



Master Gardener

Vol. 12 No. 10, November, 2007
News for Delaware County Master Gardeners



Calendar



Found in Linda's
Trick or Treat
bag—What are
these things ?

*Check out the answer on
Page 6*

Tuesday, November 20th—
MG Meeting 7:00 pm Smedley
Propagating & Growing Succulents,
Ray Murphy



Sunday, December 2nd—
HOLIDAY PARTY
1:00PM—RIDLEY CREEK STATE PARK

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From the MG President

Kathy Hornber-

get

The weather has finally turned colder. It finally feels like fall! And yesterday's news reported the first significant snowfall in Erie, PA; a whopping 12 inches! It makes me think about the upcoming winter holidays and all the sights, smells, and sounds associated with this time of year: special plants like the poinsettia, holly, and mistletoe; wonderful aromas of baking pies, turkey, and beef; and singing choirs and strains of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*.

One of these traditional elements, used today as a holiday decoration, may actually be extirpated here in PA, according to Rhoads & Block's *The Plants of Pennsylvania* (2000). The Christmas Mistletoe [*Phoradendron leucarpum* (Raf.) Reveal & M.C. Johnston], also known as Oak Mistletoe, was once recorded for four counties in the state: Bucks, Delaware, Franklin, and Lancaster. Now, however, it may be gone. So, how can it be recognized?

Mistletoe is a parasitic evergreen shrub that lives on the branches of deciduous trees, like oaks and other hardwoods. Its yellowish-green leaves are simple, entire, oblong, leathery, and oppositely arranged on the stems. Flowers on the female plants are regular, yellow, and 3-merous and develop into white poisonous berries from October through December.

To ancient peoples, like the druids, who were the priests of the ancient Celts, the European mistletoe (a different species) was considered sacred and was worshipped for its supposed magical powers. It seemed to defy nature by living in the branches of trees, not in the ground where "normal plants" grew. Furthermore, it seemed to spring from nowhere and spread from one place to another spontaneously. When the Europeans came to North America, they brought their beliefs about the mistletoe plant and conferred them onto the species found here, which occurs more commonly in the SE US.

Now that leaves are falling from deciduous trees, mistletoe should be much easier to spot. That is how I got to see this plant again after many, many years. However, the sighting took place in the state of Delaware.

If you happen to be out this fall into winter, look up more. You may just spy a native plant that people haven't eliminated from its natural habitat after all!



(This photo was taken last weekend by my friend, Craig Hillemann. The plant does not appear to have any berries. It would be considered male.)

P.S. I hope to see each of you at the Holiday Party on Sunday afternoon, December 2, at the Mansion at Ridley Creek State Park. I can assure you that we will not be using any native mistletoe from PA as decorations!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

GARDEN CLUB HOLDS GREENS SALE

The Countryside Gardeners, Arlene Pugh's group, will be holding a Holiday Greens Sale on Saturday, December 8th at Tyler Arboretum, 515 Painter Road in Media.

The Selection not only includes holiday wreaths and greens but also permanent arrangements.

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From the Coordinator: Linda Barry

In this month of giving thanks, I am increasingly thankful for the dedication, inspiration and hard work of the Master Gardeners who drive this program and continue to improve our outreach. Thanks to all of you for what you do so well!

Congratulations to Joe Daniels, Class of 1996, for his recognition as Cooperative Extension Director's *Spirit Award* for volunteers. Joe was recognized at the annual Extension meeting in State College in October.

We welcome the class of 2007 who are already visible and active in our programs. The class is working on four projects. The Hortline Project, led by Ron Gatto, Hortline co chair, involves an in-depth study of the *Woody Ornamental, Insect, Mite and Disease Management* book. The Speakers' Bureau Project, under the direction of Joe Daniels, is developing a program of 4-6 classes designed to introduce school students to gardening. The Public Relations Project, directed by Tracey Carson, will develop a portable display board and a calendar of county activities where our displays and volunteers can have a presence. The largest class committee is the Teaching Gardens Project. The chairs of the gardens are guiding the committee whose goal is to develop informational brochures and signage for the gardens.

Our Holiday Party will be held on December 1st at Ridley Creek State Park. Please RSVP as soon as possible. Most of the invitations were sent via e-mail. If you have an e-mail address, but did not receive the invitation, please call me and I will resend it to you. Kathy Hornberger is preparing a slide show of the Master Gardeners and their volunteer activities during 2007. Certificates will be awarded to those who have 500, 1000, 1500 or 2000 hours of volunteer service. Pins will be awarded to Master Gardeners who have been members for 10 or 15 years. The Chester County MGs are joining us for the party. If you would like to assist the committee, please contact Hope Jones-Gary.

We thank Barbara Smith for our excellent newsletter. Those of us who contribute are often pushing the deadline, and our good-natured editor gracefully accepts the contributions. Thanks to the loyal contributors – Joe, Kathy, Tracey and Delilah and to those of you who contribute occasionally. If you have a submission or announcement, please send them to Barbara the first week of the month.

