



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2011

Patty's Plants

2012 Plants of the Year

2012 Year of " My Favorite Plants "

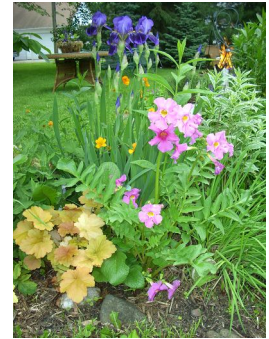
It's December first and I am sitting here listening to the song Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow.... We have had such wonderful late season weather this year. It is hard to think of decorating for Christmas with this balmy weather but Christmas will be here in no time. The weather can change so quickly.



Today I enjoyed every minute working outside in 40 degree temperatures making evergreen container gardens and selling Christmas Trees. I even opened the greenhouse where the pansies are still blooming their little heads off, sweet! So with this great weather how can I possibly bring up the 2012 Plants of the Year? Shouldn't we make it through the Holidays first? Then I thought.... sure why not. Dreaming about growing these plants during the winter will help us get through the harsh weather that will hit us eventually.

Every year the National Garden Bureau, Inc chooses their favorite plants for the up coming year. They usually pick one flower, one perennial and one vegetable. For instance their choices for 2011 was "Year of the Tomato" and "Year of the Zinnia". This year they picked more than just one plant in their categories. They picked my favorite plants, it will be "2012 Year of the Herbs". They couldn't just pick one, they are all so wonderful. Their other choices are 2012 Year of the Geranium" the annual variety and "2012 Year of the Heuchera". I must say, I'm not crazy about the geraniums but I do love all the new colorful Heucheras. I will list a few plants from all 3 of these categories and tell you a little about each. I will also give you a couple herbal recipes to make as gifts or for you this holiday season.

Enjoy!



The NGB Mission & Purpose

Mission: To improve the quality of life and the environment through increased use of seeds and plants.

Purpose: To educate, to inspire and motivate consumers to increase their use of plants in homes, gardens and workplaces by being the marketing arm of the gardening industry.

www.ngb.org

About National Garden Bureau (NGB)

James H. Burdett, was the inspiration in developing the National Garden Bureau. The NGB was born in 1920 as the result of World War I. Burnett believed the public needed much instruction on gardening in their own backyards. Since his background was in journalism and an advertising manager of a seed company, who better

than to find horticultural writers and broadcasters to help educate the public in gardening. The NGB also took part in promoting the governments push on Victory Gardens in WWII. They are incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and are still educating the garden world today.



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Why Year of the Herbs? Why Not?

I couldn't think of a better pick for me than herbs. I can see why the NGB picked them too. They have so many different uses. Herbs have probably been used since the beginning of time for medicinal, culinary, body & bath just as we still use them today. We can plant them in containers or in our gardens mixed with perennials and annuals. Herbs are very easy to grow outside and most need very little care. Herbs would be happy with 5 to 6 hours of sun. If there is too much shade your herbs will be floppy. Be aware of what time of day the sun hits each area of your yard. Most herbs do very well in dry soil conditions. Water only to prevent wilting or when you feel it's necessary. Be sure at that time you water deeply and thoroughly. This way your plants will have a deeper stronger root system.

Herbs don't need much fertilizing. If you've added enough organic materials to your soil you should be all set. You can top dress with a granular organic fertilizer mid-season.

Over fertilizing decreases the concentration of essential oils so the fragrance and flavors won't be as good.

Pruning herbs in spring helps to tidy up and shape them. Although when you want to use your herbs prune them slightly throughout the season. Harvest herbs in the morning just after the dew has dried. This is when they have the most flavor. The more you prune and use your herbs the thicker and fuller they will be. You can make 2 or 3 harvests during the growing season. In the fall, prune perennial

herbs 6-8 inches or to last year's growth as long as there's still some growth or shoots below this level. If you don't have time to dry and hang your herbs, use the cuttings on the grill or fire pit. It will add flavor to your cooking, plus it's great aromatherapy.

Herbs can be grown indoors this time of year if you have enough light. Only grow herbs that you really will use for cooking, making tea, etc. Then take a look around your house and see which area has the brightest light. You will need at least 4 to 6 hours of sun. A south, southeast or southwest window would be best. Decide whether you have enough light or if you need to purchase equipment for artificial lighting. You don't need fancy grow lights, florescent lighting will work just fine. When collecting your supplies (pots, soil, herbs, lights) make sure you have the best organic potting soil with worm casting or add worm casting to potting soil that doesn't have. This is the key to growing healthy herbs indoors and will give them the nutrients they need to survive indoor conditions in the dry winter heat.

Herbs may not grow as lush inside as they do outside but they will grow and you can use them anytime you need to be refreshed. Even if you don't want to cook with them — just smelling them can brighten even the worst of moods. So have fun, experiment with adding them to your meals. You will see the difference fresh herbs will make!

2012 will be the "Year of the Herbs"

2012 Year of the Geranium

The Geranium (the annual variety) seems to remain a staple in today's garden just as they were in our parents' garden and their parents' before them. There are so many new hybrids and cultivars now that it's hard to choose. Some of you will only plant seed geraniums while others must have cuttings. Are they really that different?

