



December 2020

THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

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The Garden In Winter

Frosty-white and cold it lies
 Underneath the fretful skies;
 Snowflakes flutter where the red
 Banners of the poppies spread,
 And the drifts are wide and deep
 Where the lilies fell asleep.

But the sunsets o'er it throw
 Flame-like splendor, lucent glow,
 And the moonshine makes it gleam
 Like a wonderland of dream,
 And the sharp winds all the day
 Pipe and whistle shrilly gay.

Safe beneath the snowdrifts lie
 Rainbow buds of by-and-by;
 In the long, sweet days of spring
 Music of bluebells shall ring,
 And its faintly golden cup
 Many a primrose will hold up.

Though the winds are keen and chill
 Roses' hearts are beating still,
 And the garden tranquilly
 Dreams of happy hours to be
 In the summer days of blue
 All its dreamings will come true.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

From internetpoems.com

President's Message

by Mary Townsend



Does anyone still hang mistletoe in the doorway? Probably not. Especially not this year. After all, with the pandemic still raging, how many people are you actually going to kiss under the mistletoe this year?

But hey, here's something I bet you didn't know – you can still hang mistletoe as a good luck charm to protect you and your family from illness and bad fortune in the coming year. The tradition of mistletoe as a “kissing ball” was popularized in Victorian England, but it was the Druids who believed mistletoe had magical powers.

In Victorian England, a sprig of mistletoe hanging in the doorway gave a man permission to kiss any woman he chose, and she was powerless to resist. Not so brutish when you consider that the tradition also afforded a married woman the opportunity to kiss another man in full view of her husband. Then after the kiss, the man removed one of the berries, and when they were all picked, the kissing stopped – until you got another sprig.

In ancient Briton, the Druids harvested mistletoe from the sacred oak with golden sickles and incorporated it into their religious rituals. Because mistletoe is an evergreen, it was also considered sacred, and unless you dropped it on the ground, it had miracle powers, including enhancing fertility and vitality. Plus, they believed it had magical healing powers and protected people from harm. (Believe it or not, in modern medicine, some European countries use mistletoe extracts to treat cancer and AIDS.) It's possible that the kissing tradition arose from the Druids, who believed that mistletoe promoted peace and love. For example, if two enemies happened to meet under an oak tree with mistletoe, they were supposed to disarm and call a truce until the next day when they went their separate ways peacefully.

Other cultures, including the Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Norse, also believed in the magical powers of mistletoe. Indeed, it is surrounded in mythology and tradition, but nothing is more fascinating than the plant itself.

For one thing, it's named after bird poop: *mistel*, the Anglo-Saxon word translated as *mistel*, meaning “dung” and *tan*, meaning “stick”; in other words, “dung on a stick.” Besides birds, the sticky seeds can be spread by furry animals.

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Presidents message continued

Mistletoe is a “hemi-parasite,” meaning a parasite that can also produce its own food. As an evergreen, it can photosynthesize, but as a parasite it grows a special root system, called haustoria, into the tree’s branch to steal nutrients. As a parasite it does weaken the tree, and if the growth is large enough, the tree will die. But the good news is that the berries are an important food source for birds like the silky flycatcher, pollen source for bees, and nesting source for butterflies and the spotted owl (“What to Know about Mistletoe Facts and Mythology,” <www.medium.com>). The bad news is that those same berries are toxic to us humans and our pets.

There are over 1300 species of mistletoe in the world, but you are probably only aware of the one we use as Christmas decoration, *Phoradendron flavescens* (American mistletoe). The American mistletoe and its cousin the dwarf mistletoe grow wild in forests from New Jersey to Florida and throughout the South, and they are commercially harvested in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma.

Now here’s the best part – you can grow your own mistletoe from seed. Just visit the “The Mistletoe Pages” at the website Mistletoe.org.uk, where you can download a culture sheet. You can also buy a “Grow Your Own Mistletoe Kit” from their sister site “The English Mistletoe Shop.”

Now wouldn’t that make a great gift for your MG BFF?





The virtual **General Meeting** is on **December 3, 2020 at 10:00** am. This meeting is really just a hello fest and holiday greetings. All are welcome to pop on and say hello. I will record it and send out the link for the video. I have no update on the RMG program status, but Rutgers U. spring semester will be all virtual. Right now, I am planning what review and training classes I can to be virtual until I hear otherwise.

