



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2009

Patty's Plants

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Getting Ready For The Holidays

Wow, November weather in southern Wisconsin was unbelievable! Decorating outside for the holidays has always been much more enjoyable with mild temperatures. But the upper 50's last month, that was totally unexpected. Yet, as I'm writing this, My husband and I did not take advantage of the warm November weather. There may be a snowstorm before the roping goes up at our home this year. For some of us, the decorating season has to have just the right kind of weather to get us in the mood. Here at Patty's we **are** in the mood and ready for the Holidays. We **did** decorate during the nice weather. Sheri and I have been busy making planters and hanging baskets full of greens. Why should we put all our containers away or worst yet let them sit empty in front of our homes or businesses all winter. Many of you have brought in your containers for us to redo for the holiday season. We really have a



lot of fun recreating them for you and for those of you who like to create your own, we have wonderful mixed greens for you too. We spray our greens with "Wilt Pruf" to keep them looking fresh through the winter. I will have more info on "Wilt Pruf" later in this newsletter. When you finish with the outside you will want to start on the inside or think about making gifts for the garden enthusiasts in your life. I will give tips on making holiday baskets to decorate your home or to give as a gift. As well as a few seasonal flowering plants you may want to use in those arrangements, along with a bit about their care. Plus, I have a couple herbal marinate recipes for meat that I will share with you for that special dinner party this season.

**I Wish Everyone A
Safe, Healthy & Happy Season!
Patty**

Holiday Gift Baskets

What better gift for the garden enthusiast in winter than a basket full of colorful plants, natural garden soaps, lotions or even gardening tools. Whether it's for you or a friend, it's bound to put a smile on any ones face just seeing the new little indoor garden. Some new "friends" to play with in the middle of winter when the snowstorm is keeping all of us inside. There are a couple ways we make our baskets. One way is to put all the flowers

and plants directly into the basket with soil. The other is to set them individually in the basket. As individual plants, you or the person that may be getting it will be able to take the plants out, set them all around their home after the season is over. There are many different seasonal flowers and plants to choose from. On the next page I will give you ideas for the type of plants with a step by step how-to.

**Patty's Plants will be having a class on :
"Taking Care of Houseplants in the Winter"
next month.
I will send an update on Date and Time soon.**

***Congratulations to our lucky winner!*
Jackie Zaricor
on winning our
Gift Basket
at this year's
Christmas Open House**

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**Great gardening gifts are here at
Patty's**

Choosing Plants

We might choose some of these flowers: Poinsettias, Christmas Cactus, Cyclamen, Paperwhites, Diamond Frost Euphorbia and Amaryllis. For green plants we use, Norfolk Island Pine, English Ivy, Rosemary, Table Ferns, Peace Lilies or Dracaena Marginata, just to name a few. Ivies and ferns make great fillers as do fresh cut greens.



Once the plants have been chosen, it's time to put it together. (You can also use any type of decorative or funky container). If the plants are just set in the container, you will want to let the person getting it to know the plants have to be watered separately. Care instructions are very helpful when making the basket for someone else so they know what type of plants they are getting and how to care for them.

Holiday Flowers & Their History

Amaryllis- One of the most eye-catching of all. This bulb will take 5-6 weeks after planting before you will see the first shoots. So plan accordingly if you want it to bloom near Christmas. After flowering the leaves must be kept growing until they start to turn yellow in August. Then amaryllis need a rest period in a cool spot about 55-60*. In 4-5 months it can begin all over again. Discovered in 1828 by Dr. Edward Frederick Poepig on a plant hunting expedition in Chili. Go to the Greek Legend Story at: www.pattyplants.com

Azalea -Indoor Available throughout the year in many shades of pink, peach and white. This is not a hardy plant for outside planting. It will bloom for 4-5 weeks. You must never let it dry out. Use good organic fertilizer once a week. It was said that in 1945 in England there was an Azalea growing in a container that was over 150 years old. In Japan they were passed down from generation to generation for centuries. So you don't need to throw them out when they are done blooming but they do need a little special treatment to bloom again. Plant or take outside all summer then bring back in about the 1st week in September.

