



Digging in Dodge



Winter Herb Harvest

Inside this issue:

<i>Upcoming Meetings</i>	2
<i>Forcing Paperwhite Bulbs</i>	3
<i>Master Gardener of the Month</i>	3
<i>Catalog & Seed Selection</i>	4
<i>Shamrocks</i>	5
<i>Easter Lily</i>	5
<i>Master Gardener Scholarship</i>	6
<i>Annual Enrollment</i>	6
<i>Volunteer Requirements</i>	6
<i>Flowering Houseplants</i>	7



Most herb aficionados agree that fresh grown herbs are much better than dried or anything purchased. However,

winter tends to put a cramp in what can be grown outside. Take heart; there are a number of culinary herbs that can be easily grown inside with a little effort.

When growing herbs indoors, it is necessary to choose ones that will grow in smaller spaces and without full sunlight. Chives, parsley, thyme, basil, sage, winter savory, lemon balm, and oregano would all fit the bill. Most will stay less than a foot tall; the taller ones can be still grown if a dwarf variety is chosen.

Choose a good quality potting soil when growing herbs inside. Make sure the pots have good drainage; six inch pots are a nice size for most herbs. Water when they start to dry out, but do not keep them moist all of the time. Herbs do not like to have wet feet. Grouping the pots together will raise the humidity, however do not place them so closely that air cannot circulate. This will promote mildew and disease. If mildew starts to form, separate the plants a bit and put a small fan in the area to circulate the air.

Most culinary herbs are native to the Mediterranean area. They require full sunlight to thrive. When growing them inside, make sure they have 6 hours of sunlight by putting them in a south window. If that is unavailable, place them six to twelve inches from two 40-watt cool white fluorescent bulbs for 14 to 16 hours. Without adequate light, plants will become leggy and spindly. If grown on a

sunny windowsill, rotate the plants periodically to make sure to get uniform growth on all sides.

Herbs enjoy the same temperatures indoors that people do. They like daytime temperatures of 70 to 75° and most can tolerate nighttime drops to 55 to 60°. Basil would be the exception; it does not survive anything less than 50°. Therefore, be careful about putting it too close to a cold window where the temperature may drop at night.

Because potting soil lacks any significant source of nutrients, herbs will benefit from a low dose of water soluble fertilizer every 2 to 4 weeks. Fertilizing any more frequently will result in an off flavor and reduction of aroma.

Herbs kept inside for any length of time will invariably attract pests. They are easily controlled by spraying with a soapy solution. Use 1 to 2 tablespoons of a mild dish detergent in a gallon of water and spray the plants weekly while the pests are visible. If the leaves show discoloration, reduce the amount of soap.

Harvest the herbs as needed. Frequent cuttings will help keep the plant stocky and compact. Leave a few inches at the stem for regrowth.

If this is a first-time indoor growing experience, the easiest one to start with is chives. Not only are they easy to grow, they are versatile and can be used in every meal from breakfast to dinner. If a challenge is the desire, go for basil. It is great to cook with, but tougher to grow indoors.

Carol Shirk, Certified Master Gardener



Upcoming Meetings

Anyone with an interest in gardening is welcome to attend the following free programs. Master Gardener meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month. Unless otherwise noted, the meetings are at 6:30 p.m. in the Administration Building, 127 E. Oak Street, Juneau.

Until further notice, in-person Master Gardener meetings are on pause.
For meeting updates watch for emails or Facebook posts.

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Master Gardener Websites

<http://www.wimastergardener.org/>

<https://wimga.org/>

<http://dodge.uwex.edu/master-gardener/>

Master Gardener E-mail

askamastergardener@att.net



Forcing Paperwhite (*Narcissus papyraceus*) Bulbs

Chase away the winter blues with a fragrant indoor bulb garden

Easy to grow, but also delicate...these bulbs are considered tropical. They are native to southern Spain and N. African regions. The paperwhite bulbs don't require a chilling period before forcing, as many other early spring bulbs do. This is a wonderful inexpensive project to include children in hands-on learning about plants. The paperwhites can be forced indoors in pebbles and water, or in a shallow bowl with a well-draining potting soil.



