

# Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



December  
2018

HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

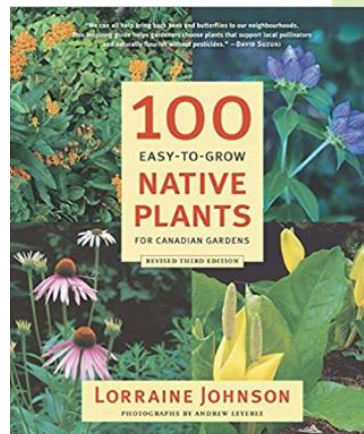
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## December & January Garden To Do List

Indoor house conditions in December and January are difficult for many houseplants. Follow these best practices for healthier plants:

- ❑ **Watering** - All plants should be watered with **room temperature** water-keep a container filled and ready to use. Never use ice cubes to water orchids-there is NO ice in the tropical forest! Water only as needed-check by lifting the pot. If it feels “heavy”, wait for another week or so. Plants with thick, rubbery leaves usually need less water. Plants with thin or delicate leaves usually need more water and humidity. Actively growing plants need more water. Plants enjoying a winter “rest”, will need less.
- ❑ **Humidity** - Increase humidity by grouping plants together or spraying weekly. Place plants on an inverted saucer within a bottom saucer filled with water. (see photo page 2)
- ❑ **Clean & tidy** - A water spray in the sink, shower or with a spray bottle keeps leaves healthy & free of dust and pests. Remove dead or dying leaves and stems.
- ❑ **Light** - Place plants in brighter south facing windows, use LED lighting or reflective white surfaces to increase lighting. Rotate pot ¼ turn weekly for even growth.
- ❑ **Fertilizer** - Most houseplants will not need any fertilizer as they are not actively growing. Orchids can be fed, “weakly, weekly”, using a dilute organic fertilizer. Dilute by ¼ or more.
- ❑ **Pests** - Inspect weekly for sticky areas, dulling of leaves, fuzzy or scaly parts. Use a magnifying glass or phone app such as “[Magnifier Camera](#)” to identify pests. Many insects can be kept in check with a weekly spray of water.

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- ❑ **Pot up** paperwhites and amaryllis bulbs for winter bloom.
  - ❑ **Lawn** - If you still have leaves on your lawn, rake them into the garden (or bags/compost to store for spring mulching) when the weather permits. Avoid walking on lawn if soil is soft and leaves footprints.
  - ❑ **Watch** - [How trees talk to each other](#)
  - ❑ **Read** - “100 Easy to Grow Native Plants for Canadian Gardens” by Lorraine Johnson. For more reading suggestions visit our website under “[Learn/Books & Magazines](#)”



Have a wonderful holiday season!

Please note there is **no January newsletter**, so talk to you again in February!

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## Care of House Plants in Winter

*"Christmas Cactus are rainforest plants and prefer bright indirect light and moist soil"*



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**Air plants & Phalaenopsis orchids** will benefit from a brief weekly soak. Float whole air plant in a bowl, & soak the roots & soil of orchids, for 10 minutes, about once a week. Drain orchids well before returning to pot or saucer and don't leave water in the crowns. Do not soak again if still humid or wet.

**Cactus & Succulents** Place plants in your brightest window. Avoid spraying leaves of succulents as this can lead to fungal problems. Water the soil instead. Allow soil to dry out between watering.

**African violets & spring primroses** Water from below by placing pot in a container of water or carefully water just the soil. Avoid splashing water on leaves or watering crown which can lead to rot. Drain after soaking. Do not allow to dry out completely.

**Holiday plants** Keep your poinsettia moist, but not wet. "Christmas" Cactus are rainforest plants and prefer bright indirect light and moist soil. When the plant finishes blooming, try placing it in a bright window, but with no artificial light, in order to induce it to bloom again.

## Increasing Humidity



Place plant pot on an inverted saucer/lid, within a 2<sup>nd</sup> shallow container. When you water the plant, the bottom container will act as a reservoir, increasing humidity around the plant.



