



### UConn Home & Garden Education Center Knowledge to Grow On!

[www.ladybug.uconn.edu](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu)

### **DECEMBER IS FOR DECORATIONS, DIEFFENBACHIA, DECAY & DANCING WOOLLY APHIDS!**

Hello Fellow Gardeners! You are receiving this email because you have provided us with your email address either when subscribing to our quarterly newsletter, 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](mailto:ladybug@uconn.edu) and ask to be removed from this list.



**Like us on Facebook!**

### **Pest Patrol/Current Concerns/Topics of Interest:**



Christmas trees by DMP



Dieffenbachia by DMP



Northern Tooth Fungus by J. Allen

### **Looking for That Perfect Christmas Tree? Think Local!**

If you are shopping for a Christmas tree, holiday greens or sways, check out local Christmas Tree Farms

and support local agriculture. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has a listing of local tree farms in this brochure:

[http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/marketing\\_files/brochures/2015/Christmas\\_Tree\\_Brochure\\_2015.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/marketing_files/brochures/2015/Christmas_Tree_Brochure_2015.pdf)

For information on selecting and caring for trees, visit the CT Christmas Tree Growers Association website: <http://www.ctchristmastree.org/Care.html>

### **Dieffenbachias Make for Striking Houseplants**

Looking for a good sized tropical houseplant? If so consider the dieffenbachia with its unique and interesting variegated leaves. This plant tolerates the lower light levels in some homes but likes to be kept warm and on the moist side. Do note cautions if small children or curious pets reside in the household. [Read more....](#)

### **Now That the Leaves Are Down Check Your Trees for Signs of Decay**

Often homeowners do not notice that their trees have decay issues until a large branch comes off or the tree topples over. Take a good look at your trees for fungal growths, cracking, oozing and so on. Learn more about the signs and causes of [tree decay](#).

### **Deer and Deer Ticks – What’s A Person to Do?**



Many of us are appreciative of this relatively warm late fall period. Unfortunately so are the deer ticks which still can be found on our dogs and even ourselves if venturing out into the woodlands. Be vigilant and do tick searches after spending time outdoors. Last winter’s heavy snow did protect smaller shrubs from deer damage as they were completely covered. While we don’t know what is in store this winter, we do know that there will be hungry deer. This handbook may give you information on dealing with them.

[https://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/docs/programs/woodland-steward/EB354\\_ManagingDeerDamage.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/docs/programs/woodland-steward/EB354_ManagingDeerDamage.pdf)

## **Dancing Woolly Aphids?**

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/running-ponies/dancing-woolly-aphids-will-probably-stab-you/>

Be sure to scroll down and turn on your volume to see the video clip!

Other items that the Center is getting calls or emails on include amaryllis bulbs, poinsettias, poisonous plants, winter mulches, soil testing and mice coming into homes. If you have specific questions, gardening queries or pest problems, check out our website, [www.ladybug.uconn.edu](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu) or call the UConn Home & Garden Education Center (877) 486-6271 (toll-free in CT). You can reach us by email at [ladybug@uconn.edu](mailto:ladybug@uconn.edu). Your County Cooperative Extension Centers are also listed on the website.

## **CT 10% Campaign: Take the pledge!**

Pledge to spend 10% of your food dollars locally at <http://www.buyctgrown.com/ct-10-percent>. Locally grown food sustains CT's farming community but more importantly, locally grown and raised food will also increase food security in our Northeast region and support local economies.

## **LET'S CELEBRATE! 2015 is the INTERNATIONAL YEAR of SOILS**

### **Watch the International Year of Soils: Soils, Culture and People Video**

Soil and people are intricately linked. In fact, the Latin root of the word *human* is similar to the root of the word *humus* and means earth. Soil touches people's lives in many ways, including serving as the source of food and clothing, and for its ecological services, such as filtering drinking water. People have recognized the importance of soil since ancient times and soil has found its way into many cultural references. And, many religions have references to soil and many feel a spiritual connection to land and earth.

Soil has also found its way into art and literature, often viewed as reflections of society. Interestingly, clay tablets were among the first portable writing and painting surfaces used. The colorful minerals of soil have inspired artwork and been used as dyes and paints. When soil is mentioned in songs and poems it usually follows one of two paths. The soil may be discussed as a metaphor for some part of the life cycle, similar to its reference in the common prayer, "from dust to dust". In the Johnny Cash album, *Songs of our Soil*, nearly all songs are about death. The other common theme of soil is in reference to work, with the word 'toil' often being used as the rhyme for soil. This surely references the hard life those who work the soil experienced. Yet, when land or earth are mentioned, it is generally with a prideful meaning of home.

While there are both fiction and nonfiction works focusing on soil and the need for soil conservation, characters who understand soil have also been used in many mystery novels, such as the Sherlock Holmes series and Temperance Brennan series, which both also became movies and/or television shows. These characters use soils found on or near victims to track the causes of death and likely murderer.

Download our December [Soils, Culture and People video](#)- it's also excellent for use in classrooms and any other event/activity that will benefit from video! You can also view it directly on [YouTube](#). Feel free to share widely!

Learn more about International Year of Soils at [www.soils.org/IYS](http://www.soils.org/IYS)

## **Celebrate World Soil Day – December 5, 2015**

World Soil day celebrates the importance of soil as a critical component of the natural system and as a vital contributor to the human commonwealth through its contribution to food, water and energy security and as a mitigator of biodiversity loss and climate change. It is celebrated particularly by the global community of 60,000 soil scientists charged with the responsibility of generating and communicating soil knowledge for the common good. Many events focus on increasing public awareness of soil and its contribution to humanity and the environment. It is held on December 5th because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, The King of Thailand, who has officially sanctioned the event.



