

January 2023

## South Schuylkill Garden Club

Third Tuesday of the Month at 6:30

First United Church of Christ, Schuylkill Haven

[www.southschuylkillgardenclub.com](http://www.southschuylkillgardenclub.com)

[www.facebook.com/soschuylkillgardenclub.com](http://www.facebook.com/soschuylkillgardenclub.com)



### Cultivating the Community Newsletter

#### Weather Folklore for January

**The first 3 days of January rule the coming 3 months.**

While the day-to-day weather can change very quickly as individual weather systems move across the country, the overall weather pattern tends to stay the same for 90 to 120 days, anchored by teleconnections such as El Niño and the North Atlantic Oscillation, which remain relatively stable. Thus, in most cases, however much the weather has departed from normal in recent days is likely to be the overall direction of departure in the coming months.

**If birds begin to whistle in January, frosts to come.**

Birds are usually around and active in the northern states during the heart of winter only when temperatures are unusually mild, which means that the steering winds high aloft have a large north-south component. The southerly component is what brought the warm weather, but, as those steering winds move, they will become northerly, bringing along very cold air.

**Always expect a thaw in January.**

The “January thaw” is a name given to a mild spell in January in places where temperatures are below freezing most days. While it does not occur every year, given the normal variations in temperature

and weather patterns, most Januarys have at least a few days when this happens.

**As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens.**

As you may know, the winter solstice occurred on December 21 in the Northern Hemisphere. This is the day when the Sun is farthest south, and the duration of daylight is least. With the Sun at its weakest, you might expect that this would be the coldest day, on average—but it is not! Think about what happens when you put a tray of water in the freezer. It does not become ice instantly, because it first must give off its stored heat. The same thing happens with Earth, so the coldest period occurs, on average, about a month after the winter solstice, even though there is more sunlight then. Hence the coldest temperatures typically occur as days are getting longer.

**FYI for 2023**

**Membership Club Dues are due to Kaye Moyer, 754 Mountain Road, Pine Grove, PA 17963 by December 31 for the coming year.** They are still only \$18.00 for the year.

**Club Committees for 2023** A sign-up sheet was circulated at the October meeting. Please contact Kim if you did not sign up on the refreshment and committee sheet for 2023. This information is needed for the printing of the 2023 yearbook.

## Preparing Center for Christmas Party

Jeanne's and Helen's ears were buzzing as we who put the arrangements were asking ourselves what Helen and Jeanne would recommend.



Kaye and Bonnie with finished product.



Bonnie and Kathy concentrating on making the arrangements

## Christmas Party

"A Winter Twilight Garden" Christmas Party was held on Tuesday, **December 13, 2022**, at 5PM In Hoss's Steak & Sea House Cressona, PA. A lovely evening was had by all who attended.

Members and guests were treated to favors and six lucky members were recipients of seasonal greens arrangement. We enjoyed background holiday music while we ate our meal. The evening program was Christmas trivia done by Kaye. Then we had an old fashion sing along of Christmas songs by matching the title of the song with a line from the song. This was provided by Kathy T. and what a great time all had with the songs. The evening ended with a reading from this poem.

## A Christmas Poem for Gardeners

T'was the weekend before Christmas, and all through the yard,

Not a gift was being given, not even a card.

The tools were all hung, in the garage with care,

With hopes that St. Nicholas soon would repair.

The shovel with blade all rusty and cracked,

The pitchfork still shiny, but handle it lacked.

When out on my lawn, (it's brown and abused)

I could see poor old Santa, looking confused.

No list had been left for Santa to see,

No gardening gifts were under the tree.

But wait there's still time, it's not Christmas yet,

And gardening gifts are the quickest to get.

You can forget the silk tie, the fluffy new sweater,

Give something to make the garden grow better.

If she wants a gift shiny, then don't be a fool,

It's not a dumb diamond, but a sparkling new tool.

If fragrance is listed you can forget French perfume,

It's a pile of manure that'll make gardeners swoon.

