

Horticulture News!

November Gardening Tips from the Horticulture Committee

Martha Pendergast, Horticulture Chair



*“Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.
The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he’s a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he’s to setting.”*

“To the Virgins to Make Much of Time.” Hesperides, Robert Herrick 1648.

Hello November!

During the lovely days of Spring and Summer, the concept of a November day is so far away we can hardly recall the experience. Well, we remember now, don't we? Cold, wet air, limited daylight, fewer people sightings and where did all those usable hours of a day go? Surely, the day can't come to a close at 4:30! Mother nature just shut the lights out when we weren't even looking! Just when it all seems too dim here on the outskirts of that seemingly endless grey landscape called Winter, we remember....SPRING BULBS! We can still plant those and just the thought of them warms the heart. Even if it's just a few new ones, they represent the hope of a beautiful Spring which comes with, of course, more cold, wet air but of a different sort: the sort that has increasingly less chill and is followed directly by elongated light and the return of color to our gardens. Check out the FGC website for details on Bulb ordering that benefits the Club. Consider also bulbs that can be forced indoors when, we or a friend to whom they can be given, need a cheering-up the most. Amaryllis, Paper Whites (*Narcissus Papyraceus*), Hyacinths, Crocus, etc. are just stunning indoors. Some of us may grow Camelia or Hellebores which provide beauty in late winter when little else is in flower. Others may have lovely indoor plants, flowering or not, to bridge the gap between outdoor gardening seasons.

All other outdoor planting should be finished by now as there's too little time left for root systems to develop. We can pick up where we left off next Spring.

After new bulbs are in the ground, it is time to lay that seaweed or other mulches down to topdress the beds. Don't clean up the beds too much, leave some seedheads and plants standing for winter interest and continued food source for birds. You can lay down branches or boughs over the beds to protect for winter. Be sure to disconnect and drain hoses and irrigation systems. Clean and oil wooden tools. Keep to the side a pair or pruners or loppers for work on a mild day. Rake or mulch-mow leaves in the grass but leave the leaves in the beds where they fall. They can be raked up in the Spring.

Bring Dahlia tubers and the rhizomes and corms of canna lilies, begonia, gladiolus, etc. in for winter storage after the killing frost. Be careful to remove excess dirt prior to storage and be sure the temperature of your storage is appropriate for the plants you are storing. (More detail on Dahlia below.) Zinnia heads can be brought in to dry and stored in paper bags till Spring when you can rub the dried flowerheads between palms to distribute the seeds in your flower beds. Cut down and dispose of any plants with powdery mildew such as Zinnia, Monarda and Peony and throw all debris away to help reduce mildew recurring in next year's growth. Label carefully any heirloom tomato and vegetable seeds you are saving for indoor germination early next spring. (Isn't it tragic to think how long it could be before we have a decent tomato again?) Remove spent plants from the vegetable garden and discard. Remove any black spot-infected leaves from your roses and from the ground under your roses. Black spot lives in the soil so any efforts to remove diseased leaves can really help improve the vigor of your beloved roses next spring. Save the pruning of them for late winter but have a good look at the structure of your rose bushes to see what spindly, dead or crossing branches can be removed when the time comes. Put a nice layer of good mulch on those roses. You will be glad you did when they leaf out again in Spring.

Lastly, cut some bundles of lavender from your plants (not too much!) to dry to use in a wood fire for a lovely reminder that all that we love in our gardens will be back soon. In the meantime, are you a cross-country skier? ice-skater? walker? cyclist? runner? beach walker? There are lots of outdoor fitness opportunities to help the time go by especially if you can meet up with a fellow enthusiast. If not any of these, just peek your head outside once in a while, take a breath and find the peace and beauty waiting to be enjoyed in the Cape Cod Winter.

Have a good 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.

Have a plant in your garden that you would like to display? Exhibit at the Flower of the Month program! 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 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. 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!

Flower of the Month News- The Horticulture Committee happily reports that participation in the October Flower of the Month exhibit made for a beautiful sight with 34 stunning entries from member's gardens. Many thanks to all who participated! Our committee is so grateful to the helpers who come to assist us in setting up (and breaking down) the table and filling out entry cards. It all helps make the Flower of the Month display so beautiful! Members and their guests are encouraged to come view the display before and just after the meeting.

Depending on what happens with the frost expected this Tuesday and Wednesday night, there may be fewer things to exhibit but there will still be options! Look around your yards for things of interest and bring in whatever catches your eye. Let's make the November exhibit a great 2023 finale!

The next Flower of the Month exhibit will be at the general meeting in February, 2024. Think ahead and look for things in your own yards or indoors that bring you joy and consider bringing it or a piece of it in to put on display! All specimens of horticulture and arboriculture are welcome! This includes forced indoor bulbs, Orchids or other house plants. Sharing the beauty of our beloved plants is a wonderful way to bond with other members. Multiple entries are encouraged! Remember to take a minute to look up the Botanical and Common name of your plant for your entry card.

We love that ALL the printed copies of the October **Horticulture News!** were picked up last month so this month we have printed a few more. Thanks to Committee Member Priscilla Ruegg for making the copies.

The Spring Swap- Will take place in early May 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!).

Tip of the Month- November- The basics of Dahila dividing and winter storage: Label all your dahlias before digging. It's a tough lesson to learn that you didn't really remember which was which and that a simple tag of some sort on the stalk will save much time waiting for the plant to bloom again next year before it can be identified. Wait a week or so AFTER the killing frost or mid-November, whichever comes first, to dig up your plants. Cut the stalk to about 6". Use a pitch fork to dig. Be careful not to break any of the tuber necks which are an essential part of the tuber. Rinse the dirt off with a hose and put the rinsed clumps up on a grate or wrought iron furniture or something where the air can circulate around the tuber for 24 hours. Do not leave them sitting on the ground or on concrete. These tubers can rot or dry out very easily in this delicate processing stage. After that 24-hr drying period, they can be stored in 40-50 degree temps. Know the general humidity level of your storage area as this will determine how they will best be stored. I divide and store in paper bags with some wood shavings (think pet store) and place the bags in plastic tubs with the lids slightly loose. They can be checked now and then during the winter to make any needed adjustments. Dahlias are basically flowering potatoes. Don't stress over them. When they get what they need they are strong, exquisite plants.

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

Featured Flower on cover: David Austin Rose "**Darcey Bussell**". Named for the British Ballerina, who at the age of 20, became the youngest-ever principal dancer at the Royal Ballet.