This year has been trying for us all, but we have all learned something new about ourselves, our family and friends, and our environment: how to persevere and stay strong. Although we all have had to keep our distances, in many ways we've become closer. We have discovered what is really important to us. For some, having space is perfect, for others a kind word or gesture. For me, family, keeping positive, moving forward and hugs are things I've come to find important. So as one year is ending and a new year awaits, let's keep finding ways to improve our outlook during these trying times. I found this on Facebook and thought I'd share to help remind us of little things to keep us positive! Enjoy your holidays!

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt



1. Find something that makes you happy.
2. Something to give someone else to make them smile.
3. Find one thing that you love to smell.
4. Find one thing you enjoy looking at.
5. Find something that's your favorite color.
6. Find something you are thankful for in nature.
7. Find something that you can use to make a gift for someone.
8. Find something that is useful for you.

www.atlantabirchtoys.com





Committee reports



Greenhouse Committee Chair:Linda Convey

Co-Chairs:Mary Townsend
Cheryl Clearo, Bart Mazzei

Insect Control in the MG Greenhouse by Linda Convey

While a GH pest management plan starts with prevention using recommended sanitation, cultural controls, and other non-chemical techniques, at some point in the season when environmental conditions are right, it will be necessary to use pesticide sprays and/or drenches, as ever-present insects will become active. We use two commercial grade certified organic pesticides: insecticidal soap and neem oil to control commonly encountered soft-bodied insects such as aphids, white flies, and thrips. Both are biorational, which are natural in origin, and according to the OSHA's Material Safety Data Sheets, they are non-toxic to humans and other mammals. These products are perfectly safe for the home gardener, too.

Commonalities:

Both insecticidal soap and neem oil are effective as contact sprays only when insect populations are low.

- They do not work as well on infestations, thus demonstrating the importance of having a good pest management plan in place that includes rigorous monitoring and scouting techniques.
- They kill only on direct contact, so thorough coverage of all plant parts is essential. Once dry, they are ineffective.
- Because of their short residual activity, they must be applied more than once. We follow the label.

Recommendations:

Read the label.

- For use mix up only the amount needed, as it degrades.
- Water plants before using.
- Look up plant sensitivity before using to avoid plant damage .
- Store product in cool, dry place out of direct sunlight.
- Do not spray when temperatures are above 90 degrees.
- Dispose of properly. Read the label.

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Insecticidal Soap

Commercially available insecticidal soap contains the active ingredient potassium salts, and fatty acids. It is most effective on larvae, nymphs, crawlers, and mites. Fortunately we rarely have mites in the greenhouse, but mites and other insects can be brought into the greenhouse on donated plant material, which is why we are hesitant to accept donations.

Mode of Action:

Insecticidal soap has several modes of action so the probability of resistance is extremely low. It's guaranteed for one year if stored properly. While the mode of action is still not well understood (Cloyd, et al., 2020), there might be four ways insecticidal soaps kill insect and mite pests.

1. They penetrate the cuticle, thus disrupting cell membranes. Consequently cell integrity is destroyed.
2. They impair molting by blocking the action of the hormone ecdysone.
3. They block breathing pores, causing respiratory failure.
4. They may impair ATP energy production.

Neem Oil

Neem oil is a naturally occurring registered pesticide/fungicide found in the seeds of the *Azadirachta indica*, the neem tree. Neem trees are natural to the tropical forests of India, Burma, and Sri Lanka, where the oil has been used as a pesticide for centuries. The seeds are soaked in water and alcohol to extract the oil and then sold in garden centers as 70 percent "clarified hydrophobic extract of neem oil." If stored properly, neem is guaranteed for one year.

Like insecticidal soap, neem oil kills insect eggs, immatures, and adults; however, it's also an effective fungicide against powdery mildew and black spot. As a contact spray, neem kills instantly; as a drench, it takes up to two to three days to work.

Mode of Action:

Like insecticidal soap, neem oil has many modes of action, all of which are not fully understood.

1. Neem is a phagorepellent (antifeedant) that reduces insect feeding.
2. The oil also interferes with insect hormone systems, making it harder for insects to grow (molt) and lay eggs.
3. It forms a coating on the insect's body, blocking the breathing openings and suffocating the insect.
4. It also has a repellent effect on certain insects and mites.
5. Neem oil prevents the germination and penetration of some fungal diseases.

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Greenhouse Committee *continued*

In the greenhouse, we alternate using insecticidal soap and neem oil. We find them both very effective for controlling the soft-bodied insect pests we encounter in the greenhouse, and we are able to ensure that effectiveness by choosing the right plants, knowing the insects common to those plants, monitoring and scouting, and following sanitation guidelines for greenhouse grown plants.

For the home gardener, these two products are safe and effective. Just read the label before you spray.



