



# Digging It!



All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

JANUARY 2019

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## Tidbits from Teresa

With the New Year comes the desire to renew and renovate so I decided to see what I needed to do to renovate my aging fruit trees. With neglect, fruit trees can become overly dense, unproductive, too tall and wide and contain dead or diseased branches. If the tree has been neglected for many years or large cuts are needed, this repair work may take 2-3 years of rather severe pruning. Up to half of the total wood can be removed from peaches or Japanese plums so you could be renovating them in a single year. On apples, cherries, apricots or European plums you should not remove more than a third of the total wood in one pruning season. If you remove more than a tenth of the wood on pears you risk stimulating vigorous new growth susceptible to fire blight.

For winter pruning remove all root suckers and waterspouts so you can better visualize where to prune. Next, remove damaged or diseased limbs along with those that have split or have very narrow crotch angles. Up to four large limbs can be removed in any one year. Now, remove secondary limbs with the same issues or are crowded or have branches cross. For harvesting purposes, you can lower the height up to four or five feet. Make these cuts to outward-growing lateral branches. Reduce the spread of the tree by tapering it so the lower branches are the longest. Remove the waterspouts and upright branches unless you need to train them to replace another limb. Do not remove or head back all drooping branches or your fruits will be too high to pick. The lower branches on a properly pruned tree will become more productive with more available light. Light penetration is key to good fruit production.

This heavy late winter pruning will stimulate new growth including root suckers and waterspouts. These can be removed in mid-summer. This renovation will allow us to get outside and work on those nicer winter days....just what the doctor ordered to combat the winter blues!

The orchid, *Orchis* Orchidaceae, is the plant name for January. The history of orchids is of lust, greed, and wealth. The most famous orchid, the vanilla orchid, was thought to promote strength in the Aztecs, who drank vanilla mixed in chocolate. The name comes from the Greek orchis, "testicle." The tubers of the Mediterranean orchids resemble paired testicles of different sizes, the smaller tubers storing the previous years' food. The

popular cattleya orchid was named for William Cattley, who received it as packing around other plants. After it flowered, it died, and wasn't found again for years. The cattleya was eventually traced to Brazil. Other orchids are called "ladies' fingers" or "ladies' tresses" or "long purples." The paphiopedilum orchids are named for Paphos, the site of a temple on Cyprus where Aphrodite was worshiped and for pedilon, "a slipper".

The sexual behavior of orchids has baffled botanists since they first began to be studied. To germinate, their seeds need to be penetrated by fungus threads. Orchids go to extremes to propagate themselves. Just as those who sought to acquire them went to extremes to show off their wealth and power. In the nineteenth century orchids were collected by the ton. Once, four thousand trees were cut down for the orchids growing on them. One collector alone was said to have sent home one hundred thousand orchids to England, many of which died. Orchid hunters mostly searched for riches rather than knowledge of the plant. Even now, orchids are more often flowers for rich than comfort for those who live in poor places. I'm happy to see that they are increasingly available for a reasonable price and the blooms last for months. It is worth a little investigation to learn how to grow these beautiful flowers. Their beauty, although undeniable, is not the beauty of simplicity.

*Teresa Diehl*

*January 2016*



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orchidaceae>





### **A DIFFICULT YEAR ENDS, A NEW YEAR BEGINS**

2018 was a difficult year for so many members of our organization.

Sadly, we had 3 more untimely deaths that impacted us in December. Please hold the families of Master Gardeners Lester Shafer and Stephanie Patton who died in December and Master Gardener Sue Hamilton whose husband Don died unexpectedly also, in your thoughts and prayers.

We will deeply miss our MGCV friends Mel Kaehler, Tom Stump, Lester Shafer and Stephanie Patton in 2019. We also know that the coming year will be challenging for MGCV's Sue Hawk, Sue Cheney, Kathy Stump, Sue Hamilton and Barb Shafer who will be for forging new paths with loss of their husbands.

Please pray for our friends, for our members who are battling illness and for our organization as we start the year anew and look forward to brighter days!

### **TIME TO RECERTIFY IN THE VMS**

Please recertify for 2019 through the Volunteer Management System. Since you logged in to see this newsletter, you should have seen the big yellow box come up when you logged in. The process is as easy as clicking on the link in the box and clicking on each of the 3 questions and answering the questions. If you are receiving a paper newsletter yet or if you have questions about the recertification process please contact me.

### **ART OF GARDENING – MARCH 16**

I'm putting the finishing touches on the plans for the Art of Gardening Seminar. Your invitation will come via email mid-month. Keep an eye out and register early. I cannot hold seats for anyone, including Allen MGCV's, so it's important to register early or be left behind!

I will be reaching out to the team leaders (you know who you are) and those of you who signed up for committee assignments for the Art of Gardening this month to confirm details and make plans for expanding the event this year.

### **SPREAD THE WORD**

~ Gretchen