Give night crawlers, not nightgowns, a hose that sprays water.

(Anything for the kitchen is not worth the bother.)

Give a great gift that can dig in the dirt,

It's better than any designer-brand shirt.

Now look quick at Santa, this guy's not so dumb,

Under his glove, he hides a green thumb.

His knees are so dirty, his back how it aches,

His boots stomp on slugs, (he gives them no breaks).

The guy works only winter, you can surely see why,

For the rest of the year it's as easy as pie.

He has elves plant through spring, pull weeds in the summer,

In fall they all harvest, but winter's a bummer

And so, Christmas gives Santa a part-time employment,

'Till spring when the blooms are his real enjoyment.

So, ask the big guy for garden gifts this year,

Seeds, plants and tools, Santa holds them all dear.

You see, malls may be crowded, vendors hawking their wares,

But visit a nursery, stress-free shopping is there.

Now Santa's flown off, to the nursery he goes,

And his voice fills the night with loud Hoe! Hoe!  
Hoe!

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## Donations for Schuylkill Hope Center

A large outpouring of items and monetary donations were collected and then distributed to the center from members of the club.

Following are some photos from the Christmas Party.





**SSGC will be taking our winter break with no club meetings till March. However, committee meetings will be held as needed to plan for 2023.**

## Holiday Cacti Care

Learn how to care for holiday cacti to keep them happy and healthy for optimal blooms.



Photo: Mandy L. Smith, Penn State



Our modern-day holiday cacti ancestors came from the mountainous rainforests of southeast coastal Brazil. These epiphytic cacti evolved above ground in trees where branches met, in pockets where leaves collected and mosses grew. While these plants are members of the cactus family, *Cactaceae*, they are treated as succulents. Some of these long-domesticated cacti can have lifespans that exceed one hundred years when properly tended.

The optimal growing temperature for holiday cacti during the winter is 68°F during the daylight hours and 60°F at night. These are considered short-day

plants, meaning they need at least twelve hours of uninterrupted darkness per day to flower. They prefer filtered light and are damaged by full sun conditions.

Three cacti are commonly known as "holiday" cacti, named for the time of year they bloom. The Christmas and Thanksgiving cacti are from the same genus, *Schlumbergera* (formerly known as *Zygocactus*) but are different species. The Easter cactus (*Hatiora gaertneri*) is from an entirely different genus. Flower colors include red, purple, pink, white, orange, and gold.



Figure 1. Thanksgiving Cactus. Photo: Mandy L. Smith, Penn State

The Thanksgiving cactus has stem segments that contain two to four saw-toothed serrations. The blooms grow horizontally to the stems. Its anthers, the part of the flower's stamen that produces pollen, are yellow.



Figure 2. Christmas Cactus. Photo: Tenette Bogart, Penn State Master Gardener

The stem segments of the Christmas cactus are scalloped and pear-shaped. Its blooms are droopy with purplish-brown anthers. The blooms of the Thanksgiving and Christmas are very similar. Growers have hybridized these plants and created thousands of cultivars.



Figure 3. This Easter cactus has been passed down through several generations and is now a family heirloom. Photo: Tenette Bogart, Penn State Master Gardener

The Easter cactus has rounded stem segments, and its blooms are flat and star-shaped. It is quite easy to tell this cactus apart from the other two by its flower. Easter cactus also needs longer periods of dark and cold for their flowers to form.

When watering a holiday cactus, water from the top down, wetting the potting soil thoroughly. Use a water-soluble plant food for feeding as directed. When the medium becomes dry, water again.

A holiday cactus, particularly a Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus, can bloom more than once a year if appropriate care is given. Once a cactus has bloomed, remove the spent flowers or let them fall off on their own. After blooming, water less frequently and ensure the plant has twelve to fourteen hours of darkness.

