



Cross Pollination

December 2010

Coordinator's Corner

Wow, the holiday season is once again upon us. How did that happen so fast?

Marg and Donna and I had a great time decorating our Halton MG "Doorway to the Holidays" at the RBG. We thought our gardening Santa decked out with his apron and tools looked quite jolly. Our mini spruce kind of "went to pots" and our rustic wreath "went to seeds" to complete our garden theme. I brought my favourite insect- 2 giant praying mantids- to give our door that special festive look. Donna suggested we make them little vests embroidered with the letters "IPM"! Now you know why "not a creature was stirring", not even Marg's green and red mouse! Don't forget to arrive at the meeting a few minutes early so that you can enjoy our door and all the others which will be on display at the RBG that evening.

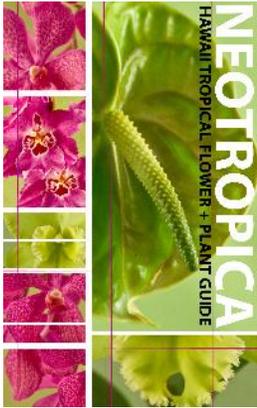
December is also the month when I ask you to fill out your volunteer hours for the year. The forms have been updated in order to make them easier to fill out-at least that was my intention. If you have any problems or questions, don't hesitate to contact me. Some categories were grouped together and others added to reflect changes brought to us by new technologies such as blogs and websites. There is also a form to track your Continuing Education Units (CEU's). In the past, we just noted how many hours were spent doing Technical Updates. We still count the hours towards your volunteer commitment, but now you are also asked to track whether you have fulfilled the requirements for your CEU's. It is important that all members complete and return these forms. They become part of the annual report that is sent to MGOI in January which in turn is used by MGOI to secure Trillium Funding support.



Claudette Sims



Roberta's Bookshelf



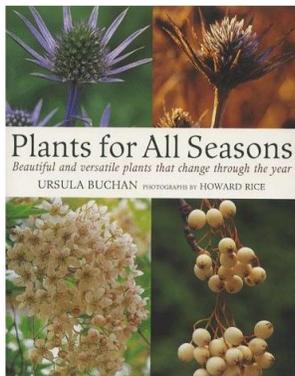
Neotropica : Hawaii Tropical Flower + Plant Guide

Hitomi Gilliam and Lois Hiranaga.
DESIGN 358
www.design358.com
\$15

Did you know that Hawaii possesses 10 of the world's 15 types of climate zones? If you

have an interest in tropical plants then this compact (12.5x19cm) and interesting book might be added to your Christmas wish list. It is all pictures, little text. Primarily written for floral designers and horticulturists, the book provides over 700 photographs and names a large number of varieties of anthuriums, orchids and proteas. Imagine 108 different varieties of anthuriums! There is also a very detailed section on orchids and even a bonus of examples of Hawaiian leis. There is a good section on "tropicals" including heliconia, strelitzia, and calathea. The sections "Foliages" and "Interiorscapes" may be of particular interest to us at flower shows as some may be entered into the horticultural division (e.g. dracaena, philodendron).

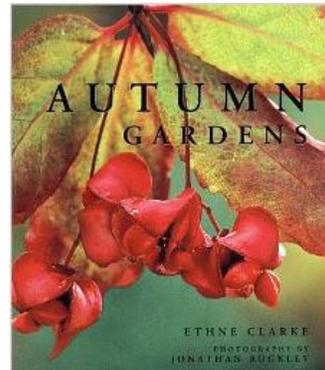
Sometimes at clinics I am asked about plants for particular seasons and the following two books are delightful to browse through and also provide good information and great photographs. They are priced in the \$35 to \$40 range but I picked them at the TBG book sale very cheaply (maybe because they are 1999 publications.)



Plants for All Seasons: Beautiful and Useful Plants that change through the year

Ursula Buckan,
Octopus Publishing Group Ltd. 1999
Great Britain (watch out for our zones)

The examples reflect changes from spring through autumn: the changing colours of leaves, impacts on bark and stems and the transformation of blossoms into seed heads. The "Habit" chapter describes a plant changes shape and form during the season (e.g. some sedums and grasses.) Just looking through this book again in November made me realize that even though a plant is past its prime, there is interest still in what it provides to the garden, even later in the fall.



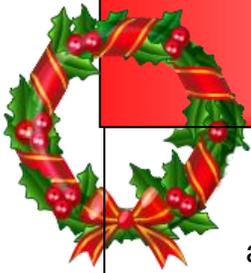
Autumn Gardens

Ethne Clarke
David and Charles 1999

This is a good companion for the previous book as it emphasizes the fall, and of course Canada specializes in fall colours. The main point is to encourage gardeners to think about what the plant or tree will look like in the fall and how that will also contribute to the garden. The photography in this book is terrific and stimulates ideas through its illustrations of how and where to plant in the garden. For example in planting smaller plants, like little fall crocus (not the colchicums) or hardy cyclamen, think of planting in larger drifts to give a more dramatic effect. The fall blooming clematis provides later flowering at this time but don't forget that the wispy seed heads of earlier clematis will still be hanging around. Fall also enjoys all the berry producing shrubs and trees and of course the delights of those fruit bearing ones.

This is a good time to sit back and enjoy what could be in 2011. Happy dreaming!

