



Digging It!

All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

December 2023

Notes from Joanne

Sorry for the delay in getting out the newsletter. It was a very hectic start of the month, and I am just getting caught up. I hope that everyone has rested up and is back in the normal swing of things after the Christmas Tree Festival. Thank you to everyone who worked and donated items. We could not have done this without you. It takes a full team to make this work. I am especially grateful to everyone who worked multiple days and shifts. I know that there were several who were volunteering almost every day. We are so appreciative of your hard work.

We had a very successful week at the festival. After totaling our numbers one more time, The Gifts of the Earth booth beat our numbers from last year. It was just a slight increase, but an increase none the less. We only had a few arrangements left over and we donated them to The Springs Senior Living Center. They were the ones with the beautiful tree by the covered wagon that received second place. The Photo Booth was a huge success after last years failure. Thanks to Nic for finding us a better way to print pictures. They still had a couple of glitches, but they will be looking at setting up a second printer next year. The single printer handled about 400 photos in three days. We really didn't know what to expect, and it did get behind a couple of times. The baked goods were also a success, they all sold out. The Children's Shop was also saw huge crowds and were thankful for our donations. We will get our final totals sometime in February when the festival committee has the next meeting. We will keep you informed.

Please be sure to check your email. You should have received an email from me on Monday, December 4th with information on your yearly hours. All hours must be either turned in to me or submitted online by December 10th to count toward 2023. You will also need to complete your yearly recertification to stay a MGV for 2024. Please take a closer look at the email or email me or call with questions.

Finally, thank you everyone for your hard work for 2023. I hope to see everyone rested up and ready for 2024. Our seminar is just around the corner.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Joanne – Allen Co Master Gardener Coordinator



Tidbits from Teresa

Fall is for cutting back and dividing. Root systems of a perennial planted in spring will be how large the canopy will be in summer. This is because one planted in spring will concentrate on top growth and fall planted ones will concentrate on roots. Fall planted perennials may have a root ball that has doubled and will be firmly established when growth starts in spring.

Certain perennials are best moved and divided in the fall.

1. Carex: (2000 varieties of grasses) just dig out a chunk and replant.
2. Garden phlox: It is easier to see the dead centers of overcrowded plants, cut back, dig out and replant.
3. Hardy hibiscus: Divide 4-6 weeks before a frost to allow the roots to become established. On a very large hibiscus, cut in half with a sharp knife and replant at the same level. Don't separate more than half.
4. Lily: Once the foliage fades, the bulbs have enough stored energy to survive. Pull off the smaller bulblets and replant as well.
5. Peony: They don't like to be disturbed so it is best to move them when they are not actively growing, giving the roots time to recover and not disturb the flowering cycle. Cut the root ball with a sharp knife into 2-3 chunks and replant no more than 2" deep.

Older perennials with taproots tend to sulk when moved so it is better to divide them before they get too reliant on the taproot. All plants tend to grow more vigorously when young, especially ones with taproots. When you transplant perennials make sure you are not allowing undesirables to tag along. Throw plants away! This is really hard for us gardeners, but some are just too prolific.

Fall weeding is a big-time saving strategy and it is easier to see the weeds with the foliage cleared out. Remember these tasks will make your spring work much easier. If you see webworms in your trees in the fall, don't be concerned. Although they are unsightly, unlike the spring tent caterpillars, they are not harmful. Protect your young trees from rabbit and deer damage. I use plastic drainage tiles cut to fit and slit so I can slip them around the trunk. Remember, with a snow cover, rabbits can reach higher up on the bark. Larger evergreens are harder to protect from deer rubs and strips. The cost of living in a wooded area!

Add compost under the mulch to your beds, this allows all winter for it to work into the soil and help insulate and protect newly planted perennials and shrubs. Fall is the best time to plant a tree; it is less stressful on it. Evergreen trees can be transplanted any time after the candles (new growth) hardens off, up to at least 6-8 weeks before the ground freezes. Deciduous trees can be move after they begin

to go dormant, and their leaves drop.

Acclimate your plants to a changing environment before you bring them inside. Make sure to put them in clean pots and that you are not introducing pests into your indoor plants. Since they have no natural predators inside, it is easy for an infestation to get started. Spray the leaves with a mild dish soap and water before they come in. Scales need to be treated with swabbed rubbing alcohol and mealybugs with insecticidal soap.

The last tool you should put away for winter is the garden hose. If the ground is not frozen and the soil is dry, go ahead and water. Hosta's summer health is very much reliant on enough moisture in the fall.

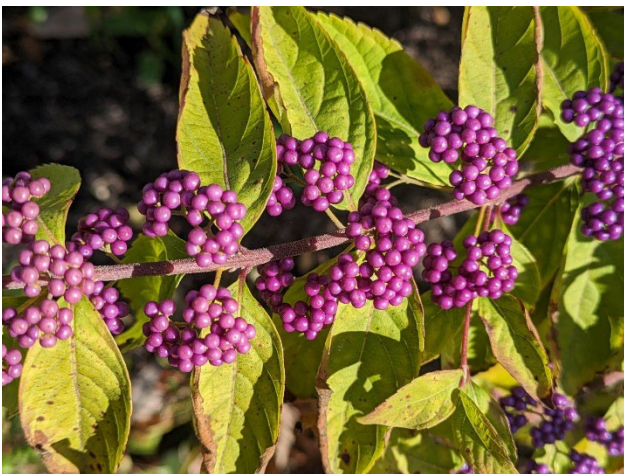
Lastly, go outside and enjoy nature's beauty, every season has its own attraction. You will see things you missed when distracted by our showy summer blooms.

