

Academy Garden Club Thymes

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

DECEMBER 2023

Dear Academy Garden Club of Lenox Members,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends.



We look forward to celebrating Christmas, Hannukah and the winter season together at Ventfort Hall on Tuesday, December 12.

Please bring:

1. Canned goods and other packaged non-perishable items for those less fortunate. (Thanks to Dianne Romeo for offering to transport these items to a food drive at St. Anne's for the AGC.)
2. Money for our fundraising auction
3. Food to share:
 - An **appetizer or main course** if your last name begins with **A-L**
 - A **dessert** if your last name begins with **M-Z**
4. Your own plate, utensils, napkins, and glass

We will supply wine and non-alcoholic beverages.

Our Garden Tour Committee is already contemplating spring and summer activities! Dianne Romeo who chairs that Committee has provided information on the Capital Region Flower Show which runs March 22-24. We will have a sign-up sheet at the December meeting so you can indicate interest and provide your preferred dates/times for a group trip.

If you will miss the December meeting but wish to sign up for the group trip, let Dianne Romeo know soon. Ordering tickets ahead of time allows a discount plus speeds the entry process at the event. For more information, see [2024 Capital Region Flower & Garden Expo | ticketing.events](#)

If you haven't seen the two planters at the front of the Academy Building decorated in lovely greens, check them out next time you are in Lenox. At the request of the Historic Society Board, a team from AGC created the holiday arrangement. Thanks to Carol Way, Liz Celli, Theresa Fasano, Lyn Schmitter and Dianne Romeo for a great job adding holiday cheer to the Academy Building.

Special thanks to our VP Jill Dore for leading the November meeting while I was on vacation and to Dianne Romeo for a terrific boxwood workshop in November. Other than the consent agenda to approve November minutes and accept the Financial Report from our Treasurer Theresa Fasano there is no business on the agenda for December other than to enjoy our holiday party and each other's company.

Best,

Susan Wolf

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Horticultural Column

Poinsettias, Amaryllis and Cyclamen

By Harriet Wetstone

I love that we all garden even in the dead of winter!! And of course, winter is the best time for house plants! I am thinking of poinsettias and amaryllis, and my favorite, cyclamen.

Poinsettias are in the Euphorbia family and native to Mexico. It is the bracts of the plant which give us the wonderful color. The actual flowers are the tiny structures in the middle called cyathia. The bracts, whose purpose is to attract pollinators, drop off once their job is done. Unlike holly and mistletoe, poinsettias are not toxic, however the sticky white sap does irritate skin. The bracts range from creamy white to pink and traditional bright red, but some have patterns in red and white, or pink and white, or even orange. To get the bright colors, it is necessary to withhold light so that the bracts will not produce chlorophyll. As with fall foliage, we see the reds only in the absence of the green of the chlorophyll.



Amaryllis comes from the Greek word amarysso which means 'to sparkle.' Amaryllis, also known as the belladonna lily, is native to South Africa. It produces pink or sometimes white flowers once a year, usually late summer or early autumn. It has a solid, unsegmented flower stem and usually only two or three flowers per stem. Amaryllis is not easily adapted to indoor growing and so is a more challenging house plant.

The bulb that we think of as Amaryllis, is actually Hippeastrum and is native to South and Central America. Hippeastrum has a hollow segmented stem and can produce more flowers per stem than Amaryllis and with a wider range of solid and variegated colors. And it adapts well to being grown indoors in pots, blooming reliably even under less-than-ideal conditions. But both Amaryllis and Hippeastrum are perennials, capable of living for several years and blooming repeatedly.



Cyclamen is a genus of twenty-three species of perennial plants in the family Primulaceae. They are native to Europe and the Mediterranean Basin, east to the Caucasus and Iran. Cyclamen (from Ancient Greek and referring to their round tuber) are known in England (and similarly in other languages) as sowbread or swine bread because they were said to be eaten by pigs. Not what I expected from a plant I love for both its flowers and wonderfully patterned leaves! However, on a more romantic note, back in the sixteenth century, Cyclamen were used as love charms and aphrodisiacs.

The cyclamen commonly sold by florists as a house plant is *Cyclamen persicum*, of which there are many cultivars. It is larger and with bigger blowsier flowers than many, and it prefers temperatures below 68 degrees and even cooler at night. Too warm a room can cause this cyclamen to go dormant, which may be why some of us think of cyclamen as difficult. While Cyclamen has been bred more for its appearance than for its scent, some of the *C. persicum* cultivars are sweetly scented.

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Of the twenty-three species of cyclamen, many are hardy. *C. hederifolium* gives us fall flowers, *C. coum* zone 4-8 flowers in late winter and can cope with the coldest of winter weathers. Many of the species will self-sow and produce carpets of bright flowers. Often called the Persian violet, cyclamen is great for under canopy ground cover and woodland edge borders. Different cultivars produce a variety of pink to white flowers and a variety of beautiful leaf patterns.

Thanks to:
<https://www.homesandgardens.com/gardens/types-of-cyclamen/>;
<https://laidbackgardener.blog/tag/fragrant-cyclamen/>;
<https://extension.umn.edu/houseplants/poinsettia#poinsettia-care-after-the-holidays-and-reblooming-1579964>; https://rocketsgarden.com/amaryllis-vs-hippeastrum/?expand_article=1

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NOTE:

November 2023 Minutes and November 2023 Financial Report are sent as separate documents with the December 2023 Thymes.

Creative Boxwood Workshop – 11/14/23



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Thanks to Tjasa Sprague
for the photos!