**Like the UConn Soil Testing Lab on Facebook**

### **Ten Tips for the December Gardener:**

1. Check for spider mites on houseplants by misting plants. If mites are present you will see water droplets clinging to the mite's webbing. Control them by misting daily to keep humidity high after giving them a thorough drenching in the sink.
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. Check fruits, vegetables, corms and tubers that you have in storage. Sort out any that show signs of disease and dispose of them.
4. Tap evergreen branches gently to remove snow and prevent the branches from breaking. If ice forms on tree and shrub branches, don't try to break it off - you'll risk breaking branches. It's best to let the ice melt naturally.
5. 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 new potting mix.
6. If you have a real Christmas tree, recycle it after the holidays are through. Cut off branches and use them as insulation over perennials. In spring, chip or shred branches to create mulch or add to the compost pile.
7. Continue to harvest Brussels sprouts. They'll typically keep even when buried in snow drifts.
8. Don't walk on frozen grass, especially if there is no snow cover. Without the protection of snow, grass blades are easily broken causing die-back in your lawn.
9. Drain the fuel tanks of the lawn mower and any other gas-powered lawn tools. Check the belt and spark plugs, change the oil and sharpen the blades.
10. Avoid using sodium salts or fertilizers to melt ice on driveways or walks. When possible use sand or kitty litter. This will help prevent salt damage to plant roots.

### **Events/ Programs/Save the Dates:**

**UConn Blooms: Poinsettias, Holiday Arrangements and Christmas Centerpiece Workshop!**



UConn Blooms is now offering poinsettias in gorgeous hues, exquisite holiday arrangements and centerpieces, gaily decorated boxwood trees and rosemary plants for the holidays ahead. Brighten up your own home or office or give as a gift to loved ones and special friends. Let us make your holiday merry and bright!

Create a living piece of art that you can bring home! UConn Blooms will help you construct a Christmas centerpiece on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Holiday arrangements incorporate both greens and flowers. To freshen up your arrangement throughout the holidays, just replace the flowers every 1 to 2 weeks for cheer all season long. Please register in advance since seating is limited. To register for workshops, call UConn Blooms at (860) 486-6000. Enroll early! Only 18 registrants per class. Cash, check, and credit cards accepted. The fee for each workshop is \$30.00 and they will be held between 5:30 and 7:00 in the Room 107 of the Floriculture building. Parking is available alongside our greenhouses and at the Towers parking lot.

UConn Blooms is located in the Floriculture Building on Route 195 (1395 Storrs Road) across from the yellow barn. Parking is available alongside our greenhouses in the driveway. We are open from 10:30 to 5:00 Monday through Friday and we will deliver on campus. Call us at 860-486-6000 to order early. Look for us online at <https://web9.uits.uconn.edu/uconnblooms/> or email [uconnblooms@uconn.edu](mailto:uconnblooms@uconn.edu).

**Garden Master Classes** (open to all, fee, <http://mastergardener.uconn.edu/>)

**Fabulous Shrubs for the 4 Season Garden** Thursday, Dec 17, 2015 from 1 to 3 pm. Fairfield County Extension Center. Deadline for registration: Dec 10. Instructor: Brid Craddock

### **UConn EEB Greenhouses - New Hours of Operation**

Beginning Saturday, November 7th, the Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Greenhouses will be open to the public on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm.

Yes... we will now be open on Saturday's year-round so you can come enjoy our wonderful collection of exotic plants with family and friends. We are working on some weekend specific programming in the months to come including periodic plant giveaways, informal talks & tours and more. Stay tuned...For more information check out: <http://florawww.eeb.uconn.edu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCONN-Ecology-Evolutionary-Biology-Plant-Growth-Facilities-121769795587/>

Tumblr: <http://uconneebgreenhouse.tumblr.com/>

Or contact: Clinton Morse at [clinton.morse@uconn.edu](mailto:clinton.morse@uconn.edu)

## **KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON!**

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

**Winter markets opening across Conn.**

**Tracing activity of cancer-fighting tomato component**

**Plastic Contaminates Table Salt in China**

**Warmer New England waters change landscape for cod and lobsters**

### **CLIMATE CORNER**

**Can Paris pledges avert severe climate change?**

**Global warming will be faster than expected**

The Climate Change summit started yesterday in Paris, and **Big Food knows how much is at stake and are speaking up.**

### **WHO KNEW ?**

**Our closest wormy cousins: About 70% of our genes trace their ancestry back to the acorn worm**

**Earth's hidden groundwater mapped: Less than six per cent renewable within a human lifetime**

**Flowers that point to the sky may attract more moth pollinators**

When you throw away an apple, you might as well be pouring 25 gallons of water down the drain. What?!? **Shocking info here on how much water is wasted when we waste food.**

**Today's disposable society: Pharmaceuticals and other contaminants of emerging concern**

**UConn Sustainable Living Website:** [www.sustainableliving.uconn.edu](http://www.sustainableliving.uconn.edu)

**UConn Extension Website:** [www.extension.uconn.edu](http://www.extension.uconn.edu)

**UConn Food Safety Website:** [www.foodsafety.uconn.edu](http://www.foodsafety.uconn.edu)

# We Need Your Support!

If you 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](http://www.uconnladybug.wordpress.com), or **SUBSCRIBING TO OUR PRINTED, 20-PAGE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR \$10/YEAR**. Find the subscription form at <http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu/newsletter/index.html>

**THANK YOU LOYAL READERS – PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR FRIENDS!!**

*“An equal opportunity and program provider “*

December 2015, DMP