

the SCOOP

Volume I, Issue 11



December 2006

CHRISTMAS PLANTS & SPICES

By: K. Smith

The December Meeting will be the annual Christmas Social. Everyone should plan to bring a dish.

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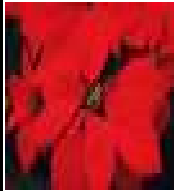
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Officer Elections
December Meeting

Volunteer for
Garden Basics 2007

This time of the year most everyone has the “Christmas Spirit” and is busy decorating their home. One of the easiest ways to bring joy to your home is to purchase or to be given a Christmas Plant. You may ask, *what is classified as a Christmas plant?*

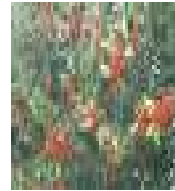
The most common Christmas plants are Poinsettia, Christmas Cactus, Mistletoe, Holly and, of course, Spices.



POINSETTIA

(*Poinsettia pulcherrima* or *Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is one of the most recognized plants for décor and beauty during the Christmas season. This native plant of Mexico is named for the American Ambassador Poinsett who discovered the plant, brought it back

to America, and grew it in a greenhouse in North Carolina. The large colorful bracts grow around the true flowers, which are tiny, yellow and clustered at the top of the plant. The inconspicuous fruits are small, green, three-lobed fleshy capsules.



ENGLISH HOLLY

(*Ilex aquifolium*) The use of this plant goes back in history to the Celtic peoples of Northern Europe. They decorated their homes with holly during the time of the winter solstice, or Yule. The ancient Romans believed that holly warded off lightning strikes and witchcraft. They sent boughs of holly to friends during the festival of Saturnalia which was celebrated at the winter solstice.

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Master Gardeners of Rutherford County Web Site: <http://www.mastergardeners-rc.org>

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS for 2006

- Phone: Waites, Chair; Dallas, B.Jones, S. Lehto
- Community Projects: Anderson, Chair
- Speakers' Bureau: Richardson, Chair
- Refreshments: Fladung, Hollingsworth, Dill
- Special Events: B. Fedorowicz
- Historian: McCray
- Public Relations: Miller
- Web Site Coordinator: Ellis
- Newsletter: K. Smith, Editor

PROJECTS 2006 Volunteers Needed

- Garden Basics 2007
- Fall Extravaganza 2007
- Brown Bag
- Diagnostic Clinics
- Senior Citizen Center
- Sam Davis Home in Smyrna
- Demonstration Garden
- Bellwood Elementary School Discovery Garden
- Grape Vines at Lane Agri-Park
- Orchard at Lane Agri-Park
- Rain Garden at MTSU

Earn Credit Hours toward Certification
By Volunteering

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The **AMERICAN HOLLY** (*Ilex opaca*) is cherished for its beautiful red berries which makes its branches ideal for Christmas décor. The dull green-white male flowers on 3 to 7 flowered cimes while female flowers are solitary with a pleasant odor, appearing in late spring. One must plant a male holly within 30-40 feet of a female holly for the latter to yield berries. The holly prefers acidic soil and can grow from a small tree to 40 feet.



CHRISTMAS CACTI

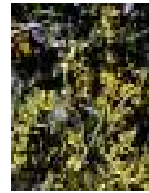
(*Schlumbergera bridgesii*)

(*Zygocactus*) is an easily grown plant which can be nurtured throughout the year. The flowers range in color from yellow, salmon,

pink, fuschia and white or combinations of these colors. This species of cacti is native to the South American jungles. In a publication from our Extension Service (SP27BD) written by James L. Pointer, University of Tennessee, the Christmas Cacti usually get credit for the cacti known as the Thanksgiving Cacti and the Easter Cacti. He states that each species has a different leaf shape making identification easy.

