the Master Gardener class.

Trudi Harter was elected president, Kim Powell President Elect, Carol Babst secretary, Alicia Moulton treasurer, Publicity Chair Elizabeth Lehner, Newsletter writers Trudi



Harter and Jean Glaser, and Junior Master Gardener Coordinator Ramie Winterton.

We will be doing community projects including "Ask a Master Gardener" booths, a plant/seed swap, organizing more educational classes, and many other fun activities.

Come garden with us!

## Living Color Gifts by Carol Babst

Bulb container gardening is a fun activity and a great gift of living color.

When choosing bulbs, first determine whether they must be 'prepared' or 'forced' for winter use. Paperwhites and amaryllis do not need to be prepared and are easily found at garden shops and local retail stores. Bulbs that do need to be prepared include narcissi (daffodils), cyclamen, hyacinth, crocus, dwarf iris, tulip and gladioli. This process can take 14 to 17 weeks. (See the article on forcing bulbs on page 4 for more information.)

To create your container garden find containers that offer drainage holes or sit within unusual baskets and thrift store finds. Begin by spreading an

inch layer of gravel, followed by good quality potting soil (25% sand added for drainage). Add bulbs, flat side down, leaving a 1 inch gap between bulbs and



around the edge. Barely cover the bulb with more soil and water lightly. Keep the soil moist but not waterlogged.

Avoid placing the container in direct sunlight as the bulbs need to remain cool to encourage strong and expansive root sys-

tems to develop. Avoid drafty positions. NO bulb enjoys drafts.

Different cultivars will flower at different times. For greatest impact, choose one type bulb in a single color. Consider adding plants such as ivy, ferns, dwarf conifers or primula for added interest. Add moss on top and keep misted.

Bulbs may also be placed in glass bulb vases. Place the bulb in a vase, add water until it touches the bottom of the bulb. Maintain water level.

Enjoy your bulb container gardening and don't forget to decorate with bows, pinecones or other greens. Fresh cut flowers can be added with the use of a 'water pic'. Have fun!

## Insects: Where Are They Now? By Erin Hodgson, USU Extension Entomologist



**“Perhaps the real question is HOW do insects survive the winter?”**



Maybe you’ve wondered where insects go in the winter. It’s a great question and a huge obstacle for insects to overcome every year. Some insects can’t survive the winter and simply have to overwinter in warmer climates every year. A great example of this is the monarch butterfly. They overwinter in Mexico, and adults travel north to the U.S. and Canada every summer. Monarch butterflies migrate back to Mexico every fall; individuals have been known to fly almost 2,000 miles in four months.

Some insects try to find harborage in human structures where there is heat. Boxelder bugs are a good example of insects that become a nuisance in the fall as they seek winter shelter.

In most cases, insects have adapted to cold temperatures by evolving a cold-hardy life stage. The optimal overwintering life stage is variable between species, but could be an egg (e.g., aphids, some mosquitoes), a larva or nymph (e.g., white grubs, borers), a pupa (e.g., lace wings, most butterflies and moths) or an adult (ants, lady beetles, most true bugs).

Often insects will bury themselves in soil, leaf litter, under rocks or other debris to offer some protection from the elements.



The root stem girdler overwinters as a larva in the petiole of its host plant.



Knapweed survive the winter as eggs on branch stems.

Others will stay on or near the plant they will feed on the following year. Perhaps the real question is HOW do insects survive the winter? Some have adapted to humans and seek warmth of buildings; often these insects are perceived as pests. But most insects go through diapause, which is a quasi-dormant period often triggered by cold temperatures and photoperiod. Wikipedia defines diapause as “a neurohormonally mediated, dynamic state of low metabolic activity.” Diapause slows down or stops all bodily functions, including eating. Sometimes diapause is a mandatory resting period, meaning that an insect must go through dormancy to continue the life cycle. To further enhance the survival rate of overwintering, insects will purge most of their gut contents and frass to minimize any unnecessary water in the body. Dehydration will lessen the chance of ice crys-

tals forming inside the body. Also, insects will start to produce glycerol, acting like antifreeze to help winterize the body for cold temperatures. A combination of these body changes provides the greatest likelihood of surviving temperatures below freezing.

Several factors can influence the chance of insects surviving the winter, including how soon freezing temperatures begin in the fall and subsequent warming/cooling events. For example, if a sudden freeze hits the Wasatch Front in the fall, insects will not be properly prepared in purging water and finding secluded sites. Most certainly an early freeze will kill a small portion of insects before they can enter diapause. But even if insects have enough time to prepare for diapause, repeated warming and cooling periods during the fall and spring can bring insects out of their resting state too soon. If insects emerge before plants are growing, they will likely starve or not survive subsequent freezes.



