

WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

THE PERENNIAL



WILLIAMSON COUNTY
UT EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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Cover photo by Holly Gardner

OUR ROOTS

A Message from our President

Can you believe this year is almost over? I'm seeing so many positives, such as the slowing of COVID (no, it's not gone yet), new projects, a new class of Master Gardeners, more in-person involvement. I pray that as we move into 2022, all of the above will only get stronger. We are a dynamic group of gardeners and this whole COVID adventure has been hard on all of us, hasn't it? I look forward to next spring when we can have our big plant sale, have a new class off interns, and launch the new project at the McLemore House. And I look forward to planting my own gardens! Every year I try something new and different, either a new method or a new plant. I can't do much gardening right now, but Dave has been faithful to put up with my ideas and carry them forward!

I have to say a special, heart-felt thank you to all the members of the WCMGA. Having a medical monkey wrench thrown into my life has definitely changed my path a bit and I'm so sorry I had to take a step back from leadership. But you are all so faithful to call, email, and fill my physical mailbox with beautiful cards. You wouldn't believe how much that has helped me over the rough spots! So far, the treatment is trying to kill me before the cancer does (lots of those rough spots), but I'm ready to start chemo and kick some cancer booty! Hopefully, I will be back in the gardens by next spring, ready to plant more tomatoes!

And a thank you to all the folks who stepped forward to help me finish out this year. You have an AWESOME Board who never waived with carrying on the business of our organization. And many more of you who offered assistance as needed. I am one lucky lady and I know it!

So now is the time to organize and inventory your seeds, order more (do you ever have enough?), do some online research for some newer/better/easier way to do things, and start mapping out "what goes where" next year. Remember to plan for crop rotation! About this time every year I haul out my seed starting supplies, order some seed starting mix, check my grow lights and on and on. It keeps me busy through the cold months!

You can follow my medical journey on my Caring Bridge site: [caringbridge.org/visit/Linda Horton](https://caringbridge.org/visit/LindaHorton)

I love you all!

WCMGA President *Linda Horton*

Holiday Plant Care

By Taylor Reeder, UT/TSU Extension, Williamson County

The holiday season is rapidly approaching and it is time shower your friends, family, and co-workers with gifts and gratitude! This year you may want to consider giving something green to your loved ones. And, no, I'm not talking about money... I'm talking about plants! Plants are the gift that keep giving year after year. In this article, we will discuss basic indoor plant care and tips on keeping specific holiday plants alive for years to come!

Plant Care 101

Proper watering is crucial to keeping indoor plants alive. Plants in small pots tend to dry out quickly. However, overwatering is just as harmful as under watering. Check water needs daily. Protect your furniture with a saucer or a plastic lid slightly larger than the pot. It's often best to discard water collected in saucers. This ensures the potting soil has an opportunity to dry in between watering. Make sure you remove foil from gift plants and always confirm there are drain holes in the bottom of the pot.

Lighting is also important to indoor plants. Put your plants where they will get high levels of indirect light (i.e. near a well-lit window, but not directly in the sun). Few indoor plants can endure direct sunlight for extended periods of time. Conversely, low light levels can lead to spindly plant growth, low bloom count, and even premature death.

Your normal household temperatures, around 60 to 75°F, are sufficient for most plants. High temperatures may shorten the life of your plants, while cooler temperatures may lengthen their life. Avoid rapidly changing temperatures and keep plants away

from drafts and heating vents.

Poinsettia

The first plant we are going to discuss is a holiday classic, the poinsettia! Poinsettias prefer bright, indirect light, and must be kept from drafts and rapid temperature changes. When the soil starts to feel dry, water, but do not let the plant sit in water. Room temperatures should be 65 to 70°F during the day and cooler at night. While the plant is growing, apply a complete fertilizer every couple of weeks or so.



Christmas Cactus

Christmas cacti are, in general, easier to care for than poinsettias. These succulents like the soil moist, but not soggy; remember not to overwater. When blooms have faded, move the plant to a cool room and reduce watering to a minimum. When buds begin to reappear, move the plant back to the warmer room, resume watering, and lightly fertilize. Bud drop may indicate a draft or sudden temperature change. Bud drop may also signal a need for repotting or that the room temperature is too high.