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### Amaryllis

by Patty King MG



When the garden is quieting down and you are already beginning to think of next spring there is a wonderful moment in-between to satisfy your plant cravings with holiday themed plants such as the amaryllis. Along with the red Poinsettia and Christmas cactus the Amaryllis or Hippeastrum will fill the darker days with large red trumpet shaped blooms atop a two foot stem. The leaves are wide and can easily reach a foot in length. Quite a sight to behold!

“Apple Blossom” from Wikipedia commons

Confusion over whether these plants are named Amaryllis or Hippeastrum has been debated for two hundred years. Nonetheless, Amaryllis is the most used common name for the plants we buy today for the holidays.

Amaryllis are a tropical/sub-tropical plant native to the Americas with an epicenter in Brazil. These large bulbs with trumpet blooms first made their way to Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to adorn the glasshouses of botanists, plant collectors and wealthy patrons. Since then technological advances in refrigeration and transportation and initiatives in plant breeding have created new varieties with taller stems, larger blooms, bigger bulbs and more colours.



“Adele”  
Patty's January 2017 Amaryllis

Continued on next page....



Winter wren singing

I heard a bird sing, in the dark of December,  
A magical thing, and sweet to remember:  
“We are nearer to spring, than we were in  
September.”

~Oliver Herford, “Hope,” in *The Century Magazine*,  
January 1914

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### Amaryllis- cont'd

Most of today's varieties are bred in the Netherlands, South Africa and South America, but also the U.S., Japan and Israel. Breeding has been taking place for about 200 years and there are now hundreds of varieties. The number that are sold commercially is much smaller and have names such as 'Apple Blossom', 'Picotee', 'Magnum' and 'Double Delicious'.



"Red Double Delicious"

Growing an amaryllis is not difficult. Most garden centers will sell you a package which includes the bulb, potting medium, and a container along with planting instructions. You can also buy the bulbs separately.

To successfully flower an amaryllis:

1. Get a large enough pot. These are big bulbs. A pot of 7 or 8 inches across is a good size. Clay or ceramic pots will add weight and balance for this tall plant and is a better choice than plastic.

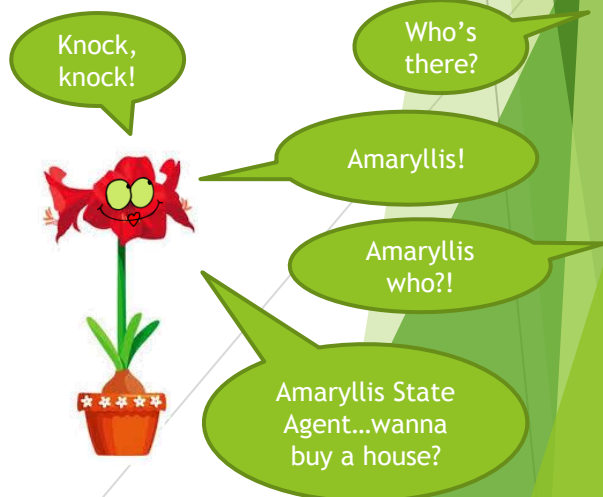
2. Average potting soil is fine.
3. Leave the top third of the bulb exposed.
4. Water well at planting. After that, let the soil dry out between watering. Once a stem starts to appear water regularly.
5. Amaryllis like sunlight and warmth. Room temperature is good and a window with bright indirect light is ideal.
6. To prevent the plant from leaning too much rotate the pot regularly.

The bulbs you purchase from garden centers at this time of year are ready to grow and bloom once you pot them up. Amaryllis bulbs can give you many years of pleasure.

To grow them from year to year just takes some preparation. Once the flowers have faded, cut the flower stalk to about an inch above the bulb. Continue to water the bulb and the leaves will continue to grow throughout the summer. Once the leaves start to decline and turn yellow cut back the water and allow the foliage to die back. Watering can be stopped at this point to allow the bulb to go dormant. Place the bulb in a cool dark and dry place for eight weeks. After this time has passed bring your Amaryllis back to a bright and warm place in your home, water it well, and wait for the cycle to begin again.



