

January 2022

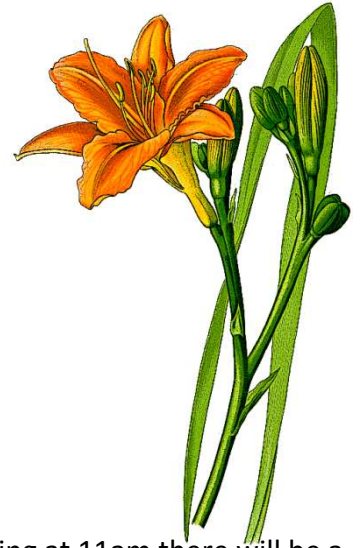
## South Schuylkill Garden Club

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

- *Fog in January brings a wet spring.*
- *A favorable January brings us a good year.*
- *If grass grows in January, it will grow badly the whole year.*
- *A summerish January, a winterish spring.*

January's birth flowers are the carnation and snowdrop.

January is the best time to start planning your garden for the upcoming season.

On January 4, 2022, Earth reaches **perihelion**, which is the point in the planet's orbit where it is closest to the Sun.

#### January 10, 2022: Plough Monday

Dating back to the fifteenth century, the first Monday after Epiphany (January 6) marked the start of the agricultural season, specifically for ploughing the fields for spring-sown crops. Of course, not much work was done on the first day! Dressed in clean white smocks decorated with ribbons, the men dragged a plow (plough) through the village and collected money for the "plow light" that was kept burning in the church all year. Often men from several farms joined together to pull the plow through all their villages. They sang and danced their way from village to village to the accompaniment of music. In the evening, each farmer provided a Plough Monday supper for his workers, with plentiful beef and ale for all.

**Jan 3 at Hosses** starting at 11am there will be a program planning meeting for 2022. If you have any ideas about programs, workshops, or garden tours for the coming year, please email me the information as soon as possible so that I may take it to the meeting -Kim

**Dues** for 2022 can be payable by check to South Schuylkill Garden Club for \$18.00. Bring the payment to the November meeting or mail to the treasurer prior to December 31 to be included in the 2022 Yearbook. -Kaye

#### Bus Trip 2022

The Bus trip has tentatively planned for Thursday May 5, 2022. It is to Bowman's with a guided tour which lasts 1 -1/2 hours. Theme for tour is "Spring Bloomers." Walking on your own after the guided tour is encouraged. The trails are not handicapped accessible. Plants will also be available for purchase.

**Christmas Party** was held at Blu Tavern, 1323 Bunting Street, Pottsville on Route 209 just outside of Llewellyn. We gather at 5:30 for social time to be seated at 6:00 for dinner of roast top round of beef, broiled flounder with lemon or stuffed chicken with filling. Delicious! Lovely time was had by all with a rousing round of Christmas carolers.

### **South Schuylkill Garden Club,**

*Thank you for the invitation to install your officers. Tom and I appreciated your hospitality. It was nice seeing people I knew and making new friends. We enjoyed our evening.*

*I wish you a very Joyous Holiday and a Healthy New Year.*

*Barbara Campbell*

## **Eco-Friendly Ways to Recycle Your Live Christmas Tree**

Finding a sustainable way to recycle, or "tree-cycle," your Christmas tree will keep the holiday spirit going all year.



Photo credit:

[jeromeeno.com/photography/landscape/](http://jeromeeno.com/photography/landscape/)

Recycling is great. But Christmas tree-cycling? Even better. According to the [Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association](#), Pennsylvania ranks third in the United States for the number of Christmas tree farms. There are more than 1,400 Christmas tree farms in Pennsylvania producing more than one million cut trees every year.

The good news is that many of these holiday trees are recycled after the holidays and why not? There are so many interesting and easy ways to recycle

your tree. What is normally a bittersweet task—dismantling the tree and all its festive bling—can be a fun way to help goats, fish, birds, and beaches. Here are suggestions for ways to tree-cycle your tree:

### **Like goats?**

Goats love to eat pine needles, and the needles are a great source of greens, fiber, and vitamins for them. Goats also love to snack on the bark from Christmas trees, especially balsam fir. You can bring your pre-cut holiday tree, with all decorations and tinsel removed, to a local goat farm that accepts trees such as the [Philly Goat Project](#) at Awbury Arboretum in Philadelphia. In 2020, the goats at the Philly Goat Project polished off more than 300 holiday trees. Many goat farms are looking for volunteers to help at tree-cycling events too. "The process of taking care of the tree skeletons left after the goats eat the needles is considerable," said Karen Krivit, Director of the Philly Goat Project. "We pay for wood chipping and have many volunteers moving and hauling trees all over for months after the holidays."

