

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER
New Meadows Garden Club
Topsfield, Massachusetts
November through December 2020



It's the season when we joyously decorated homes and our outside spaces with greens and anything shiny! Check out the Green Thumb Corner for tips and traditions.

Keeping in touch during the Pandemic and at a time of social distancing.

There's no question that the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to create extreme uncertainty in our lives. This uncertainty continues to extend to our club and how it is able to function at this time. In an effort to keep our members safe, our regular monthly meetings continue to be suspended until further notice. But, rest assured, our board is working on our members' behalf to carry on club business and will schedule events when it will be possible to hold them safely. You are being kept up to date electronically, so keep an eye out for messages you will receive about club happenings as time goes on. We all look forward to a time when we can safely be together again. In the meantime, please continue to keep yourselves and those special to you safe and healthy.

November 29



Our club will decorate the outside of the Topsfield Town Library for the holidays at 12 pm. Cut greens from your gardens are needed to dress up the urns and extra hands would be great for decorating the urns and the outside railings of the building. Please let Jane or Sandy know whether you plan to come and spend a bit of time on our club's community project.

January 19



Our next board meeting will be a Zoom meeting at 10 am. Stay tuned board members, and be prepared to fire up your electronics for this meeting!

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NOTES



Just a reminder that Honorary Member Barbara Shade is again coordinating *kid's pajama donations* for the Community Giving Tree in Boxford. The pajamas can be sizes infants through teens for both boys and girls. The past few years, this collection has been made at the Joint Meeting of the five area Garden Clubs in November. Because we were unable to meet this year, Barbara has arranged to have the collection box located at *Gil's Grocery* in the *Topsfield Village Shopping Center* at 30 Main Street. Hurry in with your PJs because the last day to drop them off is *December 3rd!*

Celebrating the Holiday Season Safely



The Stevens-Coolidge Place at 137 Andover Street, North Andover welcomes the public to a family-friendly *Holiday Stroll & Festive Parade of Trees* featuring beautiful lights and 24 festive trees, which will be decorated by local businesses and organizations. This program will follow strict COVID-19 safety guidelines to ensure your safety. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. Face masks are mandatory. The event is open Thursdays to Sundays, December 3rd to December 20th from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Here's a link for more information about this event and tickets:

<https://thetrustees.org/program/holiday-stroll-parade-of-trees/>

Castle Hill Illuminated promises to be an exciting sound and light show for the holidays this year. The public is invited to experience the magic of the Winter Solstice (the longest night) with a 40 minute show featuring music, narration and lights around the exterior of the Great House. There will be campfires to warm visitors and hot chocolate and coffee for purchase. Reservations are required. This event is open from November 28th through January 10th with show start times of 5 pm, 5:30 pm, 6 pm, 6:30 pm, 7 pm and 7:30 pm. Masks are required. Here's a link for more information about this event and tickets:

<https://thetrustees.org/content/castle-hill-illuminate/>



...more news on the following page...



We are so sad to hear of the passing of Honorary Member, Jean Ziegler, this past November 3rd. Jean was so special to all those around her and our club was blessed to count her as a very active member for many, many years. Those of us who were fortunate to know and work with her down through the years will never forget her energy and many contributions to the success of our club. For those members who didn't have an opportunity to know her, I'd like to tell you a bit about who Jean was. It was my great honor in 2014 to propose her for Honorary Membership in our club and I know

no better way to describe who Jean was than to reproduce a portion of my Honorary Membership proposal here:

"Jean joined our club in 1986, and from the start never shied away from accepting the more challenging positions our club has to offer. When appointed to club committees, more times than not, she served as the Committee Chair. She lent her capable talents to the Hospitality and Membership Committee, the Horticulture Committee, the Conservation Committee, the Nominating Committee and to Garden Therapy.

Jean also served on the Administrative Board as Secretary, and in six short years after joining our club, agreed to become our vice president. She served as president from 1994 to 1996, and if that wasn't enough to keep her busy, she represented our club with a design at Art In Bloom at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1994. The club "bloomed" during her term as president. She inspired the club to new heights, resulting in a welcome influx of new members.

