



From the Potting Shed December 2020

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

From the President's Desk

By Melody Corcoran, Class of 2016

Our gardens are going into hibernation for the winter, but the *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki' in my yard is still flowering. It doesn't bloom every year. And, when it does bloom, it is always in November — the very last plant in my garden to bloom. The first time it bloomed I had to follow my nose to find where the strong, floral scent was coming from; what could be blooming in November? The blooms are tiny, white, and not easily seen.



This shrub is also known as five-colored *Osmanthus* or variegated false holly. New leaves emerge a dark red, turn pink, then finally become a combination of cream, white, and green.



Photo by Melody Corcoran

Osmanthus heterophyllus 'Goshiki'

Osmanthus heterophyllus is listed as a potential problem on the [New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team](#) 2020 Do Not Plant List. I have had this shrub for many years, long before I knew there was a do-not-plant list of invasive species. Probably many of us have well-loved plants in our gardens that are on this list.

But I have no plans to remove my *Osmanthus* for the following reasons. First, it seems to be deer-proof. The leaves are so spiky and sharp that the deer that are always in my yard have never touched it. The deer will gladly munch my regular hollies but do not touch this one. Second, a pair of cardinals nest safely within its spiky leaves each spring. Lastly, on warm November days the shrub is alive with pollinators; many small bees and flies come to visit the flowers. This shrub is feeding some native insects just before cold weather sets in, an admirable occupation for a plant that is non-native and possibly invasive.

I wish everyone a happy holiday season. Stay safe, stay warm, and start planning for next year's gardens.

Contents	Page
From the Green Side	2
Horticulture	3
Hits and Misses	4
This and That	4
Webinars	5

Links are clickable and are noted in blue.

Rutgers poinsettias on sale for 4 days only

The Rutgers annual poinsettia sale is going on now. Twenty-one varieties of poinsettias, in colors ranging from scarlet to pink to yellow, are available for purchase and pickup this week.

Along with the Potting Shed, you'll find two files:

1. A list of the 2020 poinsettia varieties available; all varieties are \$8 per plant.
2. An order form.

Instructions

- Download the form (it's in Word) onto your device. Enter your name, email address, and the names and quantities of the poinsettias you want to order.
- Save the order form on your device. Then enclose the form as an attachment and email to [Nicoletta Graf](#) at the Rutgers. Her email address is on the form. She will send a confirmation to you.
- Pick up your poinsettias Dec. 1-4 from 11 am-3 pm at the Rutgers Floriculture Greenhouses, 64 Nichol Ave., New Brunswick. You can pay by check or in cash at the time of pickup.



Rutgers University photo

Proceeds from the sale go to the Rutgers Floriculture Greenhouses.

FROM THE GREEN SIDE

Create winter interest in your garden

By Arnie Friedman, Class of 2004

As fall progresses and the leaves drop from our garden trees, the underlying structure of these plants are revealed. For me, the structure of the branches and shape of the trunk are an important element when deciding what to plant in a landscape. With careful planning your garden can be intriguing even in the late fall and winter months.

Historically, garden designers referred to this winter structure as the “bones of the garden.” When snow falls, this structure is often dramatically highlighted as it catches the falling flakes.

One of my favorite specimen trees is the Persian ironwood or *Parrotia persica* shown in my garden with its



Persian ironwood in Arnie's garden.

leaves turning bright yellow and orange as they begin to drop from bottom up revealing the vase-like shape of its branches so typical of this species.

A lovely small tree in our garden that blooms in June with a powerful lilac scent is the *Syringa vulgaris*. It's a version of our native common lilac that has been grafted and trained to grow with a ball-shaped head. When the leaves drop, we can

see the “bones” of this little tree. Before the end of July and before it sets its buds for next spring's bloom, I prune it back to keep this tight structure. It's a weak-wooded tree so if I let it go wild and too large the heavy snows could break sections off. I keep it smaller, which also — I think — adds to its winter beauty.

No good landscape should be without a beautiful cherry tree. Everyone knows the beauty of the flowering Asian varieties that grace the Mall in Washington, DC, and give such a great show in April. However, even in winter many of these varieties have a wonderful branching vase design that points skyward giving loft to the scenery.

I planted this sample (below) at a house in Montclair. It is one of eight that march up a winding driveway. They are fast growers, and, with a little pruning, they have kept this tight branching pattern.



Photos by Arnie Friedman

A cherry, one of eight along a driveway in Montclair, provides winter interest.

In front of my door we have a *hydrangea tardiva* standard (below). This variety of *Hydrangea paniculatum*



Hydrangea tardiva standard at Arnie's front door.

blushes pink as the flowers age. Pruning it back every spring gives this wonderful small tree a great winter structure, too. I leave the old flowers on all winter for the birds to feed on and because they are nice to look at when the flowers catch the snow.

I urge every gardener to go out as the leaves fall and look at your trees with an eye to their structure. Begin to think of your garden as a four-season display. Think about how you can prune and shape their structure to capture the winter snow and learn to appreciate your garden's skeleton.

HORTICULTURE

Which is it – a Thanksgiving cactus or a Christmas cactus?



Photo by Janet Schulz

Janet Schulz, Class of 1988, has the answer. The Thanksgiving cactus is on the left and the Christmas cactus is on the right. You can tell them apart by their leaves. For details, visit the [Farmers' Almanac](#). Meanwhile, [Michigan State University Extension](#) offers tips on getting your Christmas cactus to rebloom. And, for care and propagation information, visit [Country Living](#).

Aster tataricus - Rutgers plant of the month

Bruce Crawford, program leader in home and public horticulture at Rutgers, has selected the Tatarian aster as the Rutgers Agricultural Experiment Station's November "plant of the month." Bruce writes that over the past few years, he's noticed that this plant has sustained both blooms and pollinators well into November. Click [here](#) to read more.



