



November Lawn Care

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Water your lawn if it is beginning to show signs of moisture stress. If you reseeded your lawn in September continue watering as needed. The roots and leaf growth may still be tender so continue to take care in removing leaves and raking. Shallow rooted grass is tender and easy to pull up this time of year.

Fall is an excellent time for taking soil samples in your lawn and garden. Soil tests will measure the pH of the soil, organic matter content and the levels of some of the major elements required for plant growth, such as phosphorus and potassium.

Continue mowing as long as your grass is growing. Most modern mowers also do a good job of mulching tree leaves if they aren't too thick. Heavy accumulations of large leaves from oak and maple trees should be raked and composted.



This month a fall or winter type of lawn fertilizer (20-9-9) should be applied to the lawn. This encourages good root development and helps improve the color of the lawn. Lime can also be applied, if needed from your soil test results.

Holiday Plants

Blooming plants have become a colorful Christmas tradition. They can be found at the beginning of November at many of our florists, nurseries and even at the grocery store. I have listed some plants below that are available during these upcoming holidays and how to care for them. Even though parts of this article were printed in the 2010 GardenWise, it is worthy of a repeat in 2011.

Poinsettia

Poinsettias are tropical plants. The poinsettia has become a favorite traditional Christmas plant. They are available in red, pink, gold, white, and variegated colors. When purchasing your poinsettia, look for a plant with dark green, healthy foliage, strong stems and bright colored bracts. Always check for insects before bringing a poinsettia or any new plant into your home. You don't want to bring insects into the home to spread to your year round house plants. If the temperature outside is below 50 degrees, have the plant wrapped before taking it outside to your car for transport. Place your poinsettia in a bright location out of direct sunlight and drafts. If the plant comes in a decorative wrapping and you wish to leave the wrapping on the container, be sure to make a



hole in the bottom of the wrapper to allow for good drainage. Water the plant often enough to keep the soil evenly moist but not soggy. Wilting and yellowing of leaves can result both from too little and too much water. The colorful bracts may only last for several weeks but the poinsettia can be kept as a green houseplant all year. Water regularly to keep the soil moist and fertilize monthly. The poinsettia requires long nights to stimulate bloom. If you want it to bloom again for the holidays next year, place the poinsettia in a room where you can keep it in the dark for 14 hours each night beginning in October. You may cover it with an inverted wastebasket or dark plastic garbage bag



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each night to keep the light out if a dark room is not available.

### Christmas Cactus



The Christmas cactus is a thornless cactus member. It can be an easy-to-care-for addition to your houseplants at Christmas. They require bright, indirect light and need light to moderate watering. During the spring and summer, water and fertilize your Christmas

cactus at regular intervals, about once a month, to increase size and growth. Keep the soil moist to the touch but do not allow your cactus plant to sit in water. The Christmas cactus prefers a humid environment and may be placed on a pebble tray if your home is dry. To encourage bud development, begin cutting back on watering in late summer or fall, keeping the soil barely moist to touch. This will allow the plant to become dormant, or to rest. Do not feed the cactus during this time. Six weeks before Christmas place the plant in a room with cooler temperature, 60-65 degrees. It should receive 10 hours of light during the day and 14 hours of total darkness at night. It is helpful to treat your Christmas cactus as you would a poinsettia if you are trying to have it in full bloom for Christmas, otherwise it may bloom at a different time. If you do not have a totally dark room, the plant can be covered at night with a dark garbage bag to achieve this. When the buds form, resume regular watering and feeding again. If the plant does not stay moist, there may be bud drop. The Christmas cactus is available in pink, white, red, and violet.