How to force Paperwhite bulbs in pebbles and water—Select a glass container or shallow pot without drainage holes. Fill container half full of clean pebbles, and place the bulbs on top of pebbles, so they almost touch. I try to place my bulbs in a concentric circle. Gently surround the bulbs with additional pebbles, to stabilize the bulbs. Then, add water until it reaches the bottom of the bulb (important: too much water could potentially rot the bulbs). A clear container allows you to see the roots developing. When forcing bulbs, it is helpful to label and date each planting. For best results, place in a southern exposure window and as they begin to flower, move to an area with indirect light. There usually are 10-20 small fragrant flowers per stem. They may need stem support as they grow taller. Continue to refill water to the bottom of bulbs during the 4–6-week growing period.

How to force paperwhite bulbs in soil—Add potting medium in shallow pot with drainage hole. Fill half-way with soil, and place paperwhite bulbs close to

each other (1" apart) then cover with soil, carefully pressing soil around bulbs. Use a watering can to saturate soil and let extra water drain out the bottom. I've seen green moss pressed on the soil surface to give the arrangement a beautiful woodland theme. Don't let bulb soil dry out over the next few weeks, keep the soil evenly moist. The bulbs will produce a bloom spike in 2-3 weeks. The arrangement will do best in a southern exposure and can be moved to indirect light when the stems start to flower. Enjoy your beautiful paperwhite blossoms!



Photo by
Barbara H. Smith,
HGIC, Clemson
Extension

For a detailed resource with information about Tulip, Hyacinth and Daffodil bulb varieties for forcing & proper cold temperature treatment visit University Missouri Extension at <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/q6550>

Tips for Helping Children Have Fun With Gardening:

- Let youngsters feel a sense of ownership of their part of the garden space. Label with their name, handmade decorations, etc.
- Kids love digging in the dirt. Let them take part in soil preparation/adding moss, etc.
- Nothing builds confidence like success. Choose easy bulbs to force.
- Kids love to water, let them help - keep an eye out to make sure it's done right

Dawn Shillalies, Certified Master Gardener

Master Gardener of the Month



Dawn Shillalies took the Dodge County Master Gardener training during one of the most challenging times.....Spring 2020. The training was interrupted because of Covid-19 and had to switch to a virtual method. Dawn did not miss a beat and she completed all of the requirement in stellar fashion.

She launched right into her volunteer work by stepping into a role at the Educational Gardens in Juneau. She helped there during the summer of 2020 and will assume the role of coordinator going forward.

Dawn was an art teacher for many years and is an artist extraordinaire. With that background and her love of color and texture, she finds landscape design particularly interesting. The best advice she ever received was to find your own style and she likes to remind people when following that style to always use the "right plant for the right place."

While she is a Wisconsin native, Dawn spent some time in New York. She recently returned to Wisconsin and now works at Jung's where she finds that her training helps her frequently. Her favorite tool there is a pair of micro-tip trimming shears. We are all glad she is back in Wisconsin and is a newly minted Master Gardener Volunteer and a valuable member of our organization.



Fun Fact: Americans buy more than 700 million Peeps during the Easter season.

Catalog and Seed Selection

It is February and the weather outside is frightful; what is a gardener to do? The catalogs are rolling in and it is time to plan. Two questions arise: which catalog to use and how to interpret the language?

First determine if you need to order your seeds or if you can go to a local store and purchase seeds. If you are buying a few things, are not particular about the variety, and only want seeds in the spring, ordering is likely unnecessary. The Federal Seed Act of 1939 requires accurate labeling, purity standards, and minimum germination standards, so smaller packets of cheaper seeds will produce similar results to more expensive seed packets in catalogs.

If catalog ordering is your preference, choose one well organized with good descriptions; like plants should be grouped together. Look for information on disease resistance, plant size, maturation dates, and planting guides.

As you choose your seeds, you must understand the language on the packets. What is the difference between hybrid, heirloom, open-pollinated, GMO-free, and organic?

