



UConn Home & Garden Education Center Knowledge to Grow On!

www.ladybug.uconn.edu



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DECEMBER IS FOR DISH GARDENS, DEER FENCING & CREEPING DOGWOOD

Hello Fellow Gardeners! You are receiving this email because you have provided us with your email address either when having your soil analyzed or testing the horticultural prowess and investigative abilities of our incredibly well-versed staff at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center! Or, we just might have thought you would enjoy this e-newsletter. If you do not wish to receive our monthly email updates on gardening tips, pest problems, events and other information, please email us at ladybug@uconn.edu and ask to be removed from this list.

Pest Patrol/Current Concerns/Topics of Interest:



Deer fencing by Pamm Cooper, UConn



Creeping Dogwood by tcf.bh.cornell.edu



Princettia by Leanne Pundt, UConn

Put Deer Fencing Up Now

While deer are active year round, they seem to do a lot of damage to trees and shrubs during the winter months when other food sources are covered by snow. To protect individual plants or a hedge, set up wire fencing or some other none-light blocking material. Smaller plants could have a lath-work structure placed over them. See our fact sheet for more ways to control deer damage:

<http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/FactSheets/deer-damage---control.php>

Plant Native Creeping Dogwood to Attract Wildlife

Creeping dogwood, also known as bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), is a low growing, native ground cover reaching only 6 to 8 inches high. It spreads slowly by rhizomes and may grow into a colony about 2 to 3 feet across. Four-petaled white flowers (actually bracts) appear in the spring and are followed by bright red berries in the fall. The berries are cherished by birds and many forest animals. Creeping dogwood prefers a woodland setting with filtered sunlight and moist, organic, acidic soils.

Princettia Euphorbias for the Holidays

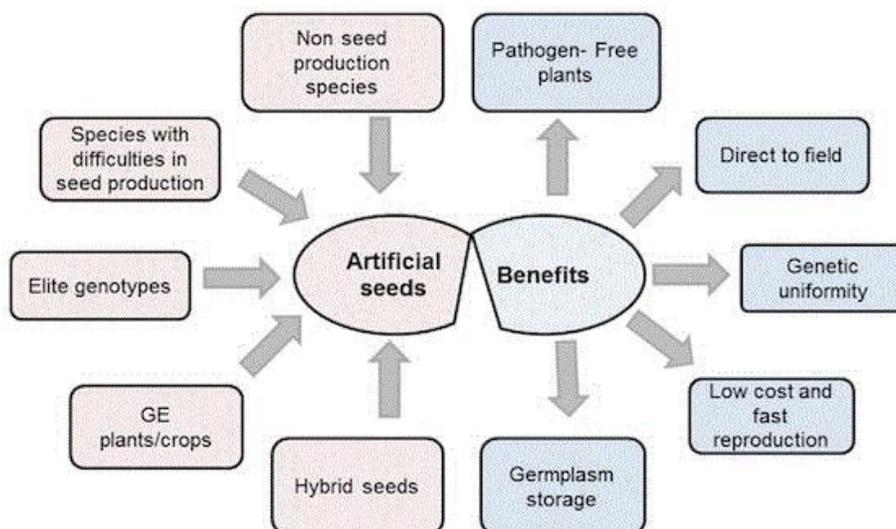
As you shop for holiday flowers to decorate your home, you might have noticed that there is a new poinsettia hybrid on the shelves. It is called a princettia and features a compact growth habit with lots of branches. Both the bracts and leaves are smaller than regular poinsettias. So far, princettias come in shades of pink plus a glistening white. Don't be surprised if you see some on sale for Valentine's Day or Easter as the Australian breeders are trying to expand their seasonal offerings. Treat princettias like you would a poinsettia. Give them bright indirect light, keep them out of drafts and do not overwater or do not let them dry out. Like poinsettias, they would need a period of 12 to 14 hours of darkness per day for several weeks next fall to rebloom.

The Facts About GMOs

Genetically engineered plants, animals and microorganisms (popularly known as GMOs) and how they are used are hotly debated topics. Many people aren't sure what they are or if they are safe for consumption, the environment, or even society. There is a lot of confusing and sometimes inaccurate information available and it can be difficult to separate out the facts. A group of twelve faculty from four different departments in UConn's College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources has developed a website (www.gmo.uconn.edu) to help provide factual, science-based information for both consumers and professionals. Have a look and if you have any questions, get in touch with one of the members of our team.

Artificial Seeds

From Perennial Pulse, 11/28/17: <https://www.growertalks.com/Newsletters/View/?article=2390>



In the future, artificial seeds might be an effective method of vegetatively propagating certain plant species. That's right—I said using seeds for vegetative propagation. Recent research has shed light on the possibility of developing artificial seeds by encapsulating vegetative plant parts, such as somatic embryos, shoot buds, auxiliary buds or other vegetative parts. These artificial seeds can be sown much like real seed and converted into a plant under vitro or in vivo conditions.

