

Academy Garden Club Thymes

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY GARDEN CLUB OF LENOX

DECEMBER 2019

**The very warmest Season's Greetings,
Ladies!**

I think we have already begun the Holiday Season with our November Boxwood Tree workshop. Many thanks to Liz Celli for leading and to Diane Romeo for setting it all up so that 26 of us could come in and sit down at places supplied with containers, soaked oasis and a bountiful choice of boxwood branches.

Anne Gannon would like us to remember that our own Academy Garden Club Cookbook is still available for only \$7.00 and would surely make a great stocking stuffer or small gift.

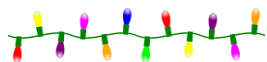
Our next meeting is our Holiday Party, our *covered dish extravaganza*, which will be December 10, at 6:00 pm, at the Academy Building. Everyone will bring a savory dish of their choice to share, our wonderful Dessert Committee will provide desserts, and our own AGC will provide festive drink. If you would like, festive table decorations and centerpieces are most welcome!

Please send me an email (hswetstone@gmail.com) if you have a suggestion for a bit of fund raising fun such as one of our hilarious raffles, or a small house plant swap, or whatever other idea you might have.

Look forward to seeing all of you on December 10!

Sincerely,

**Harriet Wetstone
President**



HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

So what do you think of when you think of mistletoe? Kissing under the mistletoe, probably? But how did that custom begin?



History.com tells us that as with many folk customs, mistletoe goes back thousands of years, to the Celts, to the Greeks and Romans, and to Norse mythology. Many ancient cultures prized mistletoe.

The Greeks thought of it as a medicinal plant that was helpful for everything from menstrual cramps to spleen disorders. The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder thought it could be used to help with epilepsy, ulcers, and poisons. The Celtic Druids (1st century A.D.) are probably the ones who connected mistletoe with romance. Because mistletoe sometimes blossomed even during frozen winter, it was viewed as a sacred symbol of vivacity and it was given to humans and animals in the hope of restoring fertility.

One of the myths in Norse mythology also has an explanation for the love connection with mistletoe: Baldur, a son of the god Odin, was killed with an arrow made from mistletoe despite his mother Frigg's best efforts to protect him. But, he was then resurrected, and his delighted mother declared mistletoe a symbol of love and vowed to kiss all those who passed beneath it! Fascinating, how a plant could hold such symbolic importance across cultures and so long ago!

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Horticultural Column – continued

So what sort of plant is mistletoe? According to britannica.com, mistletoe is a term used for many species of parasitic plants of the families Loranthaceae, Misodendraceae, and Santalaceae, especially those of the genera *Viscum*, *Phoradendron*, and *Arceuthobium*, all of which are members of the family Santalaceae. (I know all those names are so much word salad, but I love them!)



Mistletoes parasitize many ornamental timber and crop trees across many climates. Mistletoes are abnormal growths that appear up in trees, looking something like big nests. They are often called “Witches’ Brooms.” They deform branches and decrease reproductive ability of their hosts.

Mistletoe is actually hemiparasitic rather than holoparasitic, which means that while it gets some of its nutrients from the host plant, it also photosynthesizes on its own which holoparasitic plants do not.

Tropical mistletoes are pollinated by birds, temperate mistletoes by flies and wind. Germinated seeds imbed themselves into the bark of the host tree, forming a connection through which water and nutrients pass from host to parasite. All species of mistletoe produce toxic compounds which are concentrated in the leaves and the berries. Levels of toxicity vary from one species to another, but none of them are safe to eat. Toxicity has its usefulness, however, and the toxic compounds of mistletoe have been researched as medications for many diseases from cancer to hypertension, and several are used medicinally although not in the United States.

Thanks to thoughtco.com; britannica.com; history.com; wikipedia.org