We have no board meeting, general meeting, or newsletter scheduled for December. January's meeting will introduce the new class, and give committee chairs the opportunity to discuss their plans for 2008. You will receive a list of volunteer opportunities in December. We ask that you sign up for the committees by the January 15th meeting.

Continued on Page 6

HINTS FROM DELILAH

If your amaryllis was allowed to go dormant in September, replot it now, water it thoroughly and do not water it again until new growth is seen. Then water as needed, allowing three top inches or so of the soil to dry out before watering again. Gnats live in the top inch of the soil when it is damp.

Store dahlias, glads and other non-winter hardy bulbs dry in paper bags or peat moss in a cool place. Check on them every month or two and throw away those which have rotted or shriveled.

If you do not have leaves of your own, gather those on the curbs put out for trash pickup. Chip them by machine or mower and use them as mulch around perennials. Pine needles work well around acid loving plants to keep the soil temperature more even to avoid freeze and thaw heaving the plants.

A recent article stated that Cottonelle and other brand tissues use freshly cut trees in their manufacturing process, destroying bird and wildlife habitat and permitting erosion of soil. Marcal and other paper products use a large percentage of recycled paper.

Another article stated that bottled water often contained 40 % filtered or treated water. 1.5 million barrels of oil are used to make the bottles plus oil is used to transport them. A lot of money and oil could be saved by drinking tap water.

An article in the November issue of Working Mother magazine mentions the ways in which twenty companies operate environmentally safe business models. They do this by the way they build or renovate their building structures, the ingredients they use in manufacturing products and by reducing the packaging materials used, making our world greener.

Here are some of the twenty companies. Let us do what we can to support them.

Bert's Bees, Johnson and Johnson, Proctor Windex. PNC Financial Group has many ECO Buildings. Wells Fargo and Proctor & Gamble merged with Gillette, to clean up the effluents of their sites and restore vital wetlands near their plants. S.C. Johnson (Windex) ships in recycled corrugate and has removed 1.8 million pounds of volatile organic compounds.

Please save some of your small coffee cans (11.5 to 16 oz) for the birdhouse project on the second Saturday in February. Bring them to a meeting or leave them at our Smedley Park Office.

Also, please save your pop-tops from cans for Ronald Mc Donald house. I will collect them at Smedley.

Words To Weed Through

By Tracey L. Carson

Map Quest

Spin your globe until you land on Central Vietnam. Zoom in on the tropical forests of the Annamites Mountain Range. Narrow your focus onto the Green Corridor of Thua Thien Hue Province. Now discover thousands year old virgin rain forests. Dwell in one of the dwindling places on earth where the planet overflows with living thriving creations yet unheard of to science. In this utopia, the World Wildlife Fund has recently discovered two new butterfly and five new orchid species.

The “Skipper” butterfly (Zela genus) has been unearthed and noted for its “quick, darting flight habits”. The other butterfly is said to be in the Satyrinae subfamily, but is a new division.

According to researchers, “three of the new orchid varieties are entirely leafless”. This is uncommon for orchids. “They contain no chlorophyll and live on decaying matter, like many fungal breeds”. Among the newly discovered orchid class, an Aspidistra was found, which yields a bloom that is virtually black, as well as a yellow blossoming new type of Arum.

One of the few things in the region that is not new is the fact that findings of this nature have been taking place for quite some time, inclusive of 15 different reptiles and a distinctive class of wild cattle known as the “Saola”. It is believed that all of these families, and so many more, live here, and no other place on earth.

There is another thing that is not new here, and that is the fact that the region is in danger of extinction due to unlawful logging activity, the exhausting of natural resources, and so on. The World Wildlife Fund and the Provincial Forest Protection Department are teaming this battle. I guess that they too, dread the day that they spin their globe and it turns into nothing but an aimless quest, because there is not one place left in the whole world where Nature is still Mother.



Skipper Butterfly

“Birth, life, and death – each took place on the hidden side of a leaf” ~ Toni Morrison



Joe Daniels is shown accepting the EAC Spirit Award from Daney Jackson, Director of Cooperative Extension.

MG OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

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Butterfly: Kathy Hornberger
Terrace: Carl Pfeiffer
Marion Nelson
Shade: Maru Hollen
Carolyn DiPaulo
Julia King

Taylor Arboretum: Ed Lyons
Darlene Delany



Leaf Duty

The time has finally come, a little delayed this year but nevertheless, the leaves must fall and we must decide what is the best way to deal with all of nature's gold laying in front of us. We have a few choices:

1. Let them be. The first possibility of course is the "do nothing" alternative. This is actually quite feasible provided you have leaves that easily and quickly decompose such as silver maple, Japanese maple, and locusts. Delicate leaves like these will usually decompose by the time spring arrives.
2. Rake them into small piles in the corners of the backyard and leave them there. This may seem like it doesn't accomplish anything but it does. Small leaf piles or even larger ones make great habitats for insects and small animals to live in during the winter months.
3. Shred the leaves mechanically using a leaf shredder and then use them to mulch the garden.
4. Send the leaves (with or without shredding) to the compost pile. If you don't have one, then now is the time to start one, even if it means building a simple wire mesh bin and throwing the leaves in there until spring when you build a proper compost bin (or receive a free bin, when you take the compost class).
5. If your community recycles yard and garden waste, place the leaves in the designated bins or bags and place them at the curb. Be sure to call ahead and find out when the designated pickup days are and whether special yard waste bags are to be used or not.