Cutting geraniums are usually bigger in both plant and blossom size, while seed geraniums are more

compact, with smaller, single blooms. Seed geraniums are used in big mass plantings a lot because they are lower and have a very even height. They're great in smaller container gardens, where they probably won't overgrow the pot during one growing season. Cutting geraniums are larger growing plants, with very big blossom heads. They will fill out large containers and won't let other vigorous plants take over.



2012 Year of the Heuchera

I love Heucheras also known as Coral Bells. They offer such a wonderful range of foliage color that they should be a must in any garden these days. They are hardy in zones 4-8. Dwarf varieties may stay about 1 foot tall when in bloom; taller varieties can top out around 3 feet when flowering. Heucheras have spikes of small bell shaped flowers in late spring, some a bit longer. I don't grow them for their flowers though. I grow them for their beautiful leaf color. They range from lime green, purples to oranges to rust. The leaves can be smooth, ruffled or wavy. I find that even though they grow in shade, the purple and rust varieties look a bit more

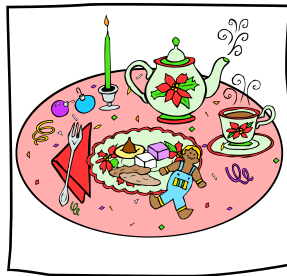


brilliant with some sun. The lime green varieties stay true to color in shade but when in too much sun they tend to be more yellow. The soil should be moist but well draining. If they are in a location with poor drainage, they usually won't survive the winter. They do have a very shallow root system so mulching in the summer will help them during the hot months as winter mulching is a good idea when we have a lot of freezing and thawing. They are a hardy perennial but I love to add them to annual containers in the summer. These are very easy, versatile plants that also attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Patty's Spicy Winter Tea

Coughs, colds, sore throats, upset tummy or for an overall feel good tea!

1 t green tea or one green tea bag
1t chocolate mint (2 t fresh)
1t peppermint (2 t fresh)
1t pineapple sage (2 t fresh)



1t anise hyssops (2 t fresh)
Dash of powdered cinnamon

Cover with 6 cups of hot water and steep for 3-5 minutes & strain.

Garden Basil/Garlic Butter Blend

1 t dried chives
1 t dried oregano
1 t dried basil
1 t dried parsley
1/2 t garlic chips



chill over night.

May place in a small freezer bag and freeze. 2 T herbs if using fresh, 1 clove garlic minced.

Combine herbs and mix with 1 stick butter softened. Mix well mound into an attractive shape and

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Patty's
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Natural & Organic Garden Supply

Herbal Vinegars

Preserving herbs in vinegars is really very simple. Use clean sterilized bottles. Do not use bottles with metal tops, there can be a reaction with the vinegar. Tight fitting cork stoppers work well with recycled glass bottles. Use herbs of your choice, Tarragon, Rosemary, Basil are just a few tasty ones to use. Choose wine, white or cider vinegar depending on whether you are making it for a dressing or a marinade. Wine or white vinegar is better for marinades and cider is better for salad dressings. Pack the herbs in the bottles then warm the vinegar, and pour over the herbs. Close and put in a sunny window sill for 2-4 weeks. Shake the bottle every day. When the steeping time is over use a cheese cloth and strain the liquid into a fresh bottle. You may add a few fresh sprigs for identifying the type of vinegar you just made. Plus it makes it look pretty, especially if you would like to give it as a gift. Tie a little ribbon or raffia around it with a tag for uses to give as a nice Christmas gift.



Cinnamon and Applesauce Dough Ornaments

I was asked if I would repeat this ornament recipe, so here it is.

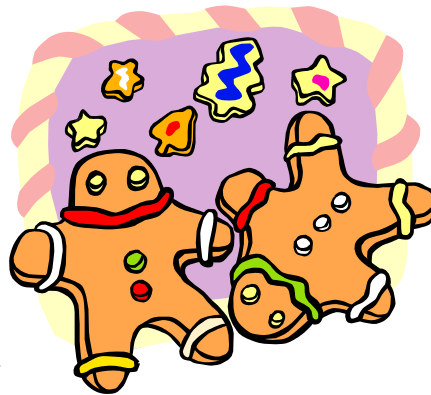
Make homemade natural ornaments for gifts & save this season.

This is a messy project but it smells wonderful.

1 cup applesauce
1 cup cinnamon

Stir together until you have the right consistency. Adjust it if the dough is too dry or too sticky. Roll out dough onto a floured board to a 1/8 inch thickness. Cut into any shapes you wish. Poke a hole at the top of the shape with a straw or chopstick. Place the cutouts carefully on a cookie tray or baking sheet. Bake for 2 hours on

200 degrees until they are hard. Or let them air dry. Place them on a waxed papered tray and let dry for one day. Change the wax paper after the first day and continue to dry until they are hard. Use colorful ribbon to put through the hole to hang. These are very fragrant, they smell wonderful but I must say they are not edible the taste is horrible.



You can find cinnamon in bulk at your local co-op or health food store. It will be less expensive