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Garden Basics V
Jan 25, Feb 1-8 &
Mar 1 6:00-9:30 pm

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- December — Election of Officers
- December Meeting—Christmas Social Pot Luck
- January — MGRC Membership Dues Payable
- January — Membership Directory Photos
- January — Officers Assume Duties

CHRISTMAS PLANTS *LEGENDS & FOLKLORE*

By: Katherine Smith, CMG, Editor

As we begin this month of December our thoughts turn to decorating our homes with traditional seasonal plants. Seldom do we stop to think “why does one select a particular plant for seasonal décor?”. Let’s take a look at a few “Christmas Plants”.

Christmas Rose (*Helleborus niger*) offers pristine, pure white flowers from late winter to early spring on foot-tall purple spotted stems. Its fingered evergreen leaves are leathery in texture. It is hardy in Zones 4-8.



The Legend of the Christmas Rose is a charming tale of a little shepherd girl named Madelon. As Madelon tended to her sheep one cold and wintry night, Wise Men and shepherds passed by Madelon’s snow-covered field bearing gifts for the Christ Child. Following, Madelon saw the Magi present gold, myrrh and frankincense to the baby...even the humble shepherds had brought fruits, honey and doves to give to the babe...but



Madelon had nothing, not even a simple flower for the Newborn King. Standing outside the stable where Jesus had been born, poor Madelon wept, wishing that she had a gift she could carry to the infant. A watching Angel, taking pity on Madelon, caused the snow at the feet of the small girl feet to vanish, thus revealing a most beautiful white flower whose petals were tipped with pink, formed by the Angel from the tears which had fallen from the eyes of the little shepherdess. Overjoyed, Madelon presented her gift at the manger of the baby Jesus...her gift of the Christmas Rose.

Poinsettea (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) delights us all with a variety of beautiful

colors which have been bred from the traditional red. Being a very difficult plant to keep beyond the holiday season, it is far better to discard it.



The tale of Poinsettia comes from Mexico. It is said that two poverty stricken children, Maria and Pablo who cherished Christmas and always looked forward to it would be unhappy as they couldn’t have enough money to offer anything in the church to convey their love and appreciation towards Baby Jesus. One Christmas Eve as the two kids set forth for the church service, they decided to pull out some roadside weeds to give it as a gift to

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WINTER SCHOOL

Is open to all Master Gardeners and Extension personnel.

EDUCATION TRACK

To train Master Gardeners in garden-related programming.

LEADERSHIP TRACK

To concentrate on coaching for leaders

REGISTRATION

<http://mastergardener.tennessee.edu>

Click on **Support** then **TMG Store** for your registration form



Remember:
Enter Your Volunteer Hours



Recipe of the Month

Strawberry Angel Dessert

From: Linda Schien, CMG

- 3 oz. Package of strawberry Jello
- 10 oz package frozen strawberries, thawed
- 1 Tbs. Sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 of a 10 inch. angel food cake
- 1/2 pint whipping cream (whipped)

Instructions

Dissolve Jello in 1-1/4 cups boiling water. Stir into Jello the thawed strawberries, sugar and salt. Refrigerate until slightly

lumpy. Whip cream. Fold Jello strawberry mixture and whipped cream together.

Tear the angel cake into 1 to 1-1/2 inch pieces. Place half of the cake into a 9 inch square pan.

Cover cake with half of the strawberry cream mixture. Repeat with remaining cake and strawberry cream mixture.

Refrigerate until completely set.

Cuts into light fluffy squares.

2010 TMG Winter School—February 17*, 18-20, 2010

***February 17— Optional Pre-Winter School TYN Workshop—FREE.** Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods Program-Tennessee Water Resources Research Center

2010 TMG Winter School Theme: Sustainable Solutions

Tracks are separate rather than concurrent.

Educator Track: To provide educators with resources to distribute information in

their county about best management practices related to sustainable practices.

Leadership Track: To provide guidance and demonstration in best practices for leading, communicating and managing volunteers in county MG Associations.

Outstanding Speakers

Leadership Keynote Speaker—Janet Carson

Leadership Speaker—Kelly D. Norris

Outstanding Programs for all attendees

Did You Know

During the Middle Ages, Europeans believed planting a juniper beside the front door kept witches out. Unfortunately the tree did not



provide complete protection. A witch could still enter if she correctly guessed the number of its needles.