Picotee"





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## Origin of the Spices

Had Charles Darwin been a foodie, he might have penned an article answering the tasty teasers below. Test your knowledge of the following 10 spices – name each AND identify the part of the plant it come from.

Just for fun, score yourself. Give yourself 1 point for naming the item and 2 points for correctly identifying the plant part. Tweet us your score @HaltonMGs.



Name

Plant Part

- |     |       |       |
|-----|-------|-------|
| 1.  | _____ | _____ |
| 2.  | _____ | _____ |
| 3.  | _____ | _____ |
| 4.  | _____ | _____ |
| 5.  | _____ | _____ |
| 6.  | _____ | _____ |
| 7.  | _____ | _____ |
| 8.  | _____ | _____ |
| 9.  | _____ | _____ |
| 10. | _____ | _____ |

Need a hint or two? See p. 7. Answers on last 2 pages.

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### What's Growing On?



ROYAL  
BOTANICAL  
GARDENS

#### Winter Walks

Daily, December 27 to January 6\*

11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.; [Hendrie Park](#)

Take a guided walk to discover how the forest has changed to survive the coming winter. Meet in the Hendrie Park Tunnel.

\*RBG closed January 1. Afternoon Winter Walks will not be available December 24 or 31.

[More Activities](#) Included in your [General Admission](#) or [Membership](#)

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#### RBG Back to Nature Hike

Sundays

2 p.m.; Location Rotates

Each Sunday of the month our volunteer Back to Nature hike leaders offer free hikes through the vast ecosystems of RBG's lands, allowing people to familiarize themselves with the area so they can continue to explore with their friends and family. [Learn More >>](#)

**December 31: Rock Chapel;** meet at the [Rock Chapel trailhead parking lot](#).

Free Guided Hike! Parking charges apply.

#### RBG Mini-Exhibit: Seeds in Disguise

November 17 to January 13

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; [RBG Centre](#)

Seeds are all around us: we eat them; we plant them; they parachute from dandelions; they



catch in the dog's coat or on your socks; they drop from the trees; and sometimes they even hang around your neck. This exhibition features ornamental seeds "disguised" as beads in jewelry, trinkets and ornaments.

Included in your [General Admission](#) or [Membership](#)



Orchid Cultural Seminars,  
Orchid Sales & Art Displays  
Admittance free with admission to RBG.

Royal Botanical Gardens  
680 Plains Rd. W., Burlington, ON

**Saturday, February 23, 2019**

Noon - 5pm

**Sunday, February 24, 2019**

10am - 5pm

**Photographers Sunday**

8am - 10am

Visit our website for additional information

[www.osrbg.ca](http://www.osrbg.ca)

Receive **\$4 OFF** an adult or  
senior admission to the RBG.\*

\*Not to be used in conjunction with any other offers or discounts. No cash value. Limit one \$4 discount per coupon. Valid ONLY February 23 & February 24, 2019.



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### Hints for Origin of the Spices (from p. 5)

Each of the names to the left matches only **one of the pictures** on page 5.

The list of plant parts may be used once, more than once or maybe not at all!

Have fun!

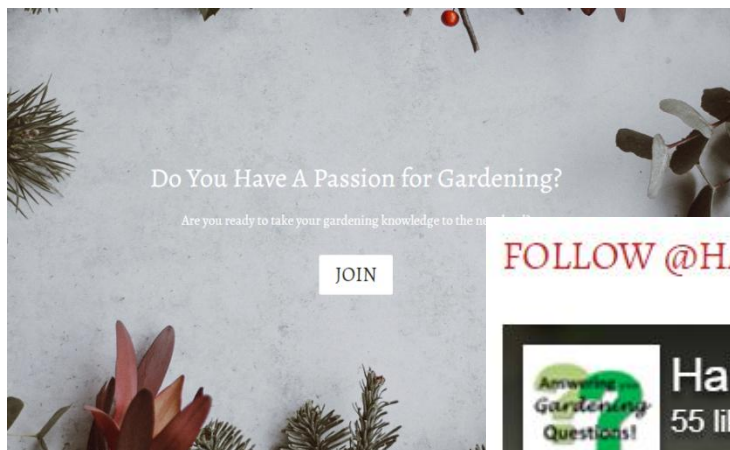
#### Names

Caraway  
Cardamon  
Celery  
Cinnamon  
Cloves  
Cumin  
Ginger  
Peppercorns  
Saffron  
Star Anise

