



Master Gardener

Vol. 10 No. 11, November, 2005
News for Delaware County Master Gardeners



Calendar

Tuesday, November 15th
M G Meeting—
Smedley Park 7:00 pm



Sunday, December 11th
Holiday Party 1-4 p.m.
Ridley Creek State Park
Special recognition for
Perennial Master Gardeners

Second Saturday—December 10th
Two Wreath Making Workshops
10:00 AM to 12 Noon &
12 Noon to 2:00 PM
Smedley Park

Tuesday, January 3rd
M G Board Meeting
Smedley Park 7:00 pm

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From the Coordinator:

You will find an invitation to our Holiday Party in this mailing. We hope that you are able to join us for the party. Please feel free to bring a guest. The luncheon will be pro-

vided for you, so there is no need to bring any food contributions. We are asking that you RSVP so that we will prepare for the appropriate number of members and guests. We will be inviting the Master Gardeners from Chester County to this year's Holiday Party. Many of you have trained with these Master Gardeners and may wish to renew your acquaintances. If you would like to be involved in the planning of the Holiday Party, please contact Jen Dean, Social Committee Chair. We will be honoring volunteers from the class of 1995 who have served for 10 years. We also have a special recognition for one volunteer who has been a member for 15 years.

Master Gardener classes are finished this month. Many thanks to the Mentors for their support of the MG candidates, and their contributions to snacks for class breaks.

Marty Roelandt is writing the Volunteer Opportunities for 2006. If you are a committee chair, please give Marty an updated description of your committee activities and plans for next year. We will choose volunteer projects at the January meeting.

I hope to see you at the November 15th meeting.

Linda Barry

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GREEN THUMB DINNER

Our November 10th destination is Da Shin Chinese Restaurant at 352 and Glen Riddle Road. Exact address is 1905 New Middletown Road, Media Pa 19063. Phone number is 610-891-0907. We hope that you can join us at 6:45. Let me know if you can come, so I can let the restaurant know what size table we need. See you there!
JANAE



DON'T FORGET—We need fresh greens for our two workshops on Wreath-making in December. Do your pruning and drop your cuttings off at the Environmental Center at Smedley.

MG OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

President: Alyce Zellers
Vice President: Kathy Hornberger
Treasurer: Ken Paulsell
Secretary: Tara Clarke
Hours Keeper: Chantal Wildman
Coordinator: Linda Barry—610-690-7669

Committee Chairs:

Newsletter : Barbara Smith
Mentoring : Lisa Augustine
Field Trips: Gerry Eunson
Social Events: Jennifer Dean
Arbor Day : Mary Sambor
Elsie Mueller
Garden Select : Robin Queenan
Gail Brewer
Flower Show: Gayla McCluskey
Hort Therapy: Delilah Fordes
Hortline: Liana Bauerle
Home Gardener's School:
Diana Breen
Ken Paulsell
Speakers Bureau: Joe Daniel

Forcing to Think Ahead— Spring Bulbs

by Barbara Smith



Not only am I a Master Gardener, I am also the president of the Ridley Park Historical Society and I always try to merge the two—killing two birds with one stone, so to speak.

The last Sunday in April is the annual Society Tea and takes at least 8 volunteers 2 days to turn a plain meeting room into a garden oasis. I seem to be the chief cook, baker & florist and afterwards I can barely recall the day, much less stop & enjoy it.

So this year I have decided that rather than stand for 2 days creating topiaries or other fresh flower arrangements, I will plant spring bulbs and force the bloom into a beautiful springtime arrangement. The thought here is to do the work in November and not in April. I am mentioning all this to you because 1) I could use your advice and 2) I'd like to share some of my misery with my fellow MGs.

Here's what I have learned so far:

Tulip and hyacinth bulbs are sold in standard sizes at garden centers; the biggest tulip bulbs will be about 6 inches in circumference. The bigger bulbs are worth the extra money because they produce the biggest flowers.

For tulips:

Plant three bulbs in a 4-inch pot, six in a 6-inch pot or eight or nine in an 8-inch pot by filling the pot two-thirds full with potting soil and nestling the bulbs, pointed right side up, in the soil. Water thoroughly.

Next, dig a hole in the ground to accommodate the pot, put the planted pot in the hole and cover it with sand and leaves. Make it easy on yourself to dig them up. These pots do not need to be covered with clay or heavy garden soil.

Mark the date on the calendar 12 weeks into the future and forget the tulips. They do not need water or fertilizer. What they need is a cold nap to finish developing their fetal flowers, snuggled tightly in the bulb. In 12 weeks, "hopefully we will have green shoots sticking up 3 or 4 inches," from the bulb. Bring the pot in, put it in a sunny window and step back,. At room temperature, the tulips should flower in 19-25 days.

Forcing hyacinths:

Because not all hyacinths respond to early forcing, check with the garden center staff before buying. Varieties that work well include "Ostara," "Carnegie," "Jan Bos" and "Fondant."

Hyacinths, like tulips, need the 12-week cold period for the bulbs to produce roots and develop flowers.

One process for forcing hyacinths is similar to that for tulips, says www.englishflowergarden.com.

Pot the bulbs in small individual pots; water well. Place the pots in shallow holes or cover with 8 inches of leaves and sand.

In 12 weeks, you should see yellow shoots. If they are up to 2 inches tall, it's time to bring them indoors. If shorter, cover the pots back up and check again in two weeks.

Gently knock the bulbs out of the small pots and plant in ornamental bowls, using ordinary potting mix.

Put the new plantings on a windowsill. Water when the soil dries out.

The hyacinths will bloom in three to four weeks. The bulbs can be planted outside when they finish blooming. They should reflower in two years. Hyacinths also can be forced to bloom in small-necked glass jars, called "forcing" glasses.

According to The Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center Web site, hyacinths labeled "pre-cooled" or "prepared" require only 10 weeks of cooling. Chill others 13 weeks.

Place the bulb (point up) on the small upper section of the glass container and add water up to, but not touching, the bottom of the bulb. Place the container in a cool dark spot until roots develop and growth starts from the top.

Add water periodically, keeping the level of water close to the base of the bulb. When the shoots are about 2 inches tall and the root system extends to the bottom of the glass, remove the jars to a warmer area with low light. During the next three to four days, move the jar to a sunny window. As blooms appear, turn the jar every few days so the flowers do not lean to one side.

Water-forced hyacinths will not bloom again in the same year, but can be planted in the garden and may produce smaller flowers in the future.

Troubleshooting:

Of course, any horticulturist knows that things go wrong when mere mortals try to imitate nature. Here are some simple diagnoses:

- If the leaves are so long they hide the flowers, the bulbs were brought in too early.
- If the flowers are on long, spindly stems, the bulbs were brought indoors too late.
- If you get flowers of different heights, the bulbs were mismatched.
- If the bulbs don't flower, the bulbs were too small or didn't get an adequate cooling period.

For more information on forcing bulbs, go to www.bulb.com. Click on Spring and scroll down to Home Forcing.

More on my progress (or lack of) in future editions.