Leaf Shredders

For those of you wondering what to do with the huge pile of leaves that has accumulated in the yard, a leaf shredder might be one solution. There are several benefits to using a leaf shredder. First and foremost is reduc-

ing the amount of organic matter into a more manageable quantity. The leaf shredder can be a simple electric power version, which reduces the quantity from 11 bags of leaves to one, a significant reduction. The second is that shredded leaves breakdown much faster if you are considering composting them or using them for mulch. Leaf shredding is especially useful if you have non-native trees on your property. The leaves of these trees do not decompose as readily as native species, a Norway maple as opposed to a red maple for example. In addition, when using shredded leaves as mulch, the insulating properties are much better with fewer air pockets. Leaf shredders are sold as one of three types; cut and crush, cut and shred, and one strictly for leaf shredding. The first is more powerful and able to crush and shred twigs and small branches. The second is less powerful and is designed for leaves and soft twigs. The third is used for leaves, pine needles, and paper. If shredding leaves is your main concern, stick to the latter type of leaf shredder, which typically has sever settings including, fine, coarse, wet, and dry, depending on the leaf conditions.

Fall Fertilizing

With winter close at hand, you may not be thinking about fertilizers right now, but maybe you should be. Indeed, autumn can be the ideal time to fertilize the trees, shrubs, and the flowers in your garden, according to some experts. While plants may be dormant at this time of the year, they're not dead and life goes on below ground that is and at least until the ground freezes and root functions stops until spring.

Many fertilizers are high in nitrogen, which stimulates leafy growth and flower production; however, fertilizers for fall should be the opposite, low in nitrogen and high in potassium and phosphorus since the goal is to nourish the roots of the plants. The N part of the NPK (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium or potash) levels should be between 2 and 5, for example 3-12-12. Fertilizers high in nitrogen might be 20-10-5 for instance.

Using a fertilizer in the fall also helps prevent the roots from freezing, as well as promotes root growth and gives your plants a head start for next spring. Don't fertilize too early in the fall though, wait until we've had a few frosty mornings and the leaves begin to drop from the trees, typically in October (later this year).



**Wreath Making Workshop/
December 8**

Master Gardeners....Don't forget to prune your evergreens the week before our Wreath making workshop and drop off the greens anytime that week (Dec 1-8). Place the greens on the steps outside the Environmental Center/classroom where we meet. Thanking you all in advance for any contributions you can make to help our Second Saturday workshop be a success. If you have any extra pinecones or other materials that can be attached to a Holiday Wreath feel free to bring them to the November monthly meeting on Nov. 20 or give me a call and I can pick them up. Thanks, Joe Daniels

Continued from page 3 FROM THE COORDINATOR:

Don't forget that your grocery purchases at Genuardi's or Safeway can provide a contribution to Delaware County 4-H. If you already registered your card, it must be renewed in order to continue to earn contributions. eScrip has made the renewal process as quick and easy as possible: Visit www.escrip.com and click on "YES! Renew".

If you have not already registered and would like to, visit the website above and provide your club card information. Delaware County 4-H is group # 1805216. At least 1% of all your purchases will be sent to Delaware County 4-H. If you don't want to register yourself, call the office and give them your name and club card number.

Thank you for taking the time to show your commitment to Delaware County 4-H and our community.

Please note that hours for 2007 are due by the end of December. We will be distributing our new membership list for 2008 in January.

Happy Holidays,
Linda



These are seed pods that were brought to the Hortline . The winged pod is the Devil Pod or Bat Nut from the *Trapa bicornis*, an aquatic Asian plant. The smaller pod is from the *Trapa natans* plant.



Need Hours??
SCRAP BOOKERS WANTED!!

The Delco M.G.s have been in the news a lot lately. Linda has been trying to save all of the articles, but they are piling up.

If you love, and are good at scrap booking, We Want You!

Contact Linda Barry 610-690-7669 or Tracey Carson for the details.

No MG News in December

The deadline for articles to be published in the January MG Newsletter is **Wednesday, January 9, 2008** Please send your article to Barbara Smith.



Pete Moss

— *Sphagnum Creek, Minnesota*

"My biggest complaint from my garden center days: Every year the owner presented each employee with the same 'Christmas treasure' holiday bonus—a 3-cu.ft. bag of silver dollar mulch."

