

Doings in December

December 5th, 2006, Hort Society Christmas Party! 6:30 p.m. At the Memphis Botanic Garden! Please bring a dish to the Christmas party (and a bottle of wine, if you like.) The MHS will supply the drinks, plates, cups and such. Don't forget to bring a guest to share in the fun and fellowship. There will be no formal meeting for December

December 5, Memphis Botanic Garden's open house. 5-7 p.m. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and holiday drinks while you gaze at our 15-foot tree and other spectacular holiday decorations. The MBG staff and board members look forward to seeing you.

December 9, Breakfast with Santa. 9 a.m. at the Memphis Botanic Garden. Cost: \$12 (\$10 for botanic garden members). Reservations: 576-4131.

December 13, Christmas Centerpiece Class. 10:30 a.m. Join floriculturist Greg Francis as he demonstrates how to use the bounty from the winter garden. Dixon Gallery and Gardens Dixon \$30 (Dixon members \$25); All participants will be given a container, glass cylinder, candle and cut material to create a holiday centerpiece. Reservations required, class size limited to 20. 761-5250.

December 13, The Hell Strip. Noon., Learn what to do with the tiny bit of ground between the sidewalk and the street with Chris Crosby, horticulturist at the Memphis Botanic Garden. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Bring your lunch or purchase one at Fratelli's in the Garden. 576-4100.

December 19, 2006 Paperwhite Sale. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Dixon greenhouse. In celebration of The Dixon 30th anniversary, the gardens will reinstate this popular sale. Call and place your orders early for these special fragrant holiday bulbs that bloom during the Christmas season. Each gift bowl will contain four blooming bulbs for \$11 each. Orders can be picked up and paid for on Tuesday, during the times listed above. A confirmation card will be mailed upon receipt of order. Bulbs are grown to order.

December 21, Polar Express Picnic. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Memphis Botanic Garden. Ages 4-9. Includes crafts, lunch and a movie. Cost \$30 (\$25 botanic garden members). 576-4126.

The Memphis Horticultural Society
PO Box 11665
Memphis, TN 38111



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Clippings

December 2006

President's Message

Paul Little

What a great design program we were treated to on Election Night! Gina from Holidays displayed an awesome gift in the designs she so skillfully put together for us Thank you so much Gina for taking the time to share this incredible gift with the Hort Society!

I know those of you that got to take home some of those gorgeous designs were delighted to get them! Special thanks to Sandy Tucker for assisting and introducing Gina, and to Rick Pudwell for furnishing the unique and beautiful greenery, and then being kind enough to identify it! And last, but certainly not least, a special thanks to Emelia Miekicki for shopping and gathering up all those "different" containers! It was a great program and I thank all of you for making it yet another informative and delightful experience for the membership.

As outgoing President I wanted to take a moment to tell how much I have enjoyed my term. You are an outstanding group of people and working with you has been a great joy! We have laughed together, we have learned together, and we have sometimes even cried together when one of our own was lost. I have been privileged to work with some of the finest people I have ever met and have learned much more than just how to run a meeting. Thank you all for your time and your patience in teaching me how to be what I needed to be for you. I also want to thank all of our volunteers in the Memphis Horticultural Society. Not only the board, but all the silent volunteers that are always there to add their support and help whenever needed. You are the life blood of this organization and you keep its heart beating! Thank you!

I will miss being your President, but I will never forget the wonderful lessons you have taught me. I look forward to handing the reins over in December and continuing to be involved in what I consider to be the best of the best. I Look forward to seeing you all at the Christmas party. As most of you know, next to talking about plants and napping, eating ranks right on up there with my favorite activities!

The following people brought food to the November meeting: Ann McCormick, Cornelia Swain, Alice Moore, Rosa Woody, Debbie Peyton, Pat Allen, Judy Daffron, Barara Bounds, and Evelyn Talada, who was our Book winner.



Gina Stowitzky with Paul Little.

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Respite

Kay Little

Over the last three years the membership of the Memphis Horticultural Society has allowed me to be a part of the monthly newsletter. I can't begin to tell you all how much your words of encouragement and compliments have meant to me. It was an honor to share my somewhat "different" views, of not only gardening, but of life. With Paul's term as President coming to an end I have decided to take a respite and focus some of my energy in a different direction. I hope to get around to typing up and organizing the 200 or so stories I have written so far, and getting them completed for my own sense of accomplishment.

I will never forget that "you" were the ones that allowed me to share those monthly thoughts with you, that you allowed me to test the waters and made them warm and welcoming. I thought that I might feel a sense of relief in having one less thing on my plate, but instead I have found this particular article more difficult to write than any of the others.

I will miss sharing myself with you, but I want to encourage someone else to step forward and do the same. While the newsletter is meant to be informative, it is also about sharing - sharing ourselves, our perspectives, and our experiences in the *garden* of life. So, to any aspiring writers among you (and I know you are there!), I beg you to give the Memphis Horticultural Society a try. You will find them an open, accepting, and incredibly supportive group of wonderful people.