### Amaryllis



The Amaryllis is a tropical plant grown for its large, 8-10 inch blooms. It comes in shades of red, pink, orange, coral, white and bicolor. Plant the amaryllis bulb in a pot with adequate drainage, just barely larger than the bulb. Amaryllis likes to be pot-bound. Use sterile potting soil, adding about

an inch to the bottom of the pot. Place the bulb in the pot making sure to spread the roots carefully. Add more soil, leaving about 2/3 of the bulb above the soil level. Water thoroughly. When it begins to grow, move the amaryllis to a sunny location. Water whenever the soil feels dry to the touch. Fertilize monthly. After the plant has finished blooming, cut back the flower stalk but not the leaves. Continue to grow the plant as you would any other houseplant, watering and fertilizing at regular intervals. In the spring, place the amaryllis plant in a window where it gets bright sun or move it outside in a sunny location. In September, bring the plant indoors. Place in a cool area (preferably about 55 degrees) and do not water for 5 to 8 weeks. In November, remove all of the old foliage and water thoroughly. Place in a sunny location. When the plant starts growing resume fertilizing. Water in stages as it grows increasing the amount of water. New blooms should appear in about 3 to 8 weeks.

### Paperwhite Narcissus

Paperwhite Narcissus is one of the easiest bulbs to force if you want a beautiful floral display for the holidays. With no preparation requirements, they can be planted as soon as you get them home. Be sure to buy bulbs that



are firm to the touch and have no discoloration. Start with an inch or two of sterile soil in a shallow, decorative container. Place the bulbs close together, nearly touching each other, with the pointed end facing up. Add more potting soil to hold them in place (or gravel or decorative filler). Water thoroughly and often enough to keep moist. Paperwhites can also be grown in water alone (use marbles, stone chips, or pebbles to hold the bulbs upright). They require no fertilizer. After planting, place the container in a well lit but cool room until the shoots get an inch tall. They can then be moved to a warmer location to enjoy more. Their blooms will last from about 4 to 8 weeks. They bloom only once, and when done, should be discarded.

### Cyclamen



Cyclamen is available in white, red, and deep pink. They generally lay dormant during summer months and bloom indoors during the winter. It's possible to have Cyclamen bloom from late fall to early spring. When you first purchase the plant, use a houseplant fertilizer once a week, then taper off to once a month after a few weeks. Keep inside

temperatures relatively cool around the plant. If that is impossible, at night keep temp in the mid 40-50s. Provide indirect bright light and be sure to keep the plants away from heat ducts and vents. When mature blooms begin to fade, try pulling off the flowers rather than cutting.

### Kalanchoe



Kalanchoe have beautiful star shaped flowers in clusters covering the plant. Leaves are succulent, broad and green. Traditionally, plants have either red or pink flowers. Kalanchoe doesn't need a lot of water due to their thick, succulent leaves for water storage. Shiny leaves

become a dull green when its time to water again. Kalanchoes like bright light, at least 4 hours a day. At night, Kalanchoes prefer a cool location. If temperatures are too warm indoors, move the plant to the patio or garage overnight or some other cool location where they will not freeze.

### General notes:

- South, east or west windows provide the most light at this time of year.
- Turn the plant weekly to keep it growing straight.
- Remember incandescent lights give off heat, which may dry the plant.
- Locations near windows are often a bit cooler than other spots in a room.
- This time of year indoor air is dry and plants tend to lose water quickly.

Don't be disappointed if your plant doesn't last too long after the holidays – they were produced under ideal conditions, which you cannot always duplicate in the home. Most holiday plants can be cut back after a few weeks and grown for use outdoors in spring and summer.



## Join us for Best Practices in the Community Garden by Mary Jac Brennan

The temperatures are cooler and the evening shadows are falling earlier and earlier. This is a good time of the garden year to reflect on the seasons past. Do you keep a garden journal? If so, pull it out and start to read. Reflect on what worked, analyze any data you may have collected on planting dates, varietal choices, last frost, rain amounts, temperature extremes, and even first frost, and even make some conclusions about your community garden experience.

In the community garden, you will have some extra calculations to make! Hopefully you have kept up with your harvests and now you can figure up how much your total harvest yielded. Perhaps you have notes on where any produce was donated, and how much. You may also have lists of volunteers (we hope!) who helped out in the garden or for the garden's benefit. For fun, you might decide to 'award' a most valuable volunteer prize to your hardest working volunteer! Often Community Garden groups will suspend regular work days in the cooler months, but will hold a final social gathering for the season to announce the garden results to all who have participated in the garden for that season. You may enjoy a potluck meal complete with lots of socializing and a short business

meeting. Have a list of monthly work days to announce, if you think you will need them.