A hybrid has two different parents, but no genetic engineering. Breeding occurs to get a plant with desired characteristics such as disease resistance, larger fruits, more uniformity, etc.

Many vegetables are open-pollinated, reproducing by either cross-pollination or self-pollination. Self-pollination occurs when both male and female reproductive structures are on the same plant and pollination occurs without travel. Cross-pollination requires two plants and relies on wind, water, or insects to complete the process. Because open-pollination does not involve human involvement, is it not considered hybridization.

Heirloom varieties are only open-pollinated. Heirloom varieties are preserved by growers who save seeds from year to year and who make sure that no cross-pollination takes place.

Laboratories create genetically modified organism (GMO) seeds using high-tech methods. A plant's DNA is altered in a way that does not occur naturally. If you are spending extra money on "certified non-GMO" seeds you are unequivocally wasting your money. There are only nine commercially available GMO-crops from seed: corn, soybeans, cotton, alfalfa, sugar beets, canola, papaya, squash and potato. None of these are available to the home gardener. You may see the "GMO-free" pledge on seed packets, but this is simply a marketing ploy.

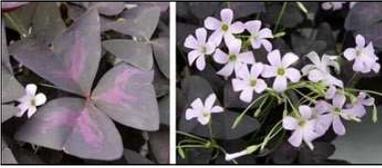
Lastly, is the extra money worth it to buy organic seeds? If you are trying to maintain organic certification, you most certainly need organic seed. Otherwise, the methods you use in your garden will be more important than the fact that you spend substantially more money on organic seeds.

Carol Shirk, Certified Master Gardener

"A seed is a forest inside out."

- Matshona Dhliwayo

Shamrocks



Oxalis regnelli 'Atropurpurea'
Photo: Susan Mahr

Saint Patrick's Day and shamrocks go hand in hand. But is the plant being sold at big box stores, florists, and grocery stores really a shamrock?

The word shamrock is derived from the Irish word seamróg or "little clover". Depending on the source, this refers to yellow clover (*Trifolium dubium*) or white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Both are in the legume family and can be found along roadsides, meadows, and lawns. Neither do well grown as a houseplant.

The "shamrock plants" being sold this time of year are species of *Oxalis* from the wood sorrel family. The leaves resemble a shamrock, and come in shades of green, red, or purple. An interesting characteristic of many *Oxalis* species is that the leaves fold up at night or on overcast days, the technical term for this is nyctinastic. Even though the leaves of *Oxalis* look like clovers, the plants are unrelated. Depending on

the species, flowers can be white, yellow, pink or red.

If you pick up an *Oxalis* plants to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, pick a plant with lush, healthy foliage with lots of new flower buds. The plants need cool conditions and bright light. Keep the soil barely moist, but not wet. The plant will start to decline after a few months, instead of throwing out; let the plant go dormant for 2-3 months. After the rest period move back to a bright window and begin watering and fertilizing again.

These plants are sensitive to salt build up in containers. To prevent this by flushing the pots thoroughly with plenty of clean room temperature water every couple of months.

Oxalis can also be used as a summer annual outdoors in a border, in containers or hanging baskets.

Oxalis plants contain oxalic acid, which in large quantities can be toxic, so be careful of these plants around pets.

Chris Jacobs, Certified Master Gardener

Easter Lily

The Easter lily (*Lilium longiflorum*), well known for its large white trumpet-shaped flowers, are a traditional symbol of the Easter season.

Although native to Japan, today almost all the potted plants grown as Easter lilies are produced by growers along the border of California and Oregon. When the plants are the right size and maturity, they are shipped to commercial greenhouse growers throughout North America. Growers use controlled conditions to coax the lilies to bloom in time for Easter.

When purchasing a potted Easter lily, select a high-quality plant that looks attractive from all angles. The leaves should be dense and plentiful from top to bottom, and free of dark spots or crinkled or wilted leaves. Select a plant that has lots of buds in various stages of development, with only one or two flowers opened.

In the home, Easter lilies prefer moderately cool temperatures. A daytime temperature of 60 – 65°F with slightly cooler night temps are ideal. They do best when placed in bright light but out of direct sun light.