The spring cutworm spends its winter as a pupa in the soil until late March.

Where insects go during the winter will affect their survival the following spring. Some migrate, others try to find hiding places in human structures, while most simply “grin and bear it” by finding secluded areas and producing antifreeze. All are major obstacles for insects to overcome each winter. I wonder if they ever tried wearing gloves and hats?

## Water-Wise Corner by Alicia Moulton

Interested in creating a beautiful but water-friendly landscape? Here are some resources to help!

*Water-Wise Landscaping*, A free on-line book by Terry Keane <http://extension.usu.edu/hsm/publications/publication=629>! This book is also available for purchase at your local USU Extension office.

This book was written to help Northern Utah residents (hardiness zones 4 and 5) conserve water. It says "Water-wise landscaping is landscaping without wasting water. It includes planning a yard for your lifestyle, grouping plants together with similar water requirements, watering just to meet plant needs and using non-water consuming areas,



such as decks and patios. By using water wisely up to 50% of landscape irrigation water can be saved."

*Water-Wise Landscaping* will help you get started by developing a map of the yard, planning uses and goals for your landscape, designing arrangements, selecting plants, and implementing your plan.

Some water-wise tips from this book include:

1. Create a native low water use landscape with shrub beds, small perennial gardens and patios.
2. Compromise and retain small high water use areas, such as turf, and convert the remaining yard to patios, decks, walkways, and low water use plants
3. Convert small areas of an existing landscape each year to lower water consuming plants.

*Conservation Garden Park At Jordan Valley*  
A water-wise landscaping demonstration garden



<http://www.conservationgardenpark.org/>

Take a tour on line of this beautiful garden, or visit it in person at 8215 S 1300 W, West Jordan, Utah. This garden features water-wise plants that fit the Northern Utah climate. Plants are grouped by water use and include commercial, garden loop, and neighborhood garden ideas.



**"Water-wise landscaping was written to help Northern Utah Residents conserve water."**

## Winter Garden Tips/Ideas Taken from *Trowel & Error, over 700 Shortcuts, Tips & remedies for the Gardener*

\*Apply mulch after the soil has frozen to deter pests. You can even apply mulch on top of snow!

\*Bag shredded leaves and set aside...in spring, you will have compost! And you can also use the mulch to protect garden crops such as beets, carrots, etc which you can use later in the winter!

\*Good use for a bad gift: Any cologne not to your liking can



be recycled by lightly misting house plants for elimination of pests. Kills mealy bugs, white flies and aphids

\*Use complete NPK fertilizer

as de-icer for anything near your landscaping. The potassium or pot ash melts ice and phosphorus provides a slip proof surface. Apply at same rate as quantities recommended for salt to prevent burning of plants.

\*Birds can rid you yard of many unwanted pests. Make bird feeders from pinecones buttered with peanut butter and rolled in seeds. See page 5 for a suet recipe for birdfeeders.





Forcing bulbs is required for narcissus (daffodil) for use in winter flower arrangements.

### Preparing/Forcing Bulbs by Carol Babst

Preparing, vernalizing, cooling, chilling and dormancy all refer to the process of preparing bulbs for early forcing.

Bulbs that need to be prepared for winter flower arrangements include narcissi (daffodils), cyclamen, hyacinth, crocus, dwarf iris, tulip and gladioli.

Follow the directions on pre purchased bulbs or force them yourself.

To force bulbs yourself, keep containers in a cool or refrigerated area at about 35 to 40 degrees for 14 to 17 weeks. After this dormancy period, move containers to a warmer area slowly, letting them acclimatize.

A garage, basement or crawl space is generally within the temperature range needed. Do not store bulbs with fruit; as ethylene gas that some fruits



give off will damage the flower inside the bulb. Be sure to protect bulbs from freezing.

**Each Newsletter edition will include featured plants, weeds, and pests!**

### Featured Plant- Curl leaf Mountain Mahogany by Jean Glaser

*Cercocarpus ledifolius*

Roseaceae

I thought given the weather we've been experiencing, it would be a good idea to begin with an extremely drought tolerant plant. This plant needs water to establish the first season but then no irrigation is required thereafter.

Curl leaf Mountain Mahogany is native to Western North American Slopes at 3,000 – 9,000 feet in elevation., zones 3-8. This small shrub is an evergreen which is loosely vase shaped, requiring little or no maintenance. Height is 4-15 feet and spread is 4-8 feet.