Christmas Cactus- This is actually a tropical plant. It grows high in the forest of Brazil and attaches its roots to trees. It is an epiphyte which has a very little root system. After flowering it needs 2 months to rest. At this point give it very little water and no fertilizer. In March—May it should start to get new growth on the tips. This is when you fertilize again with a 1/2 strength solution. In June—July, it's time for it to rest again. Water sparingly and don't fertilize. By August—Sept. increase watering. Needs 12 hours of darkness. Blooms in response to shorter days and longer nights like poinsettias. It should start to set buds. But it only blooms on new growth so if everything went well during the different stages, you should have a beautiful plant for Christmas. Discovered in the 1800's by an explorer from Belgium. It was first offered commercially in the mid-1800's by a

nursery in London. Bud-drop caused by many things, usually over-watering, lack of humidity or not enough light. It should be called the 'Holiday Cactus' because they can bloom anytime from Autumn to Spring.

Cyclamen- This plant was usually grown for Valentine's Day, but it has gotten very popular for Christmas too. It needs a cool room (68*) also a bright area but no hot sun. A north or east window would be the best. Because it grows from a corm it's very easy to over water. So let it dry slightly between watering. The cyclamen will bloom from Sept. to March. It does go dormant when the temperature gets to hot.

Most people throw it out at this point. They grow as wildflowers and are native to southern Turkey. They are ancestors of our first florist types which are over 200 years old. Called 'Sowbread' because it was a favorite food of the wild boars. In 1597 It was said a woman 'with child' should not go near them or she lose the baby. But they also said if you make flatbreads out of the corms and serve them to someone you fancy it becomes a love potion.

Paperwhites- Paperwhites are a non hardy Narcissus. This bulb will grow inside in any

type of soil or water with pebbles.. But since it is grown to be forced, you can plant the bulbs in water, rocks, marbles. The container can be glass, ceramic or metal. They are very fast growing so you'll want to stagger the plantings. They can not be replanted once they are done blooming. Called "The Chinese Sacred Lily". It's cousins grow wild among the volcanic rocks of the Canary Islands. There are over 100 distinct varieties found in various parts of the world.

Poinsettias These Mexican Wild flowers were discovered in 1825 by Dr. Joel Robert Poinsette. He was the first US ambassador of Mexico. They grow 12 feet in their native land. They are a Euphorbia. Not poisonous, but they should be kept away from children and pets. If eaten it could make them sick. Called the 'Flower of the Holy Night' in Central America, 'Christmas Star' in the Netherlands and 'Flower of the Christmas Eve' in Spanish 'Flor de Nochebueno.

**Cyclamen was once called
'Sowbread' because it was
a favorite food of
wild boars.**



Making Gift Baskets-Step by Step

- Line the basket with heavy plastic. Leave a little plastic over lapping the basket to tuck under later.
- Place a small amount of gardening charcoal or perlite in the bottom of the basket. Since there isn't any drainage holes in the bottom, the charcoal will help to keep the soil from smelling sour. They both would act as an area for the water to drain into.
- Add a small amount of good potting soil, add a little worm castings for natural nutrients.
- (make sure to moisten the soil first, it's easier to work with and the soil won't settle as much when you water.
- Arrange your flowers and plants in the basket. Put the taller plants in the back and the fillers plants in the middle with the trailers hanging over the side. This is of coarse if you are making it one sided to put up against a corner or wall. Otherwise put the taller plants in the center and shorter around the outside.
- If using a certain color in the backdrop, repeat the same color in the front opposite from each other to tie it all together.
- Fill in with the rest of the soil when you have the plants right were you want them. Firm the plants in place. Tuck the overlapping plastic under or cut off.
- Add spanish moss around the basket to give it a finished look. You can also add an ornament or garden related item at this time.
- If you are just setting the plants in, use styrofoam chunks to raise shorter plants or to secure them in place. Let the person you are giving it to know the plants have to be watered separately.
- Water the planted basket carefully. It should dry slightly between watering as it does not have any drainage holes or make sure all the individual plants are watered .
- Give a recipe card with the plants names on it, how to care for the planted basket or how to take care of the plants individually.