Propagate cuttings of holiday cactus by pinching or twisting off a length of stem with three to five segments and place the stem in a good potting medium. Use a rooting hormone powder to encourage rooting. Water well and cover the pot with a piece of plastic bag, providing a humid "greenhouse" for the plant. Place the pot in bright

but indirect light until roots form, usually in three to eight weeks. At that time, remove the plastic bag, water, and fertilize. Another propagation technique is to set the cutting in water until a good root system has developed and then transplant it into a well-draining potting medium.

These cacti like to be pot-bound and enjoy a light misting of water daily. When repotting, wait until the blooming period has ended and the flowers have wilted. Never attempt to repot the plant while it is actively blooming. Late winter or early spring is best. Repotting should be done every three to four years when the plant looks "tired" or when roots begin to grow through the drainage holes.

Remove the plant from the pot, loosening the roots. Repot with a fresh well-draining potting mix in a slightly larger pot with the root ball one inch below the pot's rim. Lightly pat the soil to remove any air pockets, and water moderately. Place the plant in a shaded location for two to three days, then resume a regular care routine.

Conditions that contribute to the lack of blooms include root rot from saturated soil, overfertilization of the plant while its buds develop, drought stress, and too much light. Temperature extremes and lack of light may also cause buds to drop.

Tenette Bogart  
Master Gardener, Columbia County

**So, I started this list below and I would love if all of you experienced gardeners would send me your ideas of "You know you are a Gardner when . . . ." Let us keep the ideas flowing and add to the list. Let us see how many ideas we can come up with. Just email your ideas to me at [kamorgan11@gmail.com](mailto:kamorgan11@gmail.com) or text it to me at 570-617-0808**

**You know you are a Gardner when:**

- Your gardening gloves fall out of the car door
- You have gardening tools in trunk of your car
- You develop community gardens

- Your gardens are themed
- You weed your neighbors' gardens
- You dead head your daughter's flowers
- You empty the dehumidifier and use the water to water your potted plants
- You sprinkle your son's hair from a recent haircut around your plants to keep the deer away
- Pull weeds in public gardens
- Carry a small set of pruners in your back pocket
- You are constantly checking the weather report.
- You plant by the phases of the moon
- You cover your fall plants to protect them from the first fall frost
- You count on the first frost being in November
- You cover your plants before the frost hits.
- Clean your gardening equipment before putting away for the season
- You stare looking at seed and plant catalogues for next year
- You know you are a Gardener ... When you go to the store for groceries and come home with some plants that just jumped into your cart. – Pat P.
- You know you are a Gardener ... when you can resist everything but temptation in a Garden Center. There is always room for one more. – Pat P.
- You know you are a Gardener ... when you smile YES when a gardener-friend asks you if you could use a few irises or daylilies that she is separating because they need thinning. – Pat P.
- You know you are a Gardener ... when the Plant catalogs arrive in the middle of winter. – Pat P.
- You know you are a Gardener ... when the plants in your garden have come from other gardening friends. Memories ... I plant my friends. – Pat

- You are out on those warm sunny days looking for the first signs of spring popping up from the soil.
- You are looking for the first robin to land in your yard.
- The March winds blow off your sun hat when you are out in the garden.
- You are anywhere that you see drying seed pods on a plant, and you wonder if you can get away with collecting some and where you can try planting them. -Kathy T.
- You know you are a gardener when your dog digs a hole going after a varmint and then you place a plant in it – Jeanne
- You know you are a gardener when you light 8 candles in your greenhouse so your peppers and tomatoes do not freeze on a cold night. - Carol H.
- When you are walking by the restaurant entrance and see weeds in the flowerbeds. Your husband turns to you and says, “Don’t even think about it.”- Linda
- When talking in your neighbor’s yard and you bend down to pull weeds.
- When you are watering plants with the dehumidifier water.
- When you stop everything, you are doing to watch it rain.
- You know you are a Gardner when “you do container gardening on an elevated deck and front porch to keep plants deer safe. Deer haven’t learned to do steps to date”
- *You know you are a gardener when*  
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***Happy New Year to You and  
your Family.***