When purchased, most Easter lilies have a decorative foil wrapper around the pot. Punch holes in the bot-

tom of the foil and place a saucer beneath it. Water the Easter lily only when the soil is dry to the touch. Water thoroughly so water flows freely out of the bottom of the pot into the saucer. Discard any water that drains into the saucer.

As the flowers open remove the yellow anthers. This will prolong the life of the flower and prevents pollen from staining the flower, tablecloth, clothing, or other objects it may fall onto. Remove the flowers as they fade. After flowering, the Easter lily can be saved and planted outdoors.

Easter lilies are hardy in zones 5 – 11, and into zone 4 with protection. They make a great addition for borders, white gardens, cut gardens, or fragrant gardens.

All parts of the Easter lily, including the pollen, are poisonous to cats. If ingested, they can suffer severe kidney failure. Contact your veterinarian immediately for care.

Chris Jacobs
Certified Master Gardener



Photo: Susan Mahr



Fun Fact: The Easter lily naturally flowers in the summer.

Master Gardeners Offer \$1000 Scholarship

The Dodge County Master Gardener Association will award a \$1000 scholarship to a high school senior who is planning a career in some area of horticulture.

The recipient must live in Dodge County and be a graduating senior from any public high school, parochial high school, or home school.

The student must have applied to a two or four year accredited college or technical school that has a program leading to a degree or certification in a horticulture or related area. Careers may include, but are not limited to, horticulture, plant science, soil science, agriculture, environmental science, landscaping, forestry, science education.

Application forms are available in the guidance offices of Dodge County and area high schools. They include Beaver Dam High School, Dodgeland High School, Horicon High School, Hustisford High School, Lomira High School, Mayville High School, Randolph High School, Watertown High School, Waupun High School, Lakeside Lutheran High School, and Central Wisconsin Christian School.

Application forms are also available online at: <http://dodge.extension.wisc.edu/master-gardener/>

Questions may be directed to: askamastergardener@att.net.

The deadline for applying for the scholarship is April 1, 2021.

Master Gardener Annual Enrollment

If you have not all ready done so, please complete this annual requirement online before March 31, 2021. Annual enrollment is a very important step to let the Master Gardener Program Office know who is going to volunteer each year. **Learn more and get it done...**

Volunteer Hours Requirements Due to COVID

In 2021, you may report less than 24 hours of volunteer time at 2021 COVID approved projects (this may be zero hours). Only volunteer at approved projects if you feel you can do so safely.

We continue to require the minimum of 10 hours of continuing education. The 10 hours of continuing ed plus completing all the volunteer mandates will be required to certify next year. You have until December 31, 2021, to complete and report your hours.

Continuing Education

Looking for continuing education hours or wondering what counts as continuing education? A Continuing Education Policy can be found on the Wisconsin Master Gardener website: <https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu/policies/> for guidelines of approved sources. The website (<https://mastergardener.extension.wisc.edu/learn/>) also has learning opportunities available - horticulture articles, Plants Plus series, and upcoming events listed. Still not sure, contact Carol Shirk, Dodge County Master Gardener Coordinator.

Flowering Houseplants to Brighten Your Day



Bromeliad
Blooms are clusters of colorful bracts (leaves)
<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/bromeliads/>



Cyclamen, Persian Violet (*Cyclamen persicum*)
Ideal plants for a sunny winter windowsill.
<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/cyclamen/>



African Violet (*Saintpaulia*)
With the right care, African violets have been known to live 50 years.
<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/african-violets/>



Geranium (*Pelargonium*)
Historically they have been grown indoors longer than they have been enjoyed in the garden.
<https://extension.umn.edu/flowers/growing-geraniums-annual-flowers-minnesota#growing-geraniums-as-houseplants-over-the-winter-1598460>



Flamingo Flower (*Anthurium*)
Poisonous Characteristics—calcium oxalate crystals and several toxic proteins. Toxic to pets and humans.
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/anthurium/>

Moth Orchid (*Phalaenopsis*)
Beautiful and Unique. No more difficult to grow than many other houseplants.



<https://extension.psu.edu/orchids-as-houseplants>