This technology could be useful to rapidly propagate plant species that don't readily produce seeds, to produce polyploids with elite traits, to produce male or female sterile plants for hybrid seed production and for the reproduction of transgenic plants.

Does this sound interesting to you? If so, click [here](#) to read more.

POISON IVY IS STILL PROBLEMATIC

Just because the leaves have senesced, does not mean that poison ivy cannot cause a rash. When cutting down trees for firewood or other purposes, look for the grey, sometimes furry vines of poison ivy on tree stems. The oil is present in these vines so use caution if removing them from the tree. Also, do not burn poison ivy as the smoke, if inhaled, can cause an allergic reaction in your throat, lungs and sinuses possibly with very serious health effects. See <http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/FactSheets/poison-ivy.php> for information about identification and control.

Is poison ivy good for anything? It is a native plant and birds feed on its berries. Forests with poison ivy as an understory have greater diversity than when invasive plants, like Japanese knotweed move in. <http://www.poison-ivy.org/blog-entry/another-reason-appreciate-poison-ivy>



Sugar Kelp (from eco RI News 11-29-17, <https://www.ecori.org/>)

Judy Li, Mark Dixon and other researchers at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Milford Laboratory in Milford, Conn., see sugar kelp as a tool to improve commercial shellfish aquaculture operations and offer a different kind of crop. The researchers are studying different aspects of the plant to help commercial growers expand operations. Widely cultivated and eaten in Asia, sugar kelp is high in fiber, vitamins and minerals. Since it's a cold-water or winter crop, sugar kelp can help shellfish growers diversify. Sugar kelp is a marine algae, also known as sea belt and Devil's apron. It's yellowish brown in color and looks like a giant lasagna noodle. It can grow up to 12 feet long.

Other items that the Center is getting calls or emails on include composting leaves, storing the lawn mower for winter, Indian meal moths, winterizing fertilizers and pruning evergreens. If you have specific questions, gardening queries or pest problems, check out our website, www.ladybug.uconn.edu, call the UConn Home & Garden Education Center (877) 486-6271 (toll-free in CT) or email us at ladybug@uconn.edu. Your County Cooperative Extension Centers are also listed on the website.

Ten Tips for the December Gardener:

1. Continue to harvest Brussel's sprouts even if they are buried in a snowdrift.
2. Store your opened bags of fertilizer in a sealed plastic bag or plastic waterproof container with a snugly fitting lid in a dry location to avoid caking.
3. Label newly planted perennials and bulbs before they become covered in snow to help you identify plants in early spring.
4. [Houseplants](#) can provide cleaner air indoors. Clean the foliage of large-leaved houseplants such as dracaena, philodendron and ficus while checking for insect pests.
5. Keep holiday poinsettias away from heat sources and drafts. Poinsettias should be consistently moist but not soggy.
6. Consider gardening gifts for the holidays. Books, gloves, hand tools, weather instruments and fancy pots are some fun ideas for fellow gardeners.
7. Avoid using salt or fertilizer to melt ice on driveways or walks. Use a non-salt ice melt product, sand or kitty litter so as not to harm plant roots or pets.
8. Recycle live Christmas trees by using the cut branches as insulation over perennials, chipping the branches in the spring to use as mulch or simply setting it outside near a birdfeeder to provide shelter from the winds.
9. Use garden notes, photos and sketches to plan out your garden for the upcoming season. Check out our [Vegetable Garden Basics and Plant Suggestions](#) for ideas.
10. Amaryllis bulbs may be started now. If they are established bulbs in old pots, two inches of soil should be removed from the surface and replaced with a good, rich mixture.

Events/ Programs/Save the Dates:

New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference and Trade Show will be held on December 11-14, 2017 at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester, NH and will include more than 25 educational sessions over 3 days, covering major vegetable, berry and tree fruit crops as well as various special topics. A Farmer to Farmer meeting after each morning and afternoon session will bring speakers and farmers together for informal, in-depth discussion on certain issues. [READ MORE HERE](#)

Solid Ground Farmer Trainings

The training calendar for year 2 of [Solid Ground Farmer Trainings](#) is now available on our webpage! We have some excellent new offerings this year, including 100 & 200-level Farm Financial trainings, Finding Your Market, Cover Crop Intensives, and more.

Please check out the topics, trainers and dates/locations offered there to see when you'll be able to join us this winter! The webpage is always the most up-to-date place to get information on the dates and time (and potential weather cancellations) for this training series.

As always, these trainings are **FREE** to growers. Please RSVP to me (charlotte.ross@uconn.edu) if you plan to come to a training, or be in touch with any questions.

This series is funded by the USDA Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program, coordinated through UConn Extension, and offered in collaboration with the many Agricultural Learning Partners that host trainings and support CT Farmer learning across the state.

Greenhouse Vegetable Workshops December 9

The Greenhouse Research & Extension Program at UConn is organizing two workshops on greenhouse vegetables. The workshop on December 9th is intended for experienced growers who would like to improve their production practices in hydroponic or soilless systems. Both workshops will take place at UConn-Storrs. For more information go to: <http://greenhouse.uconn.edu/workshops/>

CT DEEP

Cold Moon Night Hike Saturday, December 2, 7:30 – 8:30 pm. James L Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton.