Thank you for enduring me, thank you for your support, and thank you for your endless encouragement. I will miss writing to you, but I assure you if someday you happen to see a gardening book with my name listed as the author, you can bet the dedication will be to the Memphis Horticultural Society - and of course your copies would be complimentary!!! ☺ See how ambitious and confident you have inspired me to become?

I look forward to seeing you all at the December Christmas party and I also look forward to perhaps reading a bit about some of you in the future newsletters.



Missing you already
-- Kay

National Poinsettia Day

Did you know that the poinsettia has a special day all its' own? By an Act of Congress, December 12 was set aside as National Poinsettia Day. The date marks the death in 1851 of Joel Roberts Poinsett, who is credited with introducing the native Mexican plant to the United States.

The purpose of the day is to enjoy the beauty of this popular holiday plant. So, be sure to give someone you love a poinsettia on December 12!



The poinsettia is NOT poisonous

The widespread belief that poinsettias are poisonous is a misconception. The scientific evidence demonstrating the poinsettia's safety is ample and well documented. Studies conducted by The Ohio State University in cooperation with the Society of American Florists concluded that no toxicity was evident at experimental ingestion levels far exceeding those likely to occur in a home environment. In fact, the POISINDEX Information Service, the primary information resource used by most poison control centers, states that a 50-pound child would have to ingest over 500 poinsettia bracts to surpass experimental doses. Yet even at this high level, no toxicity was demonstrated. As with all ornamental plants, poinsettias are not intended for human or animal consumption, and certain individuals may experience an allergic reaction to poinsettias. However, the poinsettia has been demonstrated to be a safe plant. In fact, in 1992, the poinsettia was included on the list of houseplants most helpful in removing pollutants from indoor air. So, not only is the poinsettia a safe and beautiful addition to your holiday decor, it can even help keep your indoor air clean!

Winter Rose Poinsettia

Colors - Red

Fertilizer - Fertilize after the blooming season with a balanced, all purpose fertilizer every 2 to 3 weeks.

Height - Varies depending on pot size.

Light - Place plant in full sun to partial shade. Ideally in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day.

Features - Bright, colorful, festive bracts add to the decor during the Holiday season.

Temperature - Between 68 to 70 degrees F.

Water - Dry soil slightly between waterings

Note - Please refer to plant care tag for specific variety information

Here are the DO's of poinsettia care

- DO place your plant in indirect sunlight for at least six hours per day. If direct sun can't be avoided, diffuse the light with a shade or sheer curtain.
- DO provide room temperatures between 68 - 70° F. Generally speaking, if you are comfortable, so is your poinsettia.
- DO water your plant when the soil feels dry to the touch.
- DO use a large, roomy shopping bag to protect your plant when transporting it.
- DO fertilize your plant AFTER THE BLOOMING SEASON with a balanced, all-purpose fertilizer.
- DON'T place plants near cold drafts or excessive heat. Avoid placing plants near appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts or the top of a television.
- DON'T expose plants to temperatures below 50° F. Poinsettias are sensitive to cold, so avoid placing them outside during the winter months.
- DON'T over water your plant, or allow it to sit in standing water. Always remove a plant from any decorative container before watering, and allow the water to drain completely.
- DON'T expose your plant to chilling winds when transporting it.
- DON'T fertilize your plant when it is in bloom.

December Garden Tasks

- Make sure that the canes of your climbing roses and other vining plants are securely fastened to their supports. Winter winds can severely damage unprotected plants. Don't tie them so tightly that the string or twist-tie cuts into the stem. Use a length of an old nylon stocking; it will stretch as the plant grows.
- Mound five to six inches of soil around the bases of your hardy roses.
- You can continue to transplant your perennials throughout the fall and winter, as long as they remain dormant.
- Tender bulbs should be dug up and stored in a cool, dark area after first frost.
- Be sure that your tender plants are protected from frost. Mulching with bark, sawdust or straw will help create a blanket of protection over the root system. Should the weather get suddenly cold, place burlap, cloth or dark plastic over your *tender plants* to give them some added protection from the cold. Be sure to remove this covering when the weather has stabilized!
- Winter is a good time to transplant trees and shrubs. At this time of the year, most ornamentals have entered into dormancy, and can be safely dug and replanted. The key to transplanting is to dig a large root ball (*get as much of the root system as is possible*). Equally important, is getting the plant back into the prepared soil as quickly as possible, *to keep the roots from drying out. (Only a transplanting fertilizer should be used at this time of the year.)* Large trees or shrubs should be staked to protect them from wind during winter storms. Keep them staked until the roots have a chance to develop.
- As soon as the leaves fall from deciduous plants, they can be sprayed for the first time with a dormant spray. This spraying helps control over-wintering insects and diseases. Apply according to label instructions.
- Prune your evergreens to shape.
- If you haven't already applied a fall or winter type of lawn fertilizer (20-9-9), now is the time to do it. This encourages good root development and helps improve the color of the lawn. Lime can also be applied, if needed.
- Give your lawn a good raking to lift away accumulations of debris.
- Keep leaves raked from the lawn. They should be composted. Alternatively, you can just mow over them, turning them to mulch which adds important nutrients back to the lawn.