But serving as our president was not a stopping point for Jean. Her friends were well aware of her love for both gardening and flower arranging. She graciously volunteered to represent our club with flower designs at many functions, including in-club flower shows, the grand opening of the Gould Barn, the grand reopening of the Topsfield Library in 1999 after their extensive renovations, the Northern District Annual Meeting, and she also participated in decorating the Nesmith House in Lowell. Jean was a driving force on two committees which brought high honors to our club at the New England Spring Flower Show: A first place ribbon and the "Best of Show" Award for "A Victorian Music Room" in 1998, and a second place ribbon for a "Garden Party Table Design" in 1999.

Jean was also responsible for initiating a much-needed update of our club bylaws, which with her help was completed in 1997. In 1999, she was presented with the President's Award for Outstanding Service for her many and continued contributions to our club. Jean went on to serve the club on various committees until she requested and was granted Associate Membership in 2012. She was an Associate Member until June 30, 2014."

Jean is pictured to the right with Barbara Shade and me at our Holiday Social at the Bradford Tavern in 2014 after being awarded her Honorary Membership. Unfortunately, for many of us, it would be our last meeting with her. Jean was one of our club's most dazzling jewels, and she will be missed by all who knew her. Rest in peace, Jean.



Green Thumb Corner

Oh my, it's already the season to "deck the halls!" What fun it is to reprise our exciting traditions each year by revisiting old ornaments and other special treasures and trinkets, which await in those boxes so carefully packed away last year at this time. Evergreens provide the perfect backdrop for your prized possessions, don't you think? I'm sure their fresh scent and the soft touch of their branches also



conjure up happy memories for you of holidays past. Today, I thought we would chat a bit about how the tradition of using evergreens at this time of year came about and also how to keep your greens looking fresh throughout the holiday season. First, a quick look at the traditions...as early as 1444, wreaths made by intertwining branches of evergreens in a circular shape were used as decorations in London. The circular shape represented God's love, which has no beginning and no end. Also, the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews and Chinese used evergreen trees as decorative symbols of eternal life. In 1841, Queen Victoria's German-born husband, Prince Albert, introduced to London a decorated Christmas tree, as he remembered these from his youth. The folks in England loved the idea and started bringing evergreen trees into their homes at holiday time, decorating them with candles, handmade decorations and sweets. Soon the custom spread to America and the rest is history.

And, who doesn't love the look of holly at this time of year? These prickly branches with their red berries were popular with the ancient Druids, who thought that the plant had magical powers, in addition to being the symbol of fertility and eternal life. They believed that holly could ward off evil spirits and ill fortune. Maybe this explains why Harry Potter's wand was made of holly wood! At any rate, I am sure you agree that holly adds beautiful rich color to any holiday display. As you might know, in order for red berries to appear on a holly plant, there must be a male and female plant placed close to one another. It is the male plant that pollinates the female flower. Without this setup, you will have lovely foliage, but there won't be any berries! Lucky for me, I have the right combination outside my kitchen window. The plants are quite old now, and I am rewarded with an overabundance of red berries each year. You might say this is a good thing, but I must tell you that I have to fight the local deer population and the birds for the red berries!

