



Carleton Place & District Horticultural Society

December 2023

President's Message

Well, here we are once again. December 6, our year end when we have our Annual General Meeting. As I write this, I'm looking out onto the lake, and it is supposed to be snowing but instead it's raining. Ugh! Snow would be much better protection for the plants but the moisture from the rain is okay too. For us gardeners it has been a wonderful fall, but winter had better arrive soon or it will be a stressful winter for the plants.

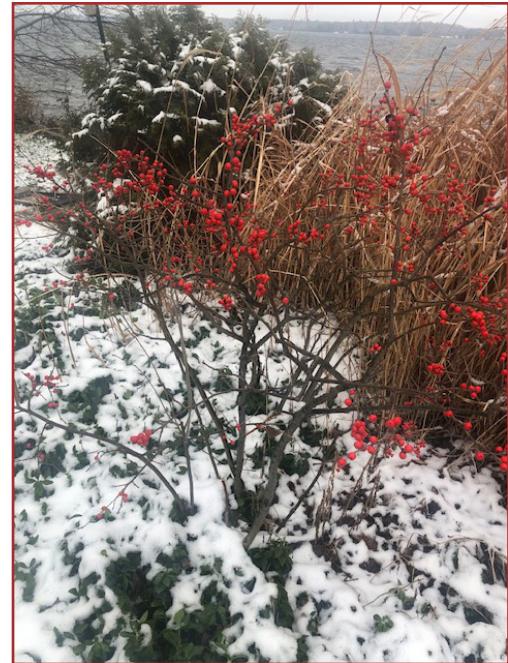
Getting back to the horticultural society's year end, Wednesday December 6 is our AGM. For us this is one of the more important meetings of the year. What happens at this meeting allows us to continue as a society for another year. This is the time for the induction of our board members. Thank you, Irene Tobis, for becoming a new board member. If there is anyone else willing to stand, please do so. Thanks to people like Laura Cupper, Rick Roberts, and Brianna Logan we have 99 members, therefore we require a quorum of 30 people to proceed.

It won't be all business as trophies will be awarded, refreshments will be served, small talk will be made, and door prizes will be given out. We also have a speaker, Leah Gibson, who will demonstrate Seasonal Floral Arrangements. So, it should be a full evening.

It has been a very good year I thought, with some excellent speakers. Ed Lawrence started us off in March - everyone's favourite. I liked Brian Hamilton who spoke on the culture of grapes in Ottawa, also Janet Johns talk on orchids and Owen March on bonsai. We had two separate tables at EarthFest – Brianna had a youth workshop for children to create different projects and our Climate Change committee promoted our society and what we can do as gardeners for climate change. Kudos to all the volunteers for this project. We had a very successful plant sale so many thanks to all who participated. We took part in the Victoria School Museum Coronation picnic by supplying pots of flowers and table arrangements. Thank you to everyone who helped and displayed at our flower shows and photo exhibit. They were great.

Like all Ontario horticultural societies, we have gone through the scare of Covid and come out the other side stronger than we went into this pandemic. Good for us. Thank you to all who made this year a success.

Paul Pietsch



Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*
Paul Pietsch, Dec 2023

Wishing You a Joyful and Peaceful Holiday Season!

Christmas and Other Forest Cacti

By Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners

The Christmas Cactus and Easter Cactus, both members of the *Schlumbergera* family and the Orchid Cactus the *Epiphyllum* family are all Forest Cactus and all are worth a little effort to get them to bloom. The natural home of the Forest Cactus is rain forests and jungles. It anchors itself to a tree (epiphytic) with its roots exposed to the elements and lives off what it can collect from air and water, or a rock (epilithic), where it collects what it can from rock debris and rainwater. It is a succulent though, storing water in its leaves. It is not surprising, therefore, that their growing needs are more like orchids than like the spiny cacti that grow in the deserts.



The typical Forest Cactus has leaf like stems and a trailing growth habit that makes it suitable for hanging baskets. The flowers on a Forest Cactus are spectacular but unfortunately, they are shy bloomers and there are rules to follow if you want a good display every year.

The Forest Cacti like a well-lit area that is shaded from direct sunlight. They thrive on an East facing window sill. During the resting period, a temperature of 13-16C is ideal. For the rest of the year, 15-20C. They need regular watering during the active growing period but the compost should be allowed to dry between watering. During their rest period, water them infrequently. If your tap water is hard, use rain water to water the plants. Many of the forest cacti come from the Rain Forest. They love humidity but hate wet roots which can lead to root rot and fungal diseases. Your cactus likes evenly moist soil but allow the top 2.5 cm (1 inch) to dry out between watering. Set it on a tray of moist pebbles and mist occasionally to provide the humidity it craves. On warm, sunny days, water every 2-3 days but if it is cool and humid, only water weekly.



Schlumbergera likes to be pot bound so don't be too generous with the pot size, but rather repot every other year or so, shortly after its flowering period. Add fresh medium when you do - a mix of three parts peat or potting mix to one part sharp sand or perlite as the *Schlumbergera* likes things a little on the acid side. A light orchid mix works well, too.

The easiest way to increase *Schlumbergera* is to take leaf cuttings - two to three segments - and stick them halfway down into a mix the same as that of the parent. You should have roots in two to three weeks. Fertilize when one new segment appears.