### **For the birds**

Birds are a beautiful sight in the bare winter months and will feast on a holiday tree reborn as a huge bird feeder in addition to enjoying the tree as a source of warmth and shelter.

"Winter feeder birds need a thermal cover, and conifers can be a good source of this warmth and protection from the elements," said Ron Rohrbaugh, Director of Conservation Science and Forest Programs for Audubon Mid-Atlantic. He suggests tying your holiday tree, clean of all ornaments and tinsel, to an adjacent tree for stability against the wind and re-decorating the tree with pine cones with peanut butter and bird seed. Others suggest leaving the tree in the holiday tree stand and weighting it with rocks or stakes. Garlands of unsalted popcorn (salt is bad for birds) as well as apple and orange slices will delight local winter birds from downy woodpeckers to black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatch, tufted titmouse, juncos and more. For more tips see [How to Convert Your Christmas Tree to a Bird Feeder](#).



Downy woodpecker. Photo credit: Nick Shearman/Audubon Photography Awards

## How about fish?

Recycled Christmas trees can be a gift for fish. Sunken trees can help create a richer aquatic habitat where smaller prey fish such as sunfish and perch can protect themselves from predators. Studies have found that species richness, diversity, and abundance of fish - from prey fish to insect-loving fish like yellow perch, bluegill, and small yellow perch as well as predator fish like bass and walleye, tends to increase with the presence of submerged trees with complex branching. See the Penn State Extension article: [Christmas Trees a Gift for the Fish](#) .

## Recycle at the beach

If you live close enough, you might consider taking your tree to the beach for recycling. Beaches use recycled trees to stop beach erosion. The trees are buried on the beach with sand and the trees help hold the sand together during storms. One such program takes place in Ocean County, New Jersey. Residents can bring trees to most of the many county parks to recycle and the trees are made into wood chips for the parks.

## Local conservation efforts and community parks

Trees can be donated to help conservation efforts in the community. Trees have been used in preventing

stream erosion. A line of Christmas trees have been anchored to the streambank, which lessens the impact of the water on the bank and traps sediment to help restore the bank. Also, check to see if your local municipality recycles Christmas trees into wood chips to be used as mulch in the parks.

If you have young children, you can read to them about the adventures of recycling holiday trees. Pennsylvania resident Lynne Samson's new book [Once Upon a Pine Tree](#) is about trees reimagining themselves after the holidays to help rebuild sand dunes, feed birds and chipmunks, and turn back into soil for the earth.

With a little planning, your tree-cycling efforts can extend the holiday spirit well into the New Year.

Jane Rauchorst Corrigan

Master Gardener

Delaware County

## Finding the Joy of Plants in Winter

Winter can be a season of joy, yet for many people it is also a season where the lack of light can cause sadness. Plants can provide spaces to be at ease and at peace.



Photo credit: Mandy L. Smith

By now, you may have heard of the Scandinavian lifestyle of *hygge* (“hue-gah”). Social media lights up during the winter season with curated pictures of



cozy blankets, candles, woolen socks, fireplaces, baked goods, and warm drinks. However, *hygge* is much more than these material items. Those living in Scandinavian countries are all too aware of the consequences of the shorter days and longer nights. Despite their extreme light conditions, Scandinavians top the charts for joy, happiness, and contentment. The concept of *hygge* brings forth the ideas of coziness, togetherness, and well-being for individuals and families to cultivate in their lives.

Where do plants fit in with the idea of *hygge*? The research in the psychological science behind color theory has proven that green brings a sense of peace, hope, happiness, and comfort. Green is associated with renewal and growth, which is uplifting to our spirits even during the darkest of days. Different wavelengths of color can produce different moods. Green belongs to the short wavelength group, which is relaxing and cool. Having houseplants in your home during the winter months (and throughout the year) conveys the calm of green. Create a cozy corner with some tried-and-true foliage houseplants or place flowering plants among other *hygge*-like (*hyggeligt*) items to generate vignettes that bring visual and physical joy.