Amaryllis

Amaryllis care is relatively simple. To pot an amaryllis bulb, fill the bottom part of the container with potting soil and place the bulb inside so the top 1/3 of the bulb is sticking up above soil level once the pot is filled. Water plants well to begin with and then only water when the potting soil appears dry. It will usually take 3-6 weeks for amaryllis to flower when grown in a bright, sunny spot. Place the plant in a cooler location once flowers appear to help blossoms last longer. Once all of the flowers have faded, the flower stalks should be cut off where they emerge from the leaves and the plant left to grow on in a sunny location.



Christmas Tree

We couldn't talk about holiday plants without mentioning Christmas tree care! Here are a few tips to help you keep those needles nice and green all season long!

To make sure that your Christmas tree lasts, keep it watered regularly and avoid high temperatures.

If a tree has been stored out of water few days, it is a good idea to make a fresh cut on the trunk. Remove a disk about ½-inch thick to provide a clean fresh surface for water uptake. Choose a tree stand that is sturdy and can hold a large amount of water. The water level should be checked and refilled daily. If the tree stand is allowed to dry out, it may not take up water again.

Your tree should be placed away from heat sources. Never set a Christmas tree near your fireplace! If possible, replace hot incandescent light strings with new cool-burning LED lights. Tree lights should not be left on unless someone is at home, and should be turned off when you go to bed. Follow key practices to keep your tree from drying out and you can avoid it becoming a fire hazard. However, when trees do dry out, they should be removed. For more information contact your local Extension Office!

Did you know...?

Did you know that when you join the WCMGA, you agree to minimum of **25 hours** of volunteer service and must complete **8 hours** of continued education (CEU) during the year. After you have been a member of the association for over 10 years, the yearly volunteer requirement changes to a minimum of **15 hours** of volunteer service and continued education (CEU) combined.



Early 19th Century Brooms Created from Broomcorn

By Jack Melnick, Williamson County Master Gardener

In 2019 at the Period Slave Garden, we planted and grew broomcorn for the purpose of making a broom like they did in the mid-1800s at the Carnton Plantation. I created these two brooms late that fall. Since there was no Williamson County Fair in 2020, I entered them in 2021 in a newly created division (Sustainable Gardening). The Fair Board informed me that all judges voted them as the best in all categories unanimously, thus awarding them as “Best of Show.”

Brooms have been in use for centuries to sweep caves, cabins, castles, and fireplaces. Before 1797, brooms were handmade in America by tying twigs, branches, and straw to sticks that did not last long. Sometimes these crude brooms did not sweep well and fell apart even though strong linen twine was used.

Broom corn is not corn at all, but instead a grain plant called Sorghum used in making traditional brooms. Instead of producing corn ears it produces red-orange seed pod heads on top of straw broom type stalks.

Ben Franklin brought broomcorn to America from Egypt in 1790, making the kitchen broom an integral part of daily lives. In the early days, there were seven styles including kitchen, Hearth, Cobweb, turkey wing whisk and Angel whisk brooms.



Brooms were fashioned by combing the seeds off the tassels and taken apart to separate the fiber by length, then placed in bundles and tied together with twine.

By 1810, the sorghum used in brooms acquired a new name and became known as broomcorn. The British called all seed-bearing plants corn, and the sorghum that looked like the sweet corn plant used to make tassels is still used to make brooms today.

All these years later, the traditional broom is very similar in the way it is made today compared to more than 150+ years ago. While various materials, dyed coloring, and styles have evolved, the broom concept remains the same.



Photos by Holly Gardner

WCMGA Personal Tour of Carnton Plantation and Garden

Close to thirty members attended the Carnton Plantation and Garden tour on September 27, 2021. The tour was led by Justin Stelter and Ron Novak, both of whom shared new information that had not been mentioned on previous tours, such as how they determined the layout



of the gardens. And, Jack Melnick provided some great information about the Slave Garden. The smaller group allowed for great discussion and questions for our hosts, educating us on the significance of the home, gardens and graveyard as part of the Franklin Trust. Members were having such a great time, most stayed until after dark. Many thanks to Justin and Ron for a wonderful tour!



New Board Members

New Board Member recommendations were presented by the Nominating Committee and approved by the members at the October WCMGA meeting.

The new President will be Matt Bergstrom, Vice-President will be Ann Harvey, and Holly Gardner will continue as Public Relations Director. Congratulations to the newly elected Board members, who will begin their 2-year terms on January 1, 2022.

