

Washington County Cooperative Extension Service

The Hoe Truth Newsletter

Helping You Grow!

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Poinsettia Care And Handling Tips



- Choose a plant with small tightly clustered yellow buds in the center
- Look for crisp, bright, undamaged foliage
- At home, water the plant when dry. Discard excess water in the saucer
- Place in a room with bright, natural light. Ideally, direct sunlight should fall on the foliage for 1 or more hours each day
- Keep out of drafts and away from appliances and radiators; do not put the plant on the television set
- After a few weeks, fertilize with ordinary house plant fertilizer

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Plant of The Month-Christmas Fern

Christmas fern got its name because it stays green right through the holiday season. It is a robust, leathery native fern which has glossy, green fronds year-round. The fronds grow in clusters from a crownless rootstock and range from 1-2 ft. in length. Fertile fronds are taller. The once-divided fronds with pointed pinnae result in a medium to coarse texture. The silvery fiddleheads emerge in early spring.

Christmas fern is very easy to establish and grow where conditions are right. It requires cool, moist, well-drained soil in shade. In the right spot, it can be a good, evergreen border or accent plant. Though often used as a groundcover, it is a clumping fern, not forming a continuous, undifferentiated carpet the way some ferns do.



Solstice Season

Winter Solstice is the shortest day and longest night of the year. Celebrations of the solstice reflect the awakening of new life. At Yuletide there is a celebration of the sun. It is a time of joy and hope as the sun is reborn.

Yule or Yuletide is a festival historically observed by the Norse Germanic peoples. Departing from its pagan roots, Yule underwent Christianized reformulation, resulting in the term Christmastide. Many present-day Christmas customs and traditions such as the Yule log stem from historical Yule traditions.

"The word 'yule' really is our understanding of the word 'winter' in Old Norse," said Heidi Sherman, associate professor of medieval history at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and curator of UWGB's Viking House. According to Sherman, Old Norse was the ancient language spoken by the Vikings and their fellow Norsemen in Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway - where winters are long and brutal.

"It really centers around the winter solstice, which of course, is the longest night of the year," Sherman said. "It's also celebrating the coming of the light because, after the winter solstice, the days get longer. The winter solstice is really sacred because it's celebrating the quiet of winter, but also the excitement of celebrating the sun," she added.

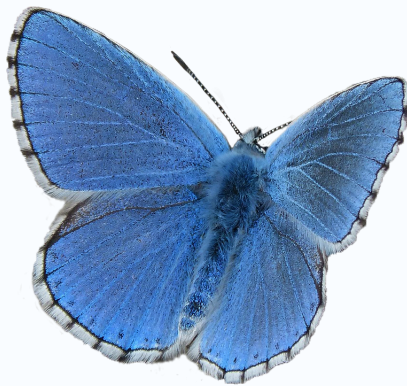
This year the winter solstice will be observed on December 21, 2024. How will you celebrate the return of the sun? Source: Kristin Bouchard, "How the Yule log tradition evolved from an ancient Viking ritual." Inside UW-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin Green Bay, 2023

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

What's Up With Mistletoe?

American mistletoe is an evergreen, partially parasitic, woody shrub. It's partially parasitic because, although it produces sugars through photosynthesis, it does not draw its water and mineral requirements from the soil. Instead, it siphons these resources from the tree on which it is growing.

American mistletoe can be found growing on many different types of hardwood trees including oaks, maples, walnuts, and more. It typically blooms in the fall and early winter. Mistletoe has male and female plants which means that some plants only have female flowers, while others only have male flowers.



A variety of pollinators, including wasps, bees, and ants, frequently visit mistletoe. Honeybees and native bees often collect nectar and pollen from the flowers. The ripe berries are quickly eaten by a wide variety of birds. It is also the only plant that the caterpillar of the great purple hairstreak butterfly will eat. In addition to the variety of food sources mistletoe provides, its dense, shrubby growth provides excellent habitat for many treetop animals.

American mistletoe isn't a plant that you can "plant" in your yard. It either will show up on its own or won't. Several resources say that any damage to the host tree is dependent on several factors, such as the health of the tree and how much mistletoe it is supporting. Some other mistletoe species that prefer conifers have been shown to shorten the tree's life. On the other hand, there is much less evidence as to whether American mistletoe affects the host tree. Either way it is a natural part of the ecosystem and has numerous benefits to a wide variety of wildlife. Source: Tyson Gregory



December To-Do's

Cover your rose bud unions as soon as the temperatures reach the upper teens and low twenties with 8 inches of mulch or soil. You can go ahead and do this anytime now.