#### Plant Part

Bark  
Calyx  
Flower  
Flower bud  
Petiole  
Rhizome  
Seed  
Stem  
Style & stamens  
Tuber

Our next newsletter will be February 2019. Stay in touch with us through our newly revamped [haltonmastergardeners.com](http://haltonmastergardeners.com) website and our [@HaltonMGs](https://www.facebook.com/HaltonMGs) Facebook page-trusted sources for the latest in gardening news and information!



FOLLOW @HALTONMGs ON FACEBOOK



You can still email us with a plant, disease or pest issue any time at [HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com](mailto:HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com)

Happy New Year!

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## Answers: Origin of the Spices

Check your score!

Just a reminder: Give yourself 1 point for naming the item and 2 points for correctly identifying the plant part. Tweet us your score @HaltonMGs. We'll publish top scores in our February newsletter.

### Item #1: Cardamon Seed Pod and Seeds



Cardamon originated in India and Indonesia and is used primarily as a spice in cooking. Currently Guatemala is the largest producer followed by India.

It's the world's third-most expensive spice, surpassed in price per weight only by vanilla and saffron.

### Item #2: Cumin Seeds



Cumin is a dried seed of the herb *Cuminum cyminum*, a member of the [Apiaceae](#) family to which parsley, carrots and celery also belong. It is native to the Middle East and as far east as India.

It is used in various cuisines in both whole and ground form.

### Item #3: Saffron - Stigmas and Styles of "*Crocus sativus*" crocus



Cultivation of saffron crocus and use of saffron have taken place for more than 3,500 years and spans different cultures, continents, and civilizations, see the [history of saffron](#).



### Item #4: Ginger - rhizome



Ginger belongs to the [Zingiberaceae](#) family to which [turmeric](#) (*Curcuma longa*) and [cardamon](#) (*Elettaria cardamomum*) also belong.

Dry ginger ale, the sort we're all used to, was invented by a Canadian pharmacist John J. McLaughlin right near us in Durham County!

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Origin of the Spices: Answers cont'd

### Item #5: Black Peppercorns - Fruit



Black peppercorns are the cooked and dried unripe fruit. Green peppercorns are dried unripe fruit and white pepper is the ripe fruit seeds.



### Item #6: Caraway Seeds



Caraway is another member of the Apiaceae family (parsley, carrot etc.) native to western Asia, Europe, and North Africa. Well known to flavour rye breads, cheeses and cabbage.



### Item #7: Star Anise - Seed pod of the fruit of *Illicium verum* evergreen tree



*Illicium verum* is native to northeast Vietnam and southwest China. The seed pod (star anise) has a licorice flavour and is the main ingredient in Chinese Five Spice, an ingredient in Indian garam masala and used in liquors like absinthe and sambucca.



### Item #8: Cinnamon - Bark of the *Cinnamomum* tree



From cinnamon buns, red-hot cinnamon hearts to Christmas pot pourris, we'd be hard pressed to live without this hard working spice. Try googling 'cinnamon health benefits' - 86.6 million hits. Not bad for tree bark!



### Item #9: Celery - Petiole of the leaf



Who knew! Makes perfect sense when you look at the picture with the answer in mind.

Another member of the Apiaceae family.

### Item #10: Cloves - Immature flower buds



Cloves are the flower buds of the *Syzygium aromaticum*, an evergreen tree that's native to Indonesia and grows 8' to 12' tall. It's a member Myrtaceae family (myrtle) which also includes allspice.



Where do spices go when they're sick?

To see Dr. Pepper!



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