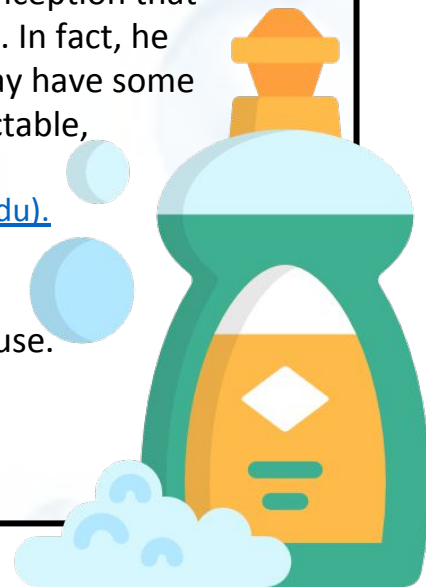
Should you make your own insecticidal soap?

University extension sites suggest using a registered commercial-grade insecticidal soap in a greenhouse environment; however, many websites offer recipes for making your own soaps for use at home.

According to entomologist Raymond Clolyd, Kansas SU, it is a misconception that any dish soap may be used as an insecticidal soap on plant material. In fact, he says, only a few select soaps like Palmolive, Ivory, Dawn, and Joy may have some activity on soft-bodied insects. However, their reliability is unpredictable, he adds, as they are not formulated or registered as insecticides.

[\(Fundamentals of Using Soaps as Insecticides, June 2020, Blogs-K-State.edu\).](https://blogs-k-state.edu/fundamentals-of-using-soaps-as-insecticides-june-2020/)

So I think you can appreciate that we prefer to purchase and use commercial-grade, registered insecticidal soaps in the MG Greenhouse.



Master Gardeners share



Pierre in his Holiday sweater. He and his owners, Rosemary and Rita, wish you joy this Holiday season. He reminds you that this is a "purrrfect" time to share your joy with family, friends, and pets. Pierre wants toys and treats.
~Rosemary M.



So I was so excited about Sue's Centerpiece demonstration I sent you pictures of the ones my mother and I made on her birthday. Hope they came through! Happy Thanksgiving! ~Dawn W.



Expanding Biodiversity - Attracting Birds to Your Yard

January 27, 12:00pm

Hosted by the Ecological Landscape Alliance

Join Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Specialist, OCSCD, for a special webinar hosted by the [Ecological Landscape Alliance](#). Using an ecologically holistic approach, Becky will discuss native plant species that are appropriate for yards, and will point out the many ways these species provide essential services to birds. She will also introduce landscape features and practices that support birds, such as leaf litter, brush piles, dead trees, nest boxes, and water features. Pre-registration required. Free to Members of the [ELA](#); Non-member fee is \$10.



FROM CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS TREE TO ROCKEFELLER CENTER

By Trish Polunas, Master Gardener Ocean County

Well, the title embellishes slightly. The truth is, the first year we were in our home, I noticed a small twig with a few green “hairs” leaning along the foundation in the garden. It wasn’t in the way, so for a season or two, I let it be. As with any new home, especially if someone lived and gardened there before you, the first and second springs and summers bring surprises or horrors, depending on your expectations and perspective.

The previous owner was ... maybe still is, a landscaper, who delighted in filling the front and side gardens with seemingly “leftover” plants from jobs. He was really into white stone too, which looked neat, but as Master Gardener interns learn, is not ideal. I exhumed a buried plant my first spring, when I saw “green leaves” peaking between the rocks near the front steps. I moved the stones, tore open the weed block, and lo’ and behold, a Hosta was surfacing, probably singing the song “I Will Survive.” The will to live, amazing! His shrubs, from weeping spruce to older evergreen bushes with one yucca (one flower, one day, every other year), and one hydrangea, blended nicely for awhile. I enjoy an eclectic garden that isn’t all lines and symmetry, unlike my neighbor who delights in groups of same seasonal annuals flowering along her 100 feet plus walkway 3 times a year on both sides. (She says she enjoys it.)

Needing to move some white stone, and fill in my front landscape, I planted a ‘Cherokee’ holly and andromeda. It was time to transplant the “twig,” which had now grown a foot bigger and bore branches. I still couldn’t tell what kind of tree it might be, but decided to remove it from near new plantings. I transplanted it to the side of my property. I delight in natural horticultural experimentation!!!

Monmouth Co. MG interns were asked to bring in a photo of something growing at/outside our home, for Rutgers’ Bill Hlubik’s slide presentation. At that point, the twig looked like a Charlie Brown Christmas tree, and it seemed to be thriving in its new location. We were supposed to identify our specimen. Who knew? Even the experts were stumped. Thin, kinda spindly, one branch here, one branch there, very little green.