Complements of Linda Schien

Source- The Healing Herbs by Michael Castleman

MGRC OFFICERS 2009

President:	Linda Goetz
Vice President:	Linda Lindquist
Secretary:	Judy Cunningham
Treasurer:	Emily Arnold
Past President & Executive Board:	Jack Smith

Newsletter:	Katherine Smith
Website Coordinator:	Bob Ellis

Christmas Plants



(Continued from page 1)

Baby Jesus, throughout the performance of the manger scene. As they put their gift around the manger, the green leaves amazingly changed its colors into bright red petals and very soon the manger was surrounded by star-shaped flowers, currently known as the Poinsettia.

Costmary (*Chrysanthemum balsamita*) is a perennial growing to 2-4 ft. in height in sun or part shade. Use as a garnish or fragrance.



Leaves of costmary or alecost were used to add spice to holiday ale (also known as "wassail") in

olden Europe, while bay laurel, along with other forms of greenery, have been used in decorations since ancient European times to help celebrate the Winter Solstice. Bay laurel is associated with Apollo, God of Light, and serves as a reminder that the long Winter will soon melt into Spring.

Holly (*Illex aquifolium*) & **Ivy** (*Hedra*

helix) [both English varieties]



Although holly is the only decorative tradition which remains of this once famous duo, the origins of both plants' usage during the holiday season is an ancient one. The Romans were very fond of using holly during their Solstice celebration, known as Saturnalia. It was also closely associated with the God Dionysus. Gifts of holly boughs were exchanged during this time, since the plant was believed to ward off lightning and repel evil spirits. The Druids also held holly, one of the only vibrant plants to be found during the Winter, in high esteem as a plant of death and regeneration. Since its berries are red...the color of life and blood...it was perceived as a "female" plant, representative of the Goddess. Ivy, the accepted symbol of friendship, was believed to represent the consort of the Goddess and, therefore, "masculine" in nature. The ancient custom of decorating the doorway with intertwined garlands of holly and ivy represented unity between the dual halves of divinity or, alternatively, the ritualized battle of the sexes. Tradition held that whoever first brought holly into the house at Christmastime, whether it be the master or mistress, would be the one who should rule the household for the coming year.



Not so long ago, Irish Christmas decorations were much simpler than they are now. The children gathered holly and ivy for adorning, windows, doorways, mantles and pictures, and the father would carve out

a turnip in which would be placed a large red candle. This would go in the window to light the way for the Holy Family on Christmas Eve. Only in relatively recent times did an Irish family have a Nativity scene and a decorated tree in the house. As for *Mistletoe*, it's quite rare in Ireland and is generally associated with ancient Celtic and Druidic fertility celebrations; this is most likely where the custom of kissing under the mistletoe comes from.

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)



When Mary, Jesus and Joseph fled to Egypt because Herod threatened to kill the babe, they ran out of water. Joseph went to

the nearest village to get some. Mary heard soldiers' shouts and the sound of hoof beats approaching. There was no place to hide.

Mary saw a rose bush and asked for shelter. It refused, which is why rose bushes have thorns. The clove bush also refused help and resulted in having unpleasant smelling flowers. The **sage plant** hid them, blossoming to create safe haven. The soldiers passed by. Since then, the plant was considered sacred and believed to possess curative and protective powers. ♦

Sections copied from following sites:

- gardenaction.co.uk
- irishcultureandcustoms.com
- novareinna.com
- Christmas-day.org
- triplecrownnewsletters.com





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“The Scoop” is the official newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, Tennessee and is published by email the first week of the month. Those members without email and who are not able to attend meetings may receive the newsletter by U.S. Postal mail. The deadline for articles, pictures, events, etc. to be included in the newsletter is due the fourth Friday of each month.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at the Lane Agri-Park at 6:30 p.m., unless specified. Membership is \$25 for a single, or \$35 for a couple residing at the same address. All memberships are valid January through December and are pro-rated for new members only.

Memberships in the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County are open to those interested in learning, teaching, and volunteering for the purpose of educating the community in all phases of gardening.

Please note: Master Gardener Certification requires 40 hours of training plus 40 hours of volunteer service. Recertification requirements are 25 volunteer hours, plus 8 hours of continuing education per year. Attendance at meetings counts as 1.5 hours of continuing education and 1.5 hours of administration

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, county governments cooperating, UT Extension, and Tennessee State University provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.