Congratulations to our 2021 Williamson County Master Gardener Graduates



THE BARK

November

- Plant tulip and daffodil bulbs for a stunning display next spring
- Cut back the yellowing foliage of herbaceous perennials, and lift and divide overcrowded clumps to maintain their vigor
- Plant out spring bedding displays of pansies, violas and primulas
- Prepare a bed for planting autumn garlic
- If you have access to fresh manure, now is the time to spread it across the surface of your vegetable beds to rot down over winter
- Tidy up your strawberry plants - cut off any dead leaves and remove runners
- Continue to clear fallen leaves off the lawn to keep it healthy
- Create compost bins for collecting fallen leaves and dead plant material
- If the soil is dry, give your garden one last good watering before the ground freezes



- Once plants are dormant, it is a good time to lift and relocate any plant that you want to move
- Winterize spigots and take in hoses

December

- Cover unused beds with mulch or a thick layer of leaves
- Clean gardening tools
- Clean any pots or seed trays
- Feed fall crops (do this every 6 weeks during the growing season)
- Water fall crops during dry spells
- Order seed catalogs
- Organize seeds and determine what you will need for spring
- Don't overlook other great plant choices for holiday color. Poinsettias aren't your only option. Consider kalanchoe, cyclamen, bromeliads, 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia, Christmas cactus, orchids, or even blooming mini-cactus.
- Pot up amaryllis, paperwhites or pre-chilled hyacinths so you'll have winter blooms inside for the holidays and beyond.

January

- Inventory left-over seeds
- Keep an eye out for spider mites, mealybugs and scale insects on houseplants
- Start planning gardens and other yard projects
- Keep your bird feeders full
- Compost or chip your Christmas tree
- Get a soil test to prepare for amendments in spring

Member Gardens

Starting with this issue of The Perennial, we will be sharing various photos from our WCMGA members' gardens. If you would like to have your photos shared or your garden featured, please contact us at wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com. (This one may lean a little heavy on my garden. At least I will give you guys ideas for upcoming issues).



Holly Gardner's beautiful 'Purple Star' bell pepper from Linda Horton



Holly Gardner's collection of various tomatoes (including a couple from the UT Home Garden Variety Trials), cosmos, okra, peppers, zinnia, and marigolds, with cantaloupe on the back fence (That purple pepper plant, in the photo at left, is in the left of this photo in the whiskey barrel).



Pink surprise lilies, naked ladies, or *Lycoris squamigera* for those of you who like scientific names.

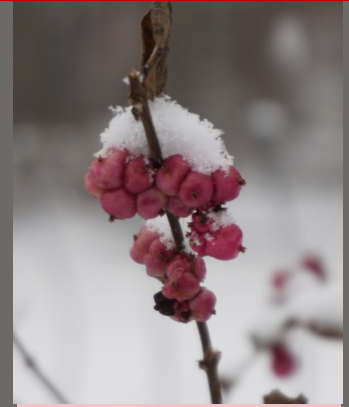
'Limelight' hydrangea, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' (right)



Newsletter and Website Articles Wanted

Special thanks to Taylor Reeder, Jack Melnick, and Holly Gardner for their contributions to this issue. If you have photos or stories to share, you can get volunteer hours!

Keep contributing! Keep reading! Keep sharing!



THANK YOU MARY!!



We would like to say a special THANK YOU to our former editor, Mary Loftus, for the years of awesome The Perennial issues. Mary recently stepped down from her position as editor to spend more time on her other Master Gardener projects such as the gardens at Carnton and on spoiling her new grandbaby. Her hard work, dedication, and creativity is much appreciated. She set a high bar and I will strive to measure up.

Holly Gardner - Editor



WCMGA by the Numbers

Volunteer hours reported for
2021 so far: **8,011**

Based on values determined by
Independent Sector Website:

Hours Value: **\$177,534**

Upcoming Events

December - No WCMGA meeting

January 10 - 6:00pm - WCMGA meeting - speaker TBD

February 14—6:00pm –WCMGA meeting - speaker TBD

WCMGA Mission

The mission of the Williamson County Master Gardeners Association (WCMGA) is to provide research-based, horticultural education, while promoting environmental stewardship, via community volunteerism. WCMGA operates under the umbrella of UTIA and the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office.

Contact Us

General Email: wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com
Address: [4215 Long Lane Suite 200, Franklin, TN 37064](#)