"Flowers are like friends; they bring color to your world." unknown.

Teresa Diehl
November 2023



Tidbits from Teresa



December is here and a different way to appreciate our landscape. One late fall, early winter standout is Beautyberry or Callicarpa. The magenta berries of this shrub contrast with its chartreuse green leaves and the berries persist into early winter. Beautyberry will tolerate moist sites and can be used in rain gardens. The fruits are high in moisture and a food source for many species of birds, foxes, raccoons and other small rodents. They are long-lived shrubs and are drought tolerant once established.

Beautyberries flower on the current years' growth. For the best berry display, cut it back in late winter or early spring to about 6" high. Most beautyberry species need two shrubs for a good fruit set. I have gotten berries on my magenta variety without another bush available but when I exposed the white variety to my magenta one both shrubs had heavy berry production. The native variety, Callicarpa Americana, has larger fruit and the berry clusters are wrapped closely to the branch, it is a 6-11 zone plant and

if left unpruned can reach 15 to 20 feet high. The native variety grows easily in the wild in the SE United States.

In the non-native variety, the fruit clusters are more open and farther from the branch than the native. The non-native, Japanese Beautyberry, is a smaller shrub, 3-5 feet tall and wide, and it is a true zone 5 plant. There is a white variety, but I love the contrast of the magenta and green. When you purchase this plant check to see that you get the color you want. My first purchase was white, not the color I wanted and it did not bloom until my magenta one was established. This was 8 years apart so you can say I don't give up on my plants! It tolerates full shade and dry and wet soils alike. If planted in the shade the blooms/berries will be limited.

The berries can be used to make jam similar in taste to elderberry. American Indians would steep the berries and make a tea to treat illnesses. The leaves contain insect repelling properties. The berries provide food for birds and color in winter.

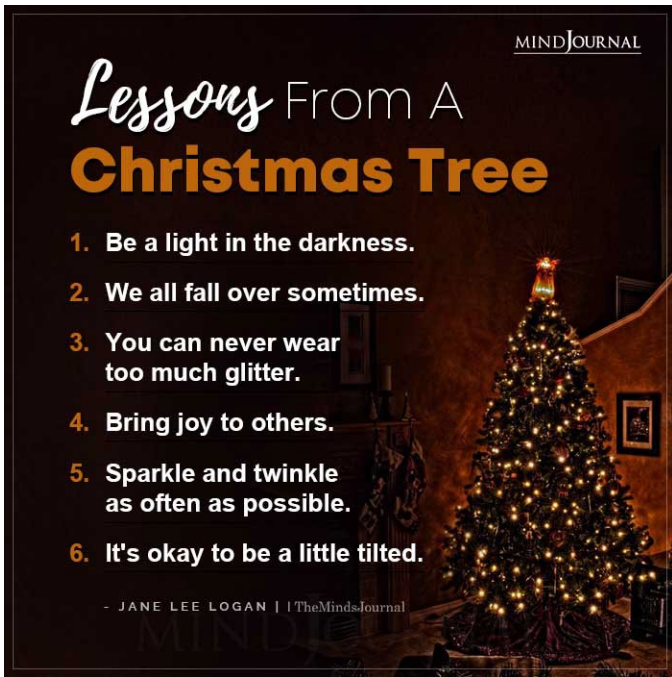
Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, my gardening friends are a true blessing!

“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Teresa Diehl

December 2023





December 2023

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Sandy Bindel



Greetings from Gretchen

SORRY FOR THE DELAY

Well, I think I've recovered from the whirlwind of the Christmas Tree Festival! What a fun and busy week! Thanks so much to all of you who were able to help in any way! We definitely feel the week was a success. We sold slightly more product at the Gifts of the Earth booth than last year! And thanks to Nic and his tech skills, the photo booth was a big success as well! We won't have "official" numbers from the event until early February so stay tuned! Special thanks to Nic and Joanne for their help with the event and for being part the Festival Committee! Thanks to Amy Amspoker for volunteering to take on the MGV tree this year! As an added note of cheer, we were able to donate the remaining, unsold arrangements to the Springs Nursing Home to bring cheer to residents who may otherwise not have a bit of Christmas cheer in their rooms! Fa La La!

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

We are excited to have a good start on seminar speakers and will continue working in the coming days to finalize our line up for the Art of Gardening on Saturday, March 16, 2024! As always, we will need your help in many ways to make the event a success!

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR!

I know that many of our volunteers have had a difficult year and I pray that during this season your hearts are filled with peace, and you can find moments of joy! As we look forward to 2024, I hope that each of you will have continued or renewed good health and that you will

find it in your heart to continue sharing your time, talents and treasure with the ACMGV's and the communities we serve! Wishing you all the very best, Gretchen





Merry Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR