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We almost decorated it with lights for Christmas one year, but decided not to weigh it down. It continued to grow, and two summers ago, it topped seven feet high with many more pine leaf-filled branches. This tree, no longer looked awkward. The crown burned in the 100 degree summer sun, and I was able to reach the top to prune it, hoping the now recognizable white pine would not die. It browned in places in the fall as evergreens do. It progresses each spring, taller, stronger, fuller and vibrant. It is now close to twelve feet tall and six feet wide at the bottom. I couldn't reach the top to prune from heat scorch this summer, but it pruned itself. Nature is grand.

While doing my best Master Gardener fall observation around my yard last week, I was thrilled to look up and see that this 6 year-old rescue/transplant evergreen tree had sprouted it's first (and only, so far) pinecone!!! A perfectly natural Christmas gift to me from my now adult tree! I think my tree is gorgeous and mostly symmetrical. (Okay, so I like symmetry in pine trees).

I will watch it from my window again this winter, with occasional ice-checks, and I believe it watches over me. Someday, it may find its way from the Jersey Shore to Rockefeller Center, but more likely, it will provide a safe haven for birds and wildlife to rest and nest away from predators and weather. I am sure this tree would wish that your holidays may be blessed with natural abundance and good health.



Support Wildlife in Winter

Support wildlife in winter by planting natives that offer food during the colder months of the year. Inkberry Holly, Winged Sumac and Sourgum provide a nutritional food source for our feathered friends! Search the [Jersey-Friendly Yards Plant Database](#) for more perennials, shrubs and trees that are friendly to birds and wildlife.



Inkberry Holly (*Ilex glabra*) is an evergreen shrub with thick waxy leaves. Tiny, greenish-white flowers bloom in the spring, followed by black berry-like fruits in late fall and winter. The flowers are a source of nectar for bees, and the berries offer food for birds. Use this wildlife-friendly shrub as foundation plantings or hedges. Good choice for wet sites, such as rain gardens and edges of ponds or streams.



Winged Sumac (*Rhus copallinum*) produces bright red fall foliage. Bunches of sticky red berries offer food for birds throughout the winter months. These edible berries were also used by native people to make a citrus-tasting beverage. Plant Winged Sumac in dry rocky places, coastal gardens, along stream banks, in naturalistic plantings, and in large areas of your yard. It will spread to form colonies.



Sourgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) is a medium-sized, flowering, deciduous tree, which offers many benefits for wildlife. White, inconspicuous flowers bloom May-June, offering an excellent nectar source for bees. Ripe sour fruits provide an important food source for birds and wildlife. It offers showy, red color in fall. It has high wind, flood and salt resistance.

**Reprinted from the OC Soil Conservation District Newsletter.
Check out their website by clicking below-**





Visit Our Website

<https://www.mgocinc.org>

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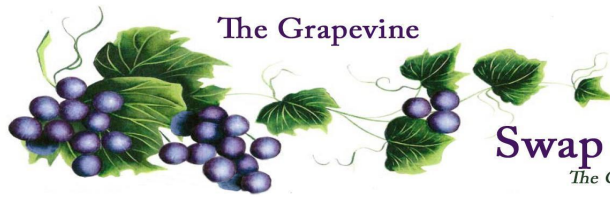
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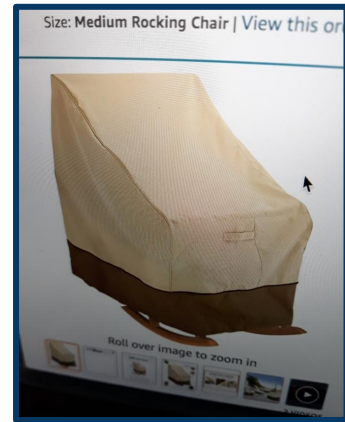


Swap & Shop

The OCMG Classified

All ads should contain type of transaction (Wanted, Free, For Sale or Trade), your name, price, picture and contact information. Contact Phyllis Delesandro doggieshop@aol.com

For sale- Medium sun-blocker shirt. \$12. Also, I have a winter vinyl patio chair cover in tan, approx. 26" W x 35" H x 27" D, selling \$12. Used one week, too much wind here to use it over my wicker rocker. Contact Suzanne K. at mgsue06@gmail.com



For Sale- Holiday decorations. Contact Phyllis D. 732-300-9154
Decorations made with reclaimed, repurposed, and reused items.
28 inch Snowflake wreath- \$25 Antique Buck Bow Saw- \$45
Cowboy boot arrangement- \$25 Horsehead Wreath - \$45