These are long-lived plants whose lifespan is measured in decades. As the cactus gets old, the branches near the roots will appear to become woody and tough. If your forest cactus is ill, first take stem cuttings to salvage an offspring in case the remedies don't work. If the leaves are limp and the soil dry, soak in water for a few hours. If the soil is wet and the leaves are limp, wash off the soil and repot in an evenly moist medium. If there are white spots on the leaves, use a fungicide. If the roots are rotted, start over.

Once you get the hang of the treatment for your Forest Cactus, you might want to bring other Forest Cacti into your home, creating spectacular beauty virtually all year long following the steps outlined below.

	Christmas Cactus	Easter Cactus	Orchid Cactus
January	Flowering Period	Resting Period	Resting Period
February	Resting Period	Pre flowering period Keep dryish and cool until buds appear	
March			Pre flowering period Keep dryish and cool until buds appear
April	Treat normally, water well when soil begins to dry	Flowering Period -water normally. Minimum temp 15C	
May			Flowering Period -water normally. Minimum temp 15C
June	Outdoors in a shady spot. Protect from Slugs	Outdoors in a shady spot. Protect from Slugs	
July			Outdoors in a shady spot. Protect from Slugs
August			
September	Pre flowering period Keep dryish and cool until buds appear	Resting Period	Treat normally, water well when soil begins to dry
October			
November			
December	Flowering Period		Resting Period

Green Christmas Ideas

By Kilby McCann, Member of Climate Change Group

The David Suzuki foundation has wonderful ideas to share for the Holiday Season 2023.

1. Restore your well-being and take a stroll in your neighbourhood. Sit outside and walk as much as you can. Have a walking party! The last three years have taught us it's all about connection not spending. Sit in the Victoria Gardens and look at the garden in the winter with a friend.
2. Gifts can be experiences and learn how to gift wrap without purchasing anything new. Send an e-card or make your own with recycled paper or old cards from previous years. Use dried flowers or herbs for cards like the Victorians. The Queens St. Market here in Carleton Place sells vintage handmade bags out of recyclable materials for 5.00 dollars!
3. For food try to choose local, organic seasonal. If that is not in your budget, then try to not waste and send leftovers with guests that avoid disposables. Have them bring their own reusables. Try to use parchment paper instead of foil and opt for beeswax food wrap.
4. Start to think of not buying new decorations and swap with friends. Forage for decorations. Incorporate plant material from your garden or area in the seasonal décor of your home.
5. Purchase a local real tree from a tree farm or buy a tree to replant outside.
6. Try to choose LED lights and use a timer. Or just keep the sky dark for wildlife rely on the darkness to forage. Point lights downward and use red lights. Use soy or beeswax candles. For festive spirit bang pots and pans. Clang!! Ring and ding ding!
7. Turn down the heat before guests arrive.
8. Give the gift of yourself, your talents, and your expertise. Give homemade cookies and jams. Feed the birds and set up a new birdfeeder on Christmas Day.
9. Give to local charities in someone's name. Interval House, Carebridge Community Support and Angel Tree are some local charities and or non-profits.
10. Donate to a garden-based charity or support nature based non-profits. For example: The Blakeney Garden, Carleton Place Community Gardens, Nature Conservancy of Canada, etc.

For more ideas and information please refer to the website.

<https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/your-guide-green-holidays/>

Winter Sowing

By Irene Tobis, CPDHS Member

I'm interested in forming a "Winter Sowing" interest group, if there are at least a couple of other members who winter sow or who would be interested in trying it.

The purpose will be to grow lots of strong, healthy seedlings, especially of native plants, for sale at our society's spring sale as well as for our own gardens.

To start off, I'd like to invite interested members to a "Winter Sowing" group launch meeting - probably at my house, but otherwise another location if it looks like we have more people interested than my house can accommodate - on Sunday, December 10 at 1pm.

This will be a support/information meeting, with some "show and tell", more than a hands-on workshop, just to exchange information and to get us prepared for starting our seeds outdoors on December 21st (as is recommended by experienced winter sowers). We'll try to do some seed exchanging also, and I'll offer info on other local seed exchange events happening later in December.

Interested members, please:

1. RSVP to Irene Tobis at irenetobis@gmail.com as soon as possible – or just see her after the December 6th meeting.
2. Search for (and join) the "Winter Sowing" group on Facebook, and read their excellent files of instructional information, if possible, before attending the meeting on December 10.

December Flower Photo Contest

The CPDHS's Climate Change and Biodiversity Group challenges you to a new contest. Starting December 1st, we want your photos of flowers blooming outside in the darkest, gloomiest month of the year! Entries should be:

- fresh blooms (not dried flowers),
- growing outdoors (don't take your tropical houseplant for a patio photo-op),
- in Lanark county or Ottawa (no pictures from Niagara or your Florida vacation),
- anywhere in your garden, parks, lawns, forests, fields, roadsides, cracks in the sidewalks, etc.

Submit your photos by email to Daniel at DB_4321@yahoo.com with the subject "**December Flower Photo Contest**" with a date and location of your flower. Winners will be announced at the March meeting. There will be an award for the latest bloom, and another award for most types of flowers found.

Two tips to help you get started: (1) weeds are perfectly acceptable, and (2) carry a magnifying glass.

Good luck!

Daniel Brumar, Director, CPDHS and Member of Climate Change Group

This newsletter is published by the Carleton Place and District Horticultural Society and is distributed to its members free of charge.

We depend on our members for its content. If you would like to contribute, please send your submissions to: cphorticulture@gmail.com

Editor, Design and Layout: Linda Bartlett
Contributors: Paul Pietsch, Dale Odorizzi, Irene Tobis, Daniel Brumar, and Kilby McCann.

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