The Reindeer are Hungry: An Exploratory Walk & Talk on Reindeer Moss Sunday, December 17, 1 – 2:30 pm. James L Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton.

Gardener's Roundtable Saturday, December 23, 10 – 11:30 am. James L Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton.

Nature Crafts, Birdseed Ornaments Tuesday, December 26, 1 – 2 pm. James L Goodwin Conservation Center, Hampton.

For more information and additional programs visit ct.gov/deep/calendar

CT Museum of Natural History (www.cac.uconn.edu)

Black Bears In Connecticut: When, Where, And How Many? Saturday, December 2, 1 pm – Biology/Physics Building, Room 130, UConn, Storrs, CT. Dr. Tracy Rittenhouse, Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, UConn. No registration required – FREE. Adults and children ages 8 and above. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Uncovering Connecticut's Past: Recent Discoveries of Office of State Archaeology
Saturday, December 9, 3 pm – Biology/Physics Building, Room 130, UConn, Storrs, CT. Dr. Brian Jones, State Archaeologist, Museum of Natural History, UConn

UConn Garden Master Classes are offered through the UConn Extension Master Gardener Program. These classes provide continuing education for Certified Master Gardeners as part of the Advanced Master Gardener certification process. These classes are also open to the **General Public**. Anyone with an interest in gardening and horticulture is welcome. For a list of classes go to:
<http://mastergardener.uconn.edu/garden-master-classes/>

Evergreen ID & Wreath Making Saturday, Dec 2, 2017 from 10 am to noon. Windham County Extension Center, Brooklyn, CT. Instructor: Lisa Richards

Floral Design Fundamentals & Boxwood Tree Arrangement Saturday, Dec 9, 2017 from 10 am to noon. Windham County Extension Center, Brooklyn, CT. Instructor: Lisa Richards

Save The Date: UConn Extension Vegetable & Small Fruit Growers' Conference
Monday, January 8, 2018. Maneeley's Conference Center, Windsor, CT. For more information contact: MacKenzie.White@UConn.edu, 860 875-3331

Save The Date: Ct Recyclers Coalition Annual Conference, January 17, 2018. Aquaturf Club, Southington, CT www.ctrecyclers.com.

KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mushrooms are full of antioxidants that may have antiaging potential

Study lists foods for fighting rheumatoid arthritis symptoms and progression

Calorie Counts on Menus Make a Difference

Eating regular variety of nuts associated with lower risk of heart disease

New research says adding cinnamon to your life may help control weight.

Only 12% of Americans eat enough fruits and vegetables

CLIMATE CORNER

Climate-influenced changes in flowering, fruiting also affect bird abundance, activities

Human-caused warming increasing likelihood of record-breaking hot years

15,000 scientists in 184 countries warn about negative global environmental trends

Climate changes triggered immigration to America in the 19th century, study finds

Plant respiration could become a bigger feedback on climate than expected

WHO KNEW?

Plastic World: <http://www.nerc.org/news-and-updates/blog/nerc-blog/2017/11/07/plastic-world>

Not all milkweed is equal for egg-laying monarchs, study reveals

Low dose, constant drip: Pharmaceutical, personal care pollution impacts aquatic life

Organic farming can make an important contribution to world nutrition, research shows

Earthworms can reproduce in Mars soil simulant

UCONN PLANT DIAGNOSTIC LAB: www.plant.lab.uconn.edu

UCONN SOIL NUTRIENT ANALYSIS LAB: www.soiltest.uconn.edu

UCONN EXTENSION: www.extension.uconn.edu

UCONN FOOD SAFETY: www.foodsafety.uconn.edu

UCONN SCIENCE OF GMOS: www.gmo.uconn.edu

DECORATIVE DISH GARDENS



Photo by dmp, UConn

Dish gardens not only make wonderful holiday gifts but making them can be a fun family activity over the holidays. A variety of containers can be used as long as they are large enough to support the plant roots. Generally, a 3-inch deep container will suffice. Often dish gardens will not have drainage holes in them; in that case be careful not to overwater. Decide where in your home to place the dish garden. Is this location in full sun or indirect light? Is this a cool or a warm room? Once you have that information, visit a local greenhouse and select appropriate plants. Talk to the staff if you need help with your plant selections. Look for slow growing plants but do keep in mind that most plants eventually increase in size. If they get too big for your dish garden, simply replace them with a smaller selection. Accessorize your dish gardens with fairy decor, natural items, like rocks or pieces of wood, or whatever else tickles your fancy.

We Need Your Support!

If you do enjoy our efforts to keep you informed about horticultural and College-related items, please consider showing your support by **liking us on Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/UConn-Home-Garden-Center/136211899745967>, **checking out our weekly blog** www.uconnladybug.wordpress.com or visiting our website, www.ladybug.uconn.edu.

December 2017 DMP