Based on the above community garden 'best practices' model, our larger community will gather on Thursday November 3 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Forsyth County Agriculture Building, 1450 Fairchild Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27105. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served. All community gardeners are invited to participate in an evening of reflection about the past season of community gardening. Come prepared to share what worked, what didn't, what plans you have for next year's garden, how much produce was grown, and how much was donated. Learn about trends observed in our county and how NC Cooperative Extension can help your community garden to be more successful. The new

Community Gardening Resource Webpage will be previewed prior to its release to the public. I hope you will join us, and that all of the community gardens in Forsyth County will be represented.

This is a FREE event and is open to the public, but registration is requested. Please register by contacting Kathy Hepler at 703-2852 or email [Kathy\\_Hepler@ncsu.edu](mailto:Kathy_Hepler@ncsu.edu).

### You are Invited!

#### Best Practices in the Community Garden

Thursday, November 3rd

6pm - 8pm

at the Forsyth County Agriculture Building

1450 Fairchild Road, Winston-Salem

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Registration instructions for this **FREE** event are at the end this article.



## Community Garden Resource Center

The Community Garden Resource Center of Forsyth County can help you with your community gardening ventures! We offer community organizing programs for groups, we have a seed bank with seeds to share, educational classes geared to community garden topics, a tool lending shed, and trained Garden Mentors who can assist with your horticulture concerns.

Follow community gardening in Forsyth County by visiting our Facebook page at [Community Garden Resource Center of Forsyth](#) and "Like" us.

Watch for new class listings in December's GardenWise.

Contact Mary Jac Brennan at [brennamj@forsyth.cc](mailto:brennamj@forsyth.cc) or call 703-2869 for more information.

Resources for Starting a  
Community Garden

Compiled by Mary Jac Brennan,  
Coordinator, Community Gardening  
Forsyth County Cooperative Extension

Join the American Community Gardening Association  
[www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)

Find out what other Community Gardeners are doing  
in the State & County  
[www.nccommunitygarden.ncsu.edu](http://www.nccommunitygarden.ncsu.edu)  
[www.nccommunitygarden.unc.edu](http://www.nccommunitygarden.unc.edu)  
[www.forsyth.cc/CES](http://www.forsyth.cc/CES)

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
The University of North Carolina System

## From the Master Gardener Hotline - Where to Get Reliable Information?

*Bertram Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer*

The internet provides an extensive amount of information about almost any subject. Just do a search on crabgrass and you will get hundreds of articles that have been written on the subject.

### Pay attention to the source!

Generally, articles that have been written by universities are accurate and dependable. In North Carolina, the website [www.ces.ncsu.edu/forsyth](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/forsyth) provides extensive information about almost any subject related to agriculture and food.

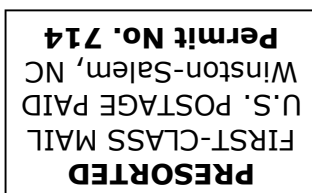
Another good source of information is [www.gardeningcarolina.com](http://www.gardeningcarolina.com), which has been created by Master Gardener Mary Conroy. This site not only provides useful information for home gardeners, but also includes a calendar of related events for the Carolinas.

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### Other Upcoming Events

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- **Nov. 5 - Colfax Persimmon Festival**, 10am - 4pm at Historic Stafford Farm, 558 North Bunker Hill Road, Oak Ridge NC 27310. Find more information at [www.colfaxpersimmonfest.com](http://www.colfaxpersimmonfest.com).
- **Nov. 7 - Community Gardening 101**, 6:30pm at the Southside Branch Library
- **Nov. 15 - Growing & Pruning Apple Trees**, 6pm at Historic Bethabara Park
- **Nov. 17 - Preparing Your Garden for Winter**, 12noon at the Frank L Horton Center at Old Salem
- **Nov. 29 - Wildlife Friendly Landscapes**, 6pm at Historic Bethabara Park
- **Dec. 13 - Choosing and Caring for Trees**, 6pm at Historic Bethabara Park



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Forsyth County Center  
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