

Boxerwood Garden Notes

November/December 2015

Upcoming Events

**December 5,
Saturday, 7:30am
Birding at
Boxerwood**

**December 5,
Saturday, 1-5pm
"Gifts of Nature"
Workshop at
Boxerwood, \$10 non-
member, \$5 member**

**December 6, Sunday,
2-5pm,
Greens
Workshop, \$20,
Make a swag, wreath
or centerpiece to take
home. RSVP to
faith@boxerwood.org**

**December 8, Tuesday,
11:30, Boxerwood
"Talking Native Plants"
Upper James River
chapter of the Virginia
Native Plant Society
Free and open to the
public**

Happy Holidays, Everyone -

I hope you are planning on coming to one (or both) of our holiday workshops here at Boxerwood. On Saturday, December 5 from 1-5pm, Jess and Hannah will be holding their popular annual "Gifts of Nature" workshop. Families are invited to come make edible ornaments for the birds and gifts for nature-loving family and friends. And then on Sunday, December 6 from 2-5pm, I will be giving a workshop on creating wreaths, swags and centerpieces from winter greenery. Participants will be able to craft their own beautiful creation to take home. Please RSVP to me, faith@boxerwood.org if you would like to attend. For both workshops, all materials are provided.

Faith

How to care for those holiday plants once the season is over:

I always like to have some brilliantly colored or sweet-scented plants around the house during the holidays, usually an amaryllis or a pot of paperwhites. I am not a fan of poinsettias, but I know many people's Christmases wouldn't be complete without them (and Milmont in Fishersville has an amazing selection!). Or maybe you have a Christmas cactus blooming. So, once the holidays are over and your plants are looking sad, now what do you do? Of course, many people treat these poor plants like wilted bouquets of flowers and throw them on the compost heap. Here are some alternatives:

Paperwhites - I happen to love the smell of these little



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white narcissus and I have to admit, I usually just pitch them once they have finished blooming. But this year I am going to try and save them. Once forced, the bulbs can't be forced again, but they can be planted outside in a sunny place. They probably won't bloom the first year as they have used up all their nutrients producing flowers. As with all bulbs, the withering foliage helps provide the food for the following year, so don't cut off that yellowed foliage when you are replanting the bulbs. I'll let you know if it works as I just potted up 25 bulbs!



Poinsettias - Getting this plant to rebloom is kind of fussy, but it can be done. (By the way, poinsettias are not poisonous. If your pet munches on the leaves, he'll probably get an upset stomach, but that's about it.) Treat the poinsettia like a houseplant with regular water, fertilizer, and bright light until April 1st. Then, let the plant slowly dry out and store in a cool location. In the middle of May, cut the stems back to 4" and repot. Move outdoors in June and pinch back each stem in July to keep the plant from getting too leggy. Between August 15 and September 1, cut the stems way back, allowing 3-4 leaves on each shoot. From October 1 - Thanksgiving, the plant will need complete darkness in between 5pm and 8am to start flowering.



Christmas cactus - The Christmas cactus is also a "short day" plant and needs 14 hours of complete darkness in between the middle of September to the middle of November. Even the light from a streetlight will delay flowering. After the plant blooms, it is a good idea to stop watering for 6 weeks to allow the plant to revitalize.

Amaryllis - Amaryllis, too, can be forced to bloom again. After blooming, cut off the flowers, but leave the stem as it provides food for next year's bulb. Treat as you would any other houseplant and then bring it outside in early summer. Keep it in the pot, first in the shade and then gradually into the sun. Amaryllis plants need at least 6 hours of sun daily. Bring the pot in before the first frost and store in a cool, dark place for 8-12 weeks. Keep the plant almost dry. New growth may start during this resting period. If not, new growth will begin once you bring the plant out of the dark and start its regular routine maintenance.

Boxerwood Eco Book Club November Selection Rescheduled for January

One of my favorite books this year has been Helen Macdonald's *H is for Hawk*, so much so that I am even willing to read it again. In a moving memoir, the author attempts to deal with her father's death by training a

goshawk, using T.H. White's (the author of *The Once and Future King* about King Arthur) book, *The Goshawk*, as a guide.

We are meeting at 3:30 on Wednesday, January 13 at my office in the Founders' Wing here at Boxerwood. I hope you can join us.

What's Blooming Now?

Most firs do not do well for us here in Virginia; they like cooler temperatures. The Concolor or White Fir (*Abies concolor*) is an exception. It can stand heat, drought and cold equally well. Usually topping out at about 30' for us, it can reach heights of 100 '. It is a beautiful stately tree. At our home in Rockbridge Baths we have one of the blue cultivars. From a distance it almost looks like a Blue Spruce. Look more closely though and you'll see that the needles are thicker, almost plastic in feel, and if you rub your hand along the needles you'll get the distinct smell of tangerines. This is a favorite Christmas tree of ours, but can be hard to find.

The needles in the following photo of the fir are about 1" long and somewhat shiny.





Buffer Environmental Education Series (BEES)

"Why is Restoring Streamside Forests so Critical to Healthy Streams and a Healthy Chesapeake Bay?"



*Dr. Bern Sweeney, Director
Stroud Water Research Center*

December 1, 2015

10:00—11:00 am

Do you work with cost share programs but aren't completely sure what all the fuss about forest buffers is? Are you familiar with buffers, but would like to know more about the latest in scientific understanding? This webinar is for you. Please join Dr. Bern Sweeney for a lively discussion of what the latest science is telling us about the benefits of restoring buffers along streams.

Bern will share with us exciting new scientific insights into how buffers along streams help shape the life of the stream, from boosting the capacity of the stream to process nutrients to impacting the communities of fish it supports and the very shape of the stream itself!

Dr. Sweeney is the Director, President and a Senior Research Scientist at Stroud Water Research Center in Avondale, PA. He is highly regarded and widely published expert on stream ecosystems and the role of streamside forests in the Chesapeake Watershed.

To participate, go to the link: <https://usfs.adobeconnect.com/na-watershed/> (no need to register!); Call-in: 888-844-9904 (6802405#)

New Master Gardener Class Forming

The Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners (RAMGA) are a very active bunch and have over twenty local projects that they devote time and energy to, including schoolyard gardens at Waddell, Central, Fairfield, Natural Bridge Elementary, the therapy garden at the Senior Center, and historic gardens at the Jackson and Campbell Houses, among others.

This coming year, RAMGA will be offering a new class. 2016 will be the first year an online course is offered. Students will have six months to finish the class and will have to participate in five hands-on labs. At the end of successfully finishing the class, participants will be Master Gardener interns and will need to complete fifty hours of

service to become certified Master Gardeners.

To maintain certification, Master Gardeners need to complete twenty volunteer hours and eight hours of continuing education. This is a great organization that I have been involved in for years. For more information, contact me at faith@boxerwood.org.