

# Horticulture News!

## February Gardening Tips from the Horticulture Committee

*Martha Pendergast, Horticulture Committee Chair*

*” Outdoor chores begin in earnest in February. I am a very early riser, and am often outside at 5:30 A.M.; I welcome the longer days and the weak rays of sunlight that begin to appear as the month enters its second and third weeks. I use these early hours to walk the dogs around the property and take note of the tasks that need to be accomplished. I am never without my secateurs....”*

“February”, Gardening Month by Month. Martha Stewart

Hello February, 2024!

Ok, so we're not Martha Stewart walking our two-acre ocean-view 1805 Federal Farmhouse property in Westport, Connecticut but you've got to admire that girl. Her Journal for February reads: "Branches, leaves and other garden debris picked up and disposed of; Fruit trees pruned; All garden machinery (tractor, mowers, etc.) sent out for servicing and cleaning; Tools cleaned and repainted; New gloves and tools ordered; Garden furniture cleaned, repaired or replaced; Garden ornaments purchased and painted; Seed packages organized as January orders begin to arrive." I figure even one of these tasks accomplished during the month of February constitutes a win! For me the takeaway is: just when you think there's nothing garden-related to do right now, take a walk around your yard no matter how big or small and see what there is to do. Pick something and have some fun with it! It's about the fun not the task.

**Horticulture Tip of the Month-** This month's tip comes committee member Cathy Slavin, a Master Gardener and new member of our Falmouth Garden Club on the subject of the dreaded **Boxwood Blight**:

Boxwood Blight is present in Massachusetts and those of us with boxwoods in our landscapes should be vigilant and ready to take action to prevent its spread.

Boxwood blight is caused by the non-native fungus *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*. *Buxus sempervirens* and *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' (American and English boxwoods) are most susceptible. It is often introduced into landscapes via infected nursery stock. Infected plants will show brown to black spotting on the leaves and, as the disease progresses, black striping on the stems, leaf browning and rapid and complete defoliation.

What can you do?

1. Buy from reputable nurseries and carefully inspect nursery stock before buying. Boxwood leaves should be spot free. Look for and buy the new, blight-resistant varieties of boxwood that are being introduced. These are marketed under various brands and are becoming more available in nurseries. One such brand is the Better Boxwood line, which includes both traditional rounded forms and more fastigiate or upright varieties.
2. Inspect your boxwoods regularly. Look for brown spots with dark edges, fuzzy gray fungus, black striping on the stems and areas of browning / defoliation. If you are unsure, take a sample in a plastic bag to the local extension office for diagnosis.

3. Remove any infected plants promptly by covering them with a plastic bag, digging them out and disposing of them in the garbage. Be sure to also clean up and dispose of any fallen leaves / plant debris in the area. Do not compost infected materials. The fungus is very sticky and it's easy to transfer it to other susceptible plants, so use disposable gloves and wash your clothing afterwards.
4. Sanitize pruners and hedge clippers before and after pruning boxwood and, if you are pruning multiple boxwood shrubs, between every shrub.
5. If possible, irrigate boxwood from below and avoid wetting the canopy of boxwood plants.

More information and useful photographs are available at: <https://www.bartlett.com/blog/how-to-prevent-boxwood-blight/>

See also: <https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/boxwood-common-health-issues-in-landscape>

**Have a gardening tip you'd like to share?** Drop your suggestion in the "Horticulture Tip of the Month Jar" at the Flower of the Month table.

**Flower of the Month News-** Have a plant in your garden that you would like to display? Exhibit at the Flower of the Month program! Multiple entries are encouraged. Our table is set up each month at the back of the room for members to display their horticulture and yes, arboriculture, including: flowers, shrubs, herbs, vegetables, fruits and trees and to compare notes with other gardeners. Come early to the meeting and we will help you set up your entry with glass vases ready and index cards available for you to tell us the Botanical Name and Common Name of your entry. Add the cultivar name if you know it! Be sure to put your name on the back. Select your entries with good form, condition and color and after the meeting come to pick up your entries and check your card to see your score of a possible 5 points! Check page 25 of your yearbook for additional info on the Flower of the Month program. Cards and helpers from the Horticulture Committee are available at the Flower of the Month table to make submitting entries easy and fun! Even if you are not submitting an entry, stop by to see the beautiful entries from fellow members and to say Hi. We love talking about and sharing Horticulture!

**The Spring Swap-** Will take place May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Cultural Center at the Museum on the Green and will include some of the plants exhibited at Flower of the Month program. Have a favorite plant (indoors or out) that you can divide and share? Please label and bring it! This is a Members Only, no-charge event. Bring a plant, take a plant. There is no charge and no RSVP is required. It's all about making connections with fellow gardeners in the Club. This is a great way for members to get to know each other, to compare notes and share our love of horticulture as well as some great plants! Please label the Botanical and Common name of your donated plant (a horticulture learning opportunity!).

We hope you enjoy the rest of your February days!  
FGC Horticulture Committee