Rutgers University photo

Flowers of aster tataricus.

Orchid resources from Carrie Buchman

Orchid expert Carrie Buchman, our November speaker, has offered an array of resources for orchid lovers and prospective orchid lovers. Check out her favorites.



Photo by Carrie Buchman

Grc. Black Comet 'indigo blue' from Carrie's collection of 300 orchids.

Nearby resources

- [White Plains Orchids](#), White Plains, NY
- [Silva Orchids](#), Neptune, NJ
- [J&L Orchids](#), Easton, CT
- [Waldor Orchids](#), Linwood, NJ

Favorite mail order sources

- [Andy's Orchids](#)
- [Norman's Orchids](#)
- [Main Street Orchids](#)
- [New World Orchids](#)
- [Tarzane Group](#)
- [Orchids by Hausermann](#)
- [Gold Country Orchids](#)
- [Sunset Valley Orchids](#)
- [Cal-Orchid](#)
- [Santa Barbara Orchid Estate](#)
- [Orchid Inn](#)

Orchid supplies

- [Kelley's Korner Orchid Supplies](#)
- [Repotme.com](#)

Nearby orchid societies

- [Ramapo \(Englewood\)](#)
- [North Jersey \(Hanover\)](#)
- [Deep Cut \(Tinton Falls\)](#)

You're invited to attend the North Jersey Orchid Society meeting Jan. 14 online. See the January *Potting Shed* for instructions to obtain the Zoon link to the meeting. Contact [Carrie](#) if you'd like to talk about orchids.

HITS AND MISSES

Editor's note: This month we introduce "Hits and Misses" where you can tell us about a recent success or failure in your garden. It can be a story, like the one below, or as simple as a photo and detailed caption. Contact [Miriam Taub](#) if you'd like to share your experience.

Loofas — a curiosity with a purpose

By Edith Terzano, Class of 2018

This is the story of my loofas — a word that is spelled many ways.

In early spring of this year a friend and fellow MG returned from a trip to Hawaii with a loofa sponge. I became intrigued by the loofa and wondered if I could grow one, even though we live in [USDA Plant Hardiness] Zone 7.



Photos by Edith Terzano

A loofa on the vine in the Hackensack Community Garden.

Loofas require a long growing season (115-200 days) with lots of warm sunny days and plenty of water. In April, I planted six seedlings bought online (no local nurseries carried them) in a raised bed in the Hackensack Community Garden.

Bergen County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office

Joel Flagler Agricultural/Resources Management Agent/County Extension Dept. Head
201-336-6780

Karen Riede Horticulture Consultant 201-336-6788

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, the State University of NJ, US Department of Agriculture, and Bergen County Board of Commissioners. Rutgers Cooperative Extension educational programs are offered to all without regard to race, religion, color, age, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Rutgers Cooperative Extension is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

We built trellises for the vines followed by lots of TLC. Many community gardeners were curious about the growing vines, and it was fun to explain the loofa story.

Just after the first light frost in early November the first gourds were ready to be picked. I peeled them, shook out the seeds, washed out the sap, and hung the remaining loofa fiber to dry.



Voila! I was able to recover a couple of loofa sponges! I documented every step of this

From bottom to top: The loofa fresh off the vine, the peeling process begins, the peeled and seeded loofa.

adventure and am creating a PowerPoint that I hope to present to the Garden Club of Hackensack after the new year. What a fun endeavor and an interesting experiment.

THIS AND THAT

Is this the year to buy a compost bin?

The Bergen County Utilities Authority sells compost bins, known as the Earth Machine, for \$60 each at its Moonachie headquarters. Call the BCUA Environmental Programs hotline at 201-807-5825 to schedule an appointment to pick one up. Each compost bin comes with a compost book. Visit the BCUA [website](#) for more information.

Relive Skylands holiday open houses

While there was no Skylands Holiday Open House this year, videos of previous HOHs are on YouTube for your enjoyment.

Click here to see the decorations from [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), and [2019](#). All videos are the work of Joseph Cooper, Class of 2008.

WEBINARS

Dec. 3, 6:30-7:30 pm. The Native Plant Trust sponsors Ecological Gardening. Fee \$12 members/\$15 non-members. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 4, 11 am: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Warren County sponsors Broadleaf Evergreens. Free. Click [here](#) to register. After registering, you'll receive a confirmation email with instructions to join the webinar.

Dec. 5, 10-11 am or 11 am-noon: Penn State Extension sponsors Greens and Gifts - Bringing Nature into Your Home for the Holidays. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 5, 10-10:45 am: Duke Farms sponsors DIY Think Green - Sustainable Wrapping. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 10, noon-1 pm: Smithsonian Gardens sponsors Poinsettias and Holiday Trees. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Dec. 10, 7 pm: Prince William Conservation Alliance (Lake Ridge, VA) sponsors Meet Virginia's Salamanders. Free. Click [here](#) to register.

Dec. 17, 7 pm: Fine Gardening presents Truly Tough Shade Plants. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

We need help with our website!

The MG of BC board is planning a redesign of our website, www.mgofbc.org. A committee composed of Arnie Friedman, Karen Riede, and Miriam Taub is investigating options and costs. But we're gardeners, not web builders. We need help from people who know how to construct and maintain websites.

Would you like to help? Have you built a website? Have you guided a business or organization in establishing its online presence? Please let me know. If you'd prefer not to *work* on a website but you have a relevant experience to share, perhaps you can tell us about it.

Send an email to [me](#) or call me at 201-707-5149.

- Arnie Friedman

Happy holidays from the MG of BC



Stay safe and healthy