Christmas Then and Now



Myths and folklore have surrounded plants through the ages. Superstition and magic were an important part of culture in earlier centuries. Trees have been a symbol of worship since the Druids of ancient Europe held rituals around sacred trees, especially oak and pine. They believed spirits lived in the trees. Their ceremonies included tying apples and other offerings to the branches of ritual trees at the winter Solstice. Evergreens, including fir, pine and juniper trees were especially admired through the ages because they remained live and fresh during the coldest, shortest days of winter. Bells were sometimes hung on evergreen trees to protect against evil spirits. In the far north of Europe, people decorated evergreens with nuts, ribbons and paper ornaments. In modern times, evergreens are still a part of our holiday decorations.

The *Christmas Rose* is not really a rose but a black hellebore, a common garden plant. It is evergreen and blooms in late winter when still covered in snow.



According to folklore, a poor shepherd girl wept because she had nothing to take as a gift to the newborn Jesus in Bethlehem. An angel heard her and brushed away the snow to reveal the beautiful pink-tipped white flower. Some versions say the original flower was pure white and the tips turned pink where baby Jesus touched them. To this day we grow several cultivars as ornamentals in our gardens. The name

“black hellebore comes from its black root.

Rosemary is the evergreen member of the mint family known for its potent aroma. In the middle ages, it was used to repel evil spirits and at Christmas it was spread on floors to release its fragrance wherever people walked. People believed that breathing its fragrance on Christmas Eve would bring happiness during the coming year.



Another legend explains that Mary spread Jesus' fresh-washed clothes out to dry on a Rosemary bush. The

clothes turned the flowers blue and gave the bush its fragrance. Today, Rosemary is often pruned into a conical shape to resemble a Christmas tree and used for holiday décor.

The popular Christmas bloom Poinsettia is native to Mexico. The Aztec people used the red leaves as a dye. Spanish priests used the flowers in



Christmas festivities. The flower associated with Christmas is based on the

legend that a Mexican girl had only weeds to place at the nativity scene. They were miraculously transformed into beautiful red poinsettias. The name comes from Dr. Joel R. Poinsett, a nineteenth century botanist who developed a shorter, bushier plant that

can now be found in red, pink, white, yellow and designer colours. Marketing has made Poinsettias nearly as popular for holiday celebrations today as evergreens.

For centuries, mistletoe has been one of the most magical, mysterious and sacred plants of folklore. It is said to bestow life and fertility, provide



protection against poison, and act as an aphrodisiac. The British tradition of kissing under the mistletoe at Christmas time started in the 17th century and is still practiced today in Britain and North America.

It is not surprising that evergreen holly, with its bright winter berries, would be celebrated in the darkest days of winter from earliest times. Folklore attributes



holly with the power to protect homes from thunder strikes. Holly and ivy have been paired at Christmas and Solstice celebrations since ancient times. Holly was considered to be male and ivy was considered female. The pairing of these two symbols survives today in the popular traditional Christmas carol "The Holly and the Ivy".

Blue Roses Are Coming



...Again

A Columbian flower grower Suntory and the Australian company Florigene, are developing a blue rose. I know, we have heard it and seen it before, but supposedly they are on track to creating a real blue. Part of the problem has been the inability to create a blue pigment. It turns out that the genes in rose petals are not encoded to take the enzyme necessary in the blue pigment "Delphinidin". In order to avoid this problem, Suntory has succeeded using the genes found in flowers like petunias and pansies to create the blue pigment and implanting them into roses. They are in fact creating a new rose, one with blue pigments instead of the traditional rose which has only red pigments. These new roses have almost 100% Delphinidin in their petals, which will allow the company to create a larger variety of blues.

Suntory hopes to have their first roses available in three years – but not to you and me. The company plans to market their roses to the Japanese. Apparently blue roses can fetch \$500 USD in Japan, and a single blue rose \$40-50. Columbia is the world's second largest exporter of flowers after Holland, with the majority of their products going to the US and Europe.

Happy Holidays!

Marg Catley

Patty King

RBG & Garden Events

- **Doorways to the Holidays:** November 27 to December 9; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



- **Stratford Garden Festival** March 3rd to 6th
<http://www.stratfordgardenfestival.com/>
- **Canada Blooms** March 15th to 20th
<http://www.canadablooms.com/>
- **RBG Garden Show** April 29th – May 1st



Halton Master Gardener Meetings

- February 2nd Chelsea Flower Show
- March 2nd
- March 30th Frank Kershaw
- May 4th
- June 1st

Check our website for details of future meetings at
www.haltonmastergardeners.mgoi.ca/Meetings.php

Workshops & Technical Updates

- **January 8, 2011 – Sustainable Horticulture** at Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East
 - Cost is \$35.00 including lunch.
 - Brochure and registration form on the MGOI home page: mgoi.ca
- **January 16th** Galt Horticultural Society, Cambridge ***Dream Garden Conference***; Speakers: Yvonne Cunnington, Perry Grobe, Lorraine Roberts; Coffee/tea & refreshment breaks, lunch; door prizes & garden vendors; tickets \$35.00 until December 31, 2010 (\$40.00 after) More info: email: crobinson@eatoils.ca phone: audrey bailey 519.623.1988 website: <http://galths.gardenontario.org/specialevents.html>
- **Sunday, February 27** Guelph and Wellington County Master Gardeners "**Gardening with a Purpose**"; three speakers, covering water features, urban trees and urban vegetable gardening Victoria East Golf Club, Guelph; registration information in early January.
- **Halton Region MG Technical Update**, September 17th, 2011
- **International MG Conference: Color it Green in a Wild and Wonderful Way** October 11th -14th, 2011 Charleston, WV <http://imgc.ext.wvu.edu/>

