



The Winter Newsletter for the Antigonish & Lismore Garden Clubs February, 2016

- Winter is moving along, the days are getting longer
- This version will deal with some more indoor winter ornamentals
- Spring - Seed Starting Tips/Ideas
- How do you keep records?
- News of coming events
- Our next effort may deal with
 - Plantings for Birds & Insects
 - Dealing with Winter Damage(may be relevant in light of recent storms)
- Please feel free to convey a topic you think would be of interest.

sbryson@ns.sympatico.ca

Miniature Hoya



Carefree plant which only needs a modicum of care and some sunlight, easily grown from cuttings if anyone is interested.

Miniature Hoya



**Blooms appear in no particular fashion, but
are a fragrant, pleasant surprise**

Thanksgiving Cactus



Christmas Cactus ?



Schlumbergera is a small genus of cacti with six species found in the coastal mountains of south-eastern Brazil. Plants grow on trees or rocks in habitats that are generally shady with high humidity, and can be quite different in appearance from their desert-dwelling cousins.

This genus contains the popular house plants known by a variety of names including Christmas Cactus, Thanksgiving Cactus, Crab Cactus and Holiday Cactus, which are *Schlumbergera* cultivars, and flower in white, pink, yellow, orange, red or purple.

You can probably guess by their names when these festive plants usually bloom; Thanksgiving cacti typically start in late fall and Christmas cacti around a month later. An Easter cactus starts producing flower buds in February.

A Christmas cactus is *Schlumbergera x buckleyi* and a Thanksgiving cactus is *Schlumbergera truncata*. There are hundreds of different named varieties, but I suspect we mostly don't get a name.

To help determine whether your cactus is a Christmas or Thanksgiving variety, will depend on the edges of the leaf segments. Christmas cacti have smooth, round edges while Thanksgiving cacti have pointy, jagged ones. Perhaps we can just refer to them as "Holiday Cactus".



Thanksgiving Cactus

Christmas Cactus

Blooming "out of season" is common. Manipulating your cactus's exposure to light and temperature conditions can achieve a flexible blooming season .

“Holiday” Cactus

Care of both Christmas and Thanksgiving cacti are essentially the same. The timing of flower bud production may be different. Both may typically rebloom later in the winter. Here are a few basic directions.

Give your “Holiday Cactus” bright but indirect light- too much direct sunlight will cause the leaves to get a reddish hue.

Use a well-draining container and well-draining soil.

Add fertilizer to assist plant growth. Plants that are actively growing should be given a blooming houseplant-type fertilizer. Fertilizer can be withheld in the fall before blooming time

Temperature range, about (18 to 20°C). Cooler night temperatures can be used to initiate blooming

Because this plant is **thermo-photoperiodic**, it will set buds when day length is about equal to night length and when the temperature drops to 50 to 60 degrees F for several weeks.

“Holiday Cactus” should be placed in a spot where it receives indirect, bright light during the daylight hours but total **darkness at night** – it requires long, uninterrupted dark periods of about 12 hours or more.

Water a Holiday Cactus with care, neither overwater or underwater it. These cacti are tropical, not desert plants; they cannot tolerate completely dry soil. If the soil gets too dry, the flowers buds will drop, and the plant will wilt. Feel the soil with your fingers; if it feels dry, it's time to water. **Indoors:** Typically water every week. In the fall and winter months, the plants should be watered less frequently in order to promote blooming, but must never be allowed to get too dry.

Reduce watering after the plant blooms for about 6 weeks to allow the plant to rest. New growth will still appear – and that is when watering should be resumed

Watch out for bud drop. Bud drop can be caused by several different conditions. Usually it's over-watering, but it can also be due to a lack of humidity or insufficient light. If this starts happening, water the plant less and add some fertilizer to the pot. Move it to an area away from a hot radiator or vent and try a new spot where it can get a bit more sunlight.

Holiday cactus may be pruned a month after blooming. This will encourage the plant to branch out, especially after a period of "rest" has been granted

Prunings can be used to propagate a Holiday Cactus : cut off short, Y-shaped sections of the stem consisting of two or three joined segments. Allow sections to dry for a few hours before pushing them into a 3-inch pot of potting soil. Plant halfway down the first segment and water sparingly to prevent rot . Roots and new growth should be apparent in 4-6 wks. This is a good idea to maintain an old plant you want to divide or repot.

In summer, it is fine to take the plant outdoors, somewhere with dappled light initially and shelter from any wind. Bring in well before cold weather.

Orchid Cactus The Epiphyllums



The Epiphyllums are a large Genus of many hybrids from various species. The word epiphyllum means "on the leaf" and refers to the way the flowers pop out from the edges of the leaves which are really just flattened stems.



Orchid Cactus The Epiphyllums



They are another cactus of jungle origin rather than deserts. The plants enjoy soils that are both well-drained and retain