When taking it out in cold weather put it in a protective cover and warm up the car. You want it to arrive alive!

How To Make Your Fresh Greens Last

Wilt-Pruf is used as an anti-transpirant for transplants, over-wintering evergreens and broad leaf evergreens. It will protect your yews, boxwood, holly, dwarf alberta spruce and rhododendrons from winter burn. This natural, biodegradable substance is derived from pine resin. When sprayed on plants,



water evaporates in sunlight to leave a thin protective film on plant surfaces that lasts for months. Spray it on all your fresh cut greens this winter and they will look fresh until spring. Wilt Pruf should dry outdoors in sunlight to be the most effective.

We carry Ready to Use quart size for 16.99 and Concentrate in pints for 21.99

Fun FactsKissing Under The Mistletoe

Mistletoe has been viewed as a symbol of love and fertility, it's is also said to be a symbol of peace. But do we know why we hang mistletoe in our doorways at Christmastime? Is it just to steal a kiss? There are many different thoughts on why we do this. Here is one interesting legend about Mistletoe... A Christmas Tradition: This legend states that a couple who kisses underneath the mistletoe will have good luck, but a couple neglecting to perform this ritual will have bad luck. It is also believed that the couple kissing under the mistletoe is sure to have a marriage that is long and happy. If a unmarried woman is

not kissed under the mistletoe she will remain single for another year. Here's a French tradition that has a more religious aspect of why we hang mistletoe at Christmas-time and why it is so poisonous. They believed it grew on a tree that was used to make the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Because of this, it was cursed and denied a place to live and grow on Earth, forever to be a parasite. **Fact:** Mistletoe needs another tree to grow and live becoming a parasite that sometimes kills it's host.



Patty's Plants

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web-site
www.pattysplants.com

Visit Hedberg Library in Janesville, WI. I will be showcasing some of my personal teapot collection through the month of December.

Easy Herbal Marinates and Rubs

Marinated Flank Steak

- 1 1/2 cup soy sauce or 10 oz bottle
- 3/4 cup honey
- 1 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon dried rosemary
- Optional: 1 clove crushed garlic

Marinate 1 to 2 flank steaks overnight for best flavor and tenderness. Flip over in the marinade a couple of times. Grill a few minutes a side. Because flank steak is thin it doesn't take long to cook. Slice on a sharp angle. Serve hot or cold. It's Delicious either way.

Perry Chicken (my daughter named it after her Uncle)

- 1 Tablespoon ginger
- 1 T sweet basil
- 1 T cinnamon
- 1 T curry powder
- 1 T cayenne pepper

Mix all together and rub on both sides boneless chicken breasts. (Sprinkle excess on during cooking). Sauté in butter or if you prefer olive oil until done.

Marinated Shish Kabob Sauce

- 3/4 t Seasoning Salt or Accent
- 1/2 t dried rosemary or a couple sprigs of fresh
- 1/4 t dried thyme or cut some fresh and sprinkle in
- 4 Tablespoons Worcestershire
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 3 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 2 t ground sea salt or plain salt
- 4 T bar-b-que sauce of your choice
- 3 T cider vinegar

Mix together pour over 2" chunks of sirloin steak, refrigerate over night. I put my onions and mushrooms in the sauce too but you wouldn't need to. Stir a couple of times while marinating.

Use: Green peppers, small tomatoes, sweet onions and mushrooms with the steak on long skewers. Grill until done.