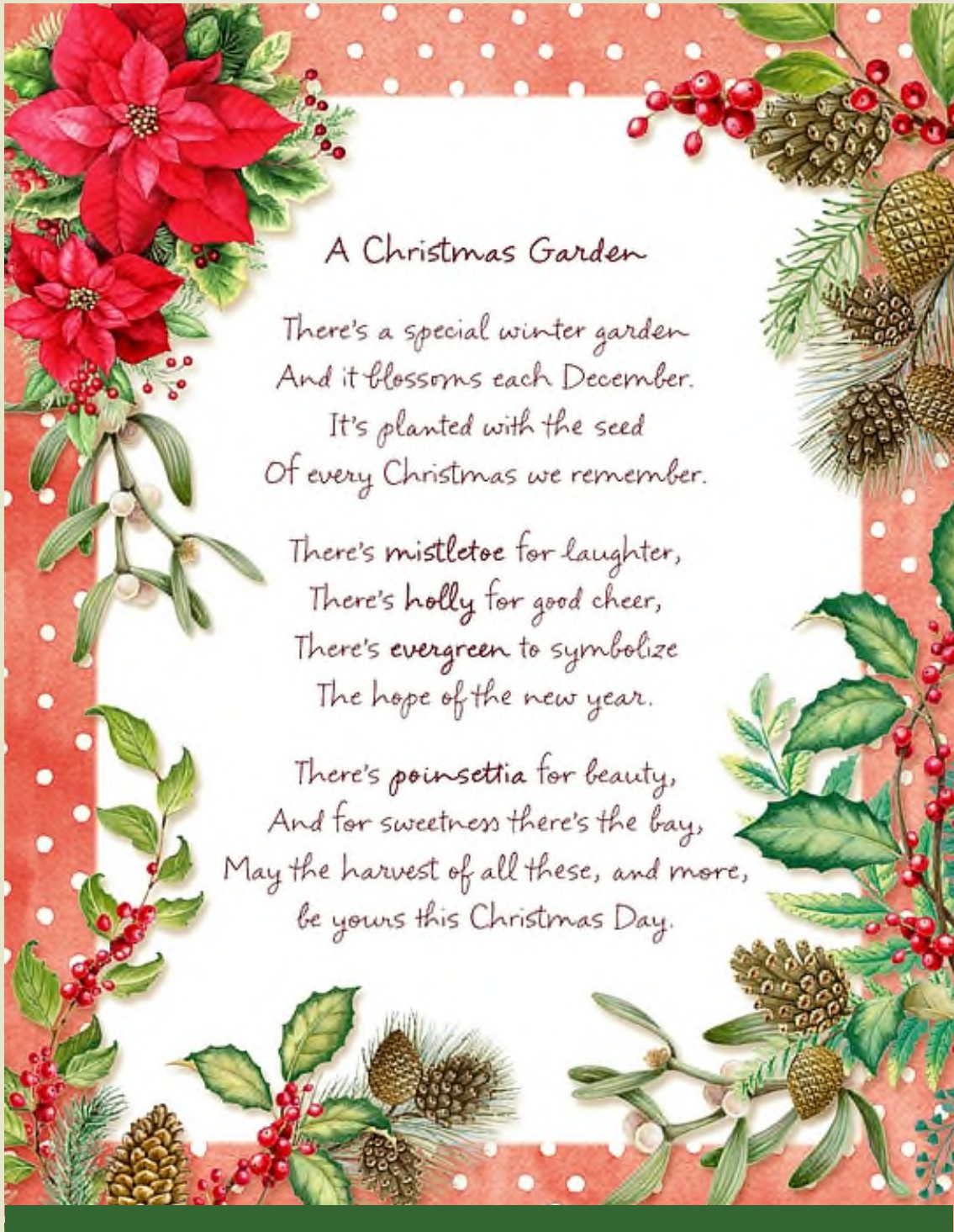
And, now, a few words on how to keep your evergreens as fresh as possible for the holiday season. These days, there are many evergreen choices...pine, holly, cedar, hemlock, juniper, spruce, cypress, and the list goes on. Keep in mind that any plant that is cut from its roots will wilt eventually...some sooner rather than later. Some greens will only last two weeks looking their best. Short-needled evergreens don't seem to last as long as long-needled varieties. So, it is important to buy the freshest plant material you can from shops you trust, as close to the time it will be used. This also goes for cutting branches in your yard.

Since the branches you purchase at your local shop have gone without water for a while, it is a good idea to rehydrate them once you get them home by pruning the stems diagonally and gently crushing the ends with a small hammer before placing in a jar of water in a cool place. You can also try spraying your branches with cool water every couple of days. Wreaths and garlands can be soaked in a bathtub or a sink for about 24 hours before putting them up to keep them looking ship-shape. Be sure to cover them with cool water. You can also invest in an anti-desiccant product like Wilt-Pruf, which is organic and adds a protective waxy coating to the needles, slowing water loss. These products are available at our local garden centers. Keep in mind that these procedures will benefit the branches you cut in your yard as well.

And, you know the saying, "location, location, location." Heat and sunlight are the enemies here, so place your evergreens in a location away from sunny windows, candles and heaters. If you want to light up your displays, consider using LED lights, which burn cooler than regular bulbs. Another tip to extend the beauty of wreaths you will display indoors is to let them "sleep" outdoors each night!

None of these techniques is foolproof, but the more you try, the greater are the chances that your greens will look pretty until the new year is upon us! Good luck, fellow gardeners.

...more on the next page...



A Christmas Garden

There's a special winter garden
And it blossoms each December.

It's planted with the seed
Of every Christmas we remember.

There's mistletoe for laughter,
There's holly for good cheer,
There's evergreen to symbolize
The hope of the new year.

There's poinsettia for beauty,
And for sweetness there's the bay,
May the harvest of all these, and more,
Be yours this Christmas Day.

*Best wishes to one and all for a beautiful, peaceful and healthy holiday season
and a better year to come.*