The only detriment I have

found with this plant is the fact that it is very slow growing. I planted 5 seedlings, 3 years ago on a south facing slope. They didn't require any water after the first season, but they have only doubled in size.

### Featured Weed- Bur Buttercup by Jean Glaser

Ranunculaceae

It is one of the top 5 weeds on my personal hit list.

This weed is an annual 2-5 inches tall. In the spring it is actually a very friendly looking

little plant. Don't let it fool you! It has grayish green ferny looking leaves and sweet little 5 petaled buttercup flowers. When you first see it you would think oh, what a nice little wild flower. At this point

you should take a hoe to it and rid your yard of it. The flowers turn into evil 1/2-3/4 inch burrs, they will easily pierce nitrile gloves and are murder on bare fingers, or toes in sandals. It is highly toxic to sheep.



### Suet is for the birds! by Trudi Harter

Suet is raw beef fat which is 'rendered' or heated until it becomes a clear liquid.

**Step one:** Melt the beef fat in a pan until it is liquid. Remove the larger bits and let the liquid cool.

**Step two:** Re-melt so that it produces a hard suet. During step two, stir in ingredients that birds love such as peanuts, peanut butter, sunflower seeds, bird seed mix, cornmeal, dried fruits, etc. Pour the suet mixture into a carton (ie: orange juice carton

works great!) Put in freezer and cut slices as needed. Place slices in bird feeder and enjoy!



## Colorful Berries Can Liven the Landscape

Writer: Julene Reese  
 Contact: Jerry Goodspeed,

"This time of the year, trees and shrubs exhibit one of their most desirable characteristics," said Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. "A beautiful display of brightly colored leaves almost makes up for some of the less-desirable features the rest of the year. For example, the amur maple is flame-red right now. This breath-taking sight almost makes homeowners forget the thousands of seed pods that regularly fell from the tree about three months ago."

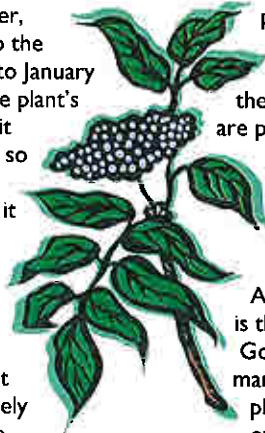
Some plants add color to the fall and winter by producing vibrant berries, he said. Berries can make it easier to overlook the negative plant features the rest of the year.



For example, pyracantha, or scarlet firethorn, is noted for its beautiful orange to red-colored fall berries, said Goodspeed. These abundant clusters often persist through the winter, adding interest to the landscape well into January and February. The plant's downside is that it produces thorns, so it is a good idea to plant it where it can be admired from a distance.

The cranberry cotoneaster also produces red fruit that contrasts nicely with the snow, he said. This low-growing plant trails over walls and terraces or creeps along the ground, producing flowers in the spring. It can be fairly aggressive, however, and can be difficult to remove once established.

Oregon grapeholly has dark-purple to blue berries that attract wildlife. Mahonia has a yellow flower in the spring and attractive fall color, said Goodspeed. Its berries are vibrant in the fall, but do not persist long. Native to Utah, it survives under a variety of growing conditions. The downside to these plants is the sharp, pointy leaves, and they can also be somewhat invasive.



"One of my favorite, yet under-used groundcovers is bear-berry, also known as Kinnikinnick," he said. "This low-growing woody plant is native to Utah's mountains. It produces red to soft-purple colored berries that appear in the middle of August and are prized by wildlife. It flowers in the spring and can be directed to trail down a wall or in a rock garden."

A colorful fruited tree is the crabapple, said Goodspeed. There are many varieties of crabapple, and each has its own unique shape and hue to the fruit. Crabapples are very hardy, durable trees that bloom in the spring.

"I recommend planting persistent fruiting varieties," he said. "Their fruit remains on the tree until it is eaten off by birds or dries up in late winter without creating a mess."

Although crabapples have many desirable characteristics, they are not flawless. They are prone to fire-blight and iron chlorosis. And, homeowners will rue the day they failed to check the varieties closer if they end up with a tree that does not have persistent fruit. The fruit provides great ammunition for a teenager, but creates lousy mulch on the yard."



**LOGAN— "All plants have desirable features, but usually at least one trait that can cause a gardener stress."**



Know someone interested in the new Master Gardener Class? Contact Alicia at (435) 657-3236!

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