

Home & Garden Education Center



UCONN | COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL RESOURCES
PLANT SCIENCE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
EXTENSION

December is for Disposable Gardening, Diseases and Damage of Boxwood, & a Day for World Soils



Disposable Gardening

A possible trend for 2019 is 'disposable gardening', a method that interior landscaping companies have utilized for years. It is the purchasing or renting of plants in containers (compostable if possible), enjoying them until they fade or die, and then composting the remains. This is not really anything new to home gardeners as we have been doing this with poinsettias, Easter lilies and tulips, and mums for a long time. An alternative to composting is to plant the Easter lilies, tulips or mums (before they have died, of course) as they may bloom the following year.

Diseases & Damage of Boxwood

Boxwoods are susceptible to several diseases, insect damage and winter damage. Check boxwoods now for signs of blight and leaf miner activity. Leaves with tan blotches may have leaf miner larvae, which remain active through the winter. If Volutella stem blight or boxwood blight is suspected, make sure to rake up and discard any fallen leaves. Check for narrow black cankers on green stems infected with boxwood blight. In early spring, remove any of last year's growth that has leaf miners and discard material. Do not compost diseased material, or material with leaf miners. Below are links to our fact sheets on Boxwood Blight and Leafminers and another from the U of Maryland that encompasses Boxwood Culture and Diseases.

Boxwood Blight

Leafminers

Boxwood Culture & Diseases

World Soils Day

World Soils Day is held annually on December 5th as an international means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and advocating for the sustainable management of soil resources. This theme for 2018 is 'Be the Solution to Soil Pollution'. Click on the button below to read about the work of the Global Soils Partnership to ensure that people have safe and nutritious food to ensure active and healthy lives without endangering essential ecosystems services.

Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations World Soil Day



Northern mockingbird on winterberry, image by Will Stuart

119th ANNUAL NATIONAL AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is the longest running Citizen Science project in the world. Started in 1899 as a way of encouraging people to count birds instead of shoot them, the CBC takes place each year from mid-December to early January when thousands of volunteer birders contribute to the long-term study of early winter bird populations across North America. Count captains in each local area coordinate volunteers for their respective "count circles," and count birds (both number of species and number of individuals) throughout a 24-hour period.

Connecticut Christmas Bird Count 2018-2019



Ten Tips for the December Gardener

Click on highlighted links for additional information.

- [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.
- Houseplants can provide [cleaner air](#) indoors. Clean the foliage of large-leaved houseplants such as dracaena, [philodendron](#), and ficus while checking for insect pests.
- Holiday poinsettias should be kept from away from heat sources and cold air. Keep the soil of poinsettias consistently moist but not soggy.
- Continue to harvest [Brussels sprouts](#) even if they are buried in a snow drift.
- 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.
- Mark perennials and bulbs before they become covered in snow to help you identify plants in early spring.
- Consider gardening gifts for the holidays. Books, gloves, hand tools, weather instruments, and fancy pots are some fun ideas for fellow gardeners.
- Avoid using salt or fertilizer to melt snow on driveways or walks. Use a non-salt ice melt product, sand, or kitty litter which will not harm plant roots or pets.
- 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 set it outside near a bird feeder to provide shelter from the winds.
- 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.

For a more extensive list of tips visit [Gardening Tips for December](#)



Time to Cut a Christmas Tree

Forget the hustle and bustle of big box stores this holiday season and enjoy a relaxed, fun, memory-making visit to a Connecticut tree farm. Click the link below to find farms offering trees, wreaths, and garland to trim your home in fresh, fragrant Connecticut Grown evergreen.

[CT Department of Agriculture Christmas Tree Brochure](#)



Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micro Nutrients

Beat the spring rush and send your soil sample in for testing now. Our standard nutrient analysis includes pH, macro- and micro nutrients, a lead scan and as long as we know what you are growing, the results will contain limestone and fertilizer recommendations. The cost is \$12/sample. You are welcome to come to the lab with your 'one cup of soil' but most people are content to simply place their sample in a zippered bag and mail it in. For details on submitting a sample, go to [UConn Soil and Nutrient Laboratory](#).

Photo by dmp, UConn

Click on the Following Links to Visit Our Sites:

[UConn Extension](#)

UConn Food Safety

UConn Home & Garden Education Center

UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory

UConn Science of GMOs

UConn Soil & Nutrient Analysis Laboratory

Events/Programs/Save the Date

[Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group \(CIPWG\)](#)

Listen to the 2018 CIPWG Symposium Podcasts:

[Donna Ellis interviewed with John Voket from Connoisseur Media](#)

[Charlotte Pyle and Judy Preston were interviewed by Suzanne Thompson with CT Outdoors](#) (click on "On Demand" and scroll through Podcasts to 8//28/18 podcast)

[Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station](#)

Connecticut Cigar Wrapper Tobacco: The Result of Practical Research and 380 Years of Tobacco Production Wednesday, December 19th, 2018 from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm
Jones Auditorium, 123 Huntington Street, New Haven, CT Speaker-Dr. James LaMondia

[Connecticut College](#)

New Directions in the American Landscape (NDAL) Symposium-Ecology-based Landscape Design: What Comes Next? Thursday, January 17 & Friday, January 18, 2019 Connecticut College Arboretum-Cummings Arts Center, New London, CT Registration is required.