Cut your Christmas Tree yourself, it will last the longest. Keep fresh Christmas trees away from direct heat, they will dry out much faster.

Cut your lawn one last time if you haven't been lately. It will keep it looking nice this winter and reduce disease problems this winter and spring.

After Christmas, mulch your Christmas tree by running it through a chipper shredder. It will decompose and make great compost.

If you find some time between the holidays and shopping, December is a really good time to apply a layer of compost or manure to the garden. It protects the soil and provides nutrients for spring plantings.

Now is still a good time to make a compost pile!

December is a good time to apply fertilizer to lawns and landscapes.

Spray liquid lime sulfur or a fungicide containing chlorothalonil on peach trees to stop peach tree leaf curl next year.



Christmas Tree "Fire Retardant" Watering Solution

- .2 gals. of hot water
 - .2 cups Karo syrup (corn syrup)
 - .2 oz. liquid bleach
 - .2 '2-finger' pinches Epsom salts
 - .1/2 cup borax (20 Mule Team is a popular brand)
 - 1 tsp. chelated iron (available at garden shops)
- Each 6' Tree Will Drink Several Gallons A Day!

Poinsettia Care And Handling Tips



Continued...

Make Your Plant Bloom Again

You can make that festive holiday spirit last all year. Coaxing your poinsettia to bloom again is a fun project when you tie it in with holidays during the calendar year.

Christmas—Select plants with tightly clustered, yellow buds. Protect them from hot or cold drafts, water when dry, and put them in a room with bright natural light.

New Years—Use an all-purpose house-plant fertilizer. Keep plants in a sunny window, water regularly, fertilize monthly. Plants will stay colorful for many weeks.

St. Patrick's Day—Remove faded flowers and bracts and dried leaves from the plants. Add more soil, preferably a commercially available sterile mix.

Memorial Day—Your plant should be approaching 3 ft. tall. Trim off 2 to 6 inches of the branches to promote side branching. Repot to a larger container. Move the plant outside; first to indirect, then direct light.

4th of July—Trim the plant again. Make sure it has full sunlight. Slightly increase the amount of fertilizer.

Labor Day—Your plant may have grown to 5 ft. or more. It can be pruned to a height of 18-24 inches. Move it indoors but make sure it has 6 hours of direct sunlight from a curtain-free window. Continue regular water and fertilizer.

First Day of Autumn—Starting on or near September 21, give your plant 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness and 10 hours of bright sun each day. For example, put the plant in a light-free closet or under a box at 6 p.m. each afternoon and return it to a sunny window at 8 a.m. the next morning. Keep watering and fertilizing it. Rotate it each day to give all sides even light.

Halloween—Discontinue the day/night treatment. Keep the plant in a sunny area. Reduce fertilizer applications.

Christmas—Enjoy your "new" poinsettia!



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Washington County Extension Updates
each Tuesday Morning at 8:30 AM On
WLSK 100.9 FM And Extension Tips Daily
After The Farm Report

Recipe of The Month

Blackberry Lemon Upside Down Cake



2 teaspoons melted butter	1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour	1 large egg
1/3 cup brown sugar	1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder	3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 teaspoons grated lemon peel	1/4 teaspoon salt	1 teaspoon lemon juice
2 cups fresh blackberries	2/3 cup sugar	1/2 cup skim milk
	2 tablespoons butter	

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Place melted butter in the bottom of a 9-inch round cake pan.

Sprinkle with brown sugar and lemon rind.

Top with berries. Set aside.

Combine flour, baking powder and salt in a small bowl. Set dry ingredients aside.

Beat sugar and butter together in a large bowl with a mixer

on medium speed until well blended.

Add egg, vanilla, and lemon juice. Mix well.

Add dry ingredients to egg mixture alternately with milk, beginning with milk and ending with flour. Mix after each addition.

Spoon the batter over the blackberries.

Bake at 350 degrees for 40

minutes.

Cool cake for 5 minutes on a wire rack. **Loosen** edges of the cake with a knife and place a plate upside down on top of cake; **invert** onto plate.

Serve warm.

Yield: 8, 3 inch wedges.

Nutritional Analysis: 230 calories, 5 g fat, 35 mg cholesterol, 220 mg sodium, 45 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 4 g protein.

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.