Photo credit: Mandy L. Smith

Not only does the color of plants put us in a happier mood, but the simple act of choosing to nurture a plant can also boost our well-being. In 1975, positive psychologist Ellen Langer conducted a study within nursing homes using houseplants (and other daily activities) to test whether being empowered to make choices increases wellness.

One group of residents was given houseplants but was told that the staff would take care of it. The other group was given houseplants and was told they could care for them on their own. After 18 months, the group that could control their choices had improved health. The research showed that having control of our actions and spaces as we age, such as through tending plants, will keep us healthier. Especially during the winter months, for all of us, when we perceive that we do not have as much autonomy due to colder temperatures, snow, ice, and darker days, making a choice to care for something such as a houseplant will lift our spirits as it gives us purpose.

Decorating a cozy home with houseplants is wonderful. It creates respite for the togetherness of *hygge*. Many low-maintenance choices are available. Pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*) is not only easy to grow, but it also provides trailing vines with heart-like leaves, and opportunities to propagate more vines that can be shared with loved ones. The peace plant (*Spathiphyllum* spp.), with its dark glossy leaves and white flowers, exemplifies the meaning of peace in our society. The unique leaves, rabbit track pattern on the upper leaf and the purple underside of the prayer plant (*Maranta leuconeura*) add variation and softness to the cool green background. Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* spp.) flowers add warmth and bright colors. Clivia (*Clivia miniata*) requires patience but brings rewards in the winter with fiery orange blooms. Forcing bulbs such as hyacinth, tulips, and narcissus will expand the color palette and textures of your space. Flowers are cheerful and bring an early spring to our indoor spaces. Remember to consider the right plant for the right place just as you would outside. Also, be mindful of the toxicity of plants if you have children or pets.

While having a cozy home with houseplants is wonderful, the plants outside can also bring joy, even though they are dormant. Another lifestyle concept from Scandinavia is that of *friluftsliv* (“*free-loofts-liv*”) which translates to “open-air living”—basically, getting outdoors. Taking winter walks through your garden, the local botanical garden, or a nature preserve can allow you to see and engage with the beauty of the seemingly barren landscape. Structure and contrast of plants becomes prominent. The repetitive branching of jagged edges of trees is what mathematicians call fractals.

Fractals are “infinitely complex,” composed of never-ending self-similar patterns. They are found everywhere in nature from plant root systems, to rivers and fern fronds. Fractals are classified under the new geometry that goes beyond triangles, rectangles, and linear structures. Numerous studies have been conducted on fractals and their appeal through art and aesthetics, as well as the benefits to our focus, productivity, and well-being. Studies conducted at schools have shown that if students have even one window where they can look out at a tree or greenspace, their ability to focus on their classwork improved: views of nature enhance recovery from stress and restore mental energy more quickly. Take time to admire an oak (*Quercus spp.*) or hickory (*Carya spp.*), with their branches grasping toward the blue winter sky.



Photo credit: Mandy L. Smith

While you are out on your walk, stop to look at and touch the bark of a tree. Take a copy of the *Winter Tree Finder* by May T. Watts with you and learn how to identify trees by bark and bud, thus adding to your horticultural trove of knowledge. The texture of each tree species stands out and is another appealing aesthetic of our landscapes. The trunk of an American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) is reminiscent of an elephant leg—gray, straight, and sturdy. Upon closer inspection, wrinkles appear, and light gray or pale green spotting may be found on the bark in the form of lichens. Paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) lights up the garden with its white, flaky bark. The bark is smooth to touch in places, but it is marked by transverse (extending across) lenticels. Lenticels are like plant blisters that add unique texture but also function as a pathway in

which gases can diffuse to the living cells of the tree bark.



Photo credit: Mandy L. Smith

No matter what time of the year or season, plants can bring us a sense of peace, calm, hope, and well-being. Whether indoors or out, we benefit from their presence and the time we take to observe and care for them. This winter, make space for being well, being cozy, and being together with your loved ones, surrounded by plants that can help set the foundation for these joyful times.

Mandy L. Smith  
Westmorland County Master Gardner Coordinator

**Please Share photo from your gardens.**

**Email photo to: [kamorgan11@gmail.com](mailto:kamorgan11@gmail.com)**

**or text to 5706170808**

**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 5706170808**

**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*

**Stay Safe by staying socially separated from others by at least 6 feet. Wash hands frequently and above all do not touch your face, but with clean hands.**

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**Happy and Prosperous  
New Year**