Landscape Symposium Brochure

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection



A webinar: Plastic Bag Programs and Initiatives: State and County Efforts Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. Please join us and learn about plastic bag programs and initiatives at the state and county level, including how Alameda County operates and enforces their program, what the benefits would be for an EPR structured plastic bag law and an update from the newly formed CT Reusable Bag Alliance.

Meeting Registration

Celebrate “Holidays with Friends” at Gillette Castle State Park Gillette Castle will be open to the public for tours on every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday through December 23rd, 2018 on Fridays from 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (last ticket sold at 8:00 p.m.) and Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (last ticket sold at 3:30 p.m.).

Visit the Osborne Homestead Museum and open a page into the wonderful world of “Storybook Holiday” The holiday tours will run through December 16, 2018. Tours will be offered Thursdays through Sundays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Admission is free and donations are accepted. The Osborne Homestead Museum, operated by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, is located off Rte. 34 on 500 Hawthorne Avenue in Derby, CT. To register for group tours and for more information, please call (203) 734-2513 or [email](#).

UConn Equestrian, Western, and Dressage Teams

Fall 2018 Shows

CT Western Team Show Schedule: Zone 1

- December 2-Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA

Contact Coach Alena Meacham

UConn Extension



Early registration is \$40 and includes the Trade Show, continental breakfast, coffee, and lunch. 3 pesticide re-certification credits available.

Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers' Conference Agenda and Registration



Cut Flower Workshop Agenda and Registration Form

[Visit the UConn Animal Barns](#)



Everyone is welcome to explore our animal barns that are open to the public and to learn more about the animals that are used in the Department of Animal Science program. Visitors can see dairy and beef cows, sheep, and horses. The poultry units are closed to the public. Young animals can be found in the barns at the following times of year at barns that are opened to the public: baby foals in the summer in outside paddocks at Horse Unit II, lambs during February and March outside only at Livestock Unit 1, dairy calves year-round at the Cattle Resource Unit and beef calves beginning in mid -March outside at Livestock Unit 1. Every day visitors can view the UConn dairy cows being milked from 12:30 - 3:00 p.m. at the Kellogg Dairy Center.

Then enjoy more than 24 flavors of ice cream at the UConn Dairy Bar!

[UConn Garden Master Classes](#)

Garden Master Classes such as the following items 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.

Winter Field Plant Identification Tuesday, December 4th, 2018 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.
Middlesex County Extension Center, Haddam, CT Instructor-Gail Reynolds

Cutting Propagation Wednesday, December 5th, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Bartlett Arboretum, Stamford CT Instructor-Adam Wheeler

All About Terrariums Wednesday, December 12th, 2018 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Bartlett Arboretum, Stamford, CT Instructor-Tovah Martin

Master Gardener Classes

KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

[The Food Bank of Delaware has a 'Veggie Meter' that can measure how many fruits and vegetables a person is eating.](#)

[Flowers in food are popular, but the safety data is limited.](#)

[How plants evolved to make ants their servants.](#)

CLIMATE CORNER

[How do birds know to fly south?](#)

[What happened in the past when climate changed?](#)

[It's not trails that disturb forest birds, but the people on them.](#)

DID YOU KNOW?

[December 12th is Poinsettia Day, marking the death of Joel Roberts Poinsett in 1851](#)

[To stave off winter's chill honeybees hug.](#)

[A new study from the USDA says that coconut compounds may repel insects better than DEET.](#)



Image by Terranova Nurseries

***Penstemon digitalis* 'Dakota Burgundy'**

The 'Dakota Burgundy' penstemon is a compact dark-foliaged penstemon. Dakota is an intermediate-sized perennial with 12" glossy, purple-black foliage topped in the summer

with lovely lavender-to-violet tubular flowers for a total plant height of about 24". Also known as beardtongue, this plant is great for cut flowers, is loved by hummingbirds, is long lived, and cold hardy (to Zone 3). It prefers well-drained soil, especially in the winter.

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center (**HGEC**) is a horticultural informational resource for the citizens of Connecticut and beyond. The staff at the Center reach nearly 400,000 citizens in outreach efforts each year. We're ready to assist you. 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! 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.

We Need Your Support!

If you enjoy our efforts to keep you informed about horticultural and UConn-related items, please show your support by liking us on Facebook, following us on Pinterest or Instagram, checking out our weekly Ladybug blog, or visiting the Home & Garden Education center website.



[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center: We are on a collaborative journey.

How. We co-create knowledge with farmers, families, communities, and businesses. We educate. We convene groups to help solve problems.

What. Food, Health, and Sustainability.

Join us.

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