Christmas Cacti have smaller, smooth-edged stem segments with rounded tips. Thanksgiving Cacti have a crab or lobster shape with prominent joint shapes in the form of teeth, or points, at the tip of each joint or segment. The Easter Cacti can be recognized by the bristles produced at the tip of the terminal segment and on each side of the leaf or segment. During warm weather the cacti will flourish outside in a shady or semi-shady location, with proper watering and fertilizer. You will begin to see buds on the Christmas Cactus in the fall. I usually bring mine indoors at the first site of buds. For me, this prevents bud drop. The ideal life of a Christmas Cactus:

- January —flowering
- Februar-March—resting-infrequent watering
- April-May—Water thoroughly
- June-August—Place outdoors in shady spot
- September-October—Plant pepare to flower
- November-December—Flowering



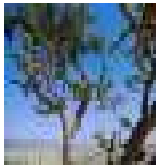
MISTLETOE (*Phoradendron*) is a partial parasite (hemiparasite). The origin of the word “mistletoe” is every bit as complex and obscure as the botany and folklore surrounding the plants. The word originated

from the perception in pre-scientific Europe that mistletoe plants sprang spontaneously from the excrement of the “mistel/missel” thrush. People noticed that mistletoe plants would often appear on a twig where these birds had left their excrement. The “toe” suffix was originally tan and meant twig. Mistle-toe, then, is literally the “twig of the mistel thrush”. Some scholars extend the etymological dissection further, pointing out that the very name of the mistle thrush seems to derive from an Indo-European root for excrement; thus they argue that the mistletoe plant is literally the “dung twig”. As a parasitic plant, it grows on branches or the trunk of trees and sends out roots that penetrate into the tree to take up nutrients. Mistletoe is also capable of growing on its own, producing its own food by photosynthesis. The mistletoe native to North America is *Phoradendron flavescens* and grows as a parasite on trees. Mistletoe has been one of the most magical, mysterious, and sacred plants of European folklore. The oak mistletoe was especially sacred to the ancient Celtic Druids being regarded as a sexual symbol and the soul of the oak. The Greeks thought it warded off evil spirits. In the Eighteenth Century the English are credited with the magical appeal called a kissing ball. *The Legend of the Mistletoe* is associated with the Goddess Frigga, goddess of love and mother of Balder, the god of the summer sun. Balder had a dream of death which alarmed his mother, for should he die, all life on earth would end. In attempt to keep this from happening, Frigga went at once to air, fir, water, earth, and every animal and plant seeking a promise that no harm would come to her son. Balder now could not be hurt by anything on earth or under the earth. But Balder had one enemy, Loki, god of evil. Loki knew of one plant that Frigga had overlooked in her effort to keep her son safe — it grew neither on or under the earth or water, but on apple and oak trees — the lowly mistletoe. Loki made an arrow tip of the mistletoe and gave it to the blind god of winter, Hoder, who shot it striking Balder dead. For three days each ele-

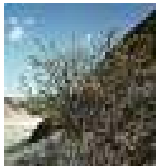
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ment tried to bring Balder back to life. Finally Balder's life was restored by his mother, Frigga. The tears she shed for her son turned into the pearly white berries on the mistletoe plant, and in her joy Frigga kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree on which it grew. A decree that whoever stood under the mistletoe, no harm should befall them, only a kiss, a token of love.



FRANKINCENSE is the resin produced by various trees in the genus (*Bosweilla*). The trees grow in the dry areas of north-eastern Africa and southern Arabia. The resin is harvested by nomadic tribes, who make small cuts in the bark. A few weeks later the tribe returns to collect the "tears" of solidified whitish resin. Trees can yield several kilograms of resin each year. Frankincense has long been valued for the sweet-smelling aroma it produces when burned.



MYRRH is the yellowish-red sweet-smelling resin from damaged bark of the (*Commiphora myrrha*) tree found in the bushland that covers the drier parts of tropical Africa, Arabia, Madagascar and India. The resin gums up the mouthparts of attacking insects such as termites, and its antibiotic properties protect the trees against infection through wounds in their bark. Ancient Egyptians used the resin to preserve mummies — the antibiotic qualities reduced decay, helped to prevent tissues falling apart, and it smelled sweet.



CINNAMON is the dried bark of the (*Cinnamomum verum*) tree, now mainly grown in Sri Lanka. It is said to be among the oldest of spices and was one of the first crops to start world trade.



NUTMEG is the seed of the nutmeg tree (*Myristica fragrans*), a member of the nutmeg family *Myristicaceae*. It is native to the Spice Islands of Indonesia but is now cultivated in the West Indies and other tropical areas as well. The nutmeg tree is an evergreen growing to 65 feet high with long, oval leaves, and small pale yellow flowers. Male and female

flowers are borne on separate trees. The fruit splits open when fully ripe to expose the single, large, brown seed surrounded by fleshy, reddish, netlike appendage (aril) of the seed stalk. The seed is the source of nutmeg. The dried aril is the source of another spice called **Mace**. Nutmeg reached Europe around the 1100s.



ORANGE (*Citrus sinensis*) trees are thought to have been first cultivated in China and did not reach Europe until the 15th century. However even in the late 16th century oranges were an expensive delicacy especially in Britain as they had to be imported from Portugal. The orange was first grown for the smell of the rind. They were carried around by Chinese ladies so their hands would absorb the scent. Mandarin oranges were the first kind of orange to be eaten as a fruit. The famous Jaffa oranges are from Israel.



DATE (*Phoenix dactylifera*) palms were first cultivated in the Arabian Gulf region and have been a staple food in Arabia for at least 5,000 years. Dates grow in bunches of up to 1,000 dates. A single tree produces about 50 kg of fruit per year.



ALMOND trees (*Prunus dulcis*) produce the oldest and most widely grown of all the world's nut crop. The tree is a member of the rose family and similar in appearance to the peach tree and requires more than one variety for pollination. Almonds were found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, and were first cultivated in the Levant some 5,000 years ago. The Romans imported the fruits to England. Ω

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MEETING CALENDAR FOR 2006			
MONTH	DAY	PROGRAM	REFRESHMENTS
December	18	No Speaker—Holiday Celebration	POT LUCK
January	22	TBD	Everyone bring finger food



Members voted to change the refreshment format. Instead of members signing up for a certain date, ALL MEMBERS are to bring a small snack, desert, etc. (Example: a bag of chips, crackers, cheese, etc.)

EVENTS CALENDAR



December 2006						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 Meeting	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Holiday	26	27	28	29	30
31						

January 2007						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Happy New Year	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 Meeting	23 Mstr Gardener	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 Mstr Gardener	31			

February 2007						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 Gar. Basics
4	5	6 Mstr Gardener	7	8	9	10 Gar. Basics
11	12	13 Mstr Gardener	14	15	16	17 Gar. Basics
18	19 Meeting	20 Mstr Gardener	21	22	23	24 Gar. Basics
25	26	27 Mstr Gardener	28			3 Gar. Basics

- **November 24-December 23 — Season of Celebration**
Cheekwood contact: 615-356-8000
- **November 25-December 31 — A Civil War Christmas-Sam Davis Home** contact: 615-459-2341
- **November 30-December 31 — Christmas at Belmont**
Belmont Mansion contact: 615-460-5459
- **December 9 — Christmas at Cannonsburgh —**
Cannonsburgh Village contact: 615-890-0355
- **December 9 — Oaklands Candlelight Tour of Homes**
contact: 615-893-0022
- **December 18 — MG of RC Monthly Meeting:**
 - Christmas Social (bring a dish)
 - Election of 2007 Officers
 - Directory Pictures to be taken
- **January 22 — MG of RC Monthly Meeting**
- **January 23 — Master Gardener Classes Begin**
- **February 3 — Garden Basics Classes Begin**

The December Meeting will be the annual Christmas Social. Everyone should plan to bring a dish.

Directory Pictures Will Be Made At The December Meeting



Featured Photos of the Month

Winter Scenes



Cardinal Male & Female



Snow in Colorado Rockies—Fall 2006

VOLUNTEER FOR GARDEN BASICS 2007

MASTER GARDENERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, county governments cooperating, UT Extension, and Tennessee State University provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.

"*The SCOOP*" is the monthly newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, Tennessee and is published the week after the monthly meeting by email. Those members without email and who are not able to attend meetings may receive the newsletter by U.S. postal mail. The deadline for articles, pictures, events, etc. to be included in the newsletter is the third Friday of each month.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at the Lane Agri-Park at 6:30 p.m., unless specified. Membership is \$25 for a single, or \$35 for a couple residing at the same address. All memberships are valid January through December and are prorated.

Memberships in the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County are open to those interested in learning, teaching, and volunteering for the purpose of educating the community in all phases of gardening.

PLEASE NOTE: MASTER GARDENER CERTIFICATION REQUIRES 40 HOURS OF TRAINING PLUS 40 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE. RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS ARE 25 VOLUNTEER HOURS, PLUS 8 HOURS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PER YEAR. ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS COUNTS AS 1.5 HOURS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AND 1.5 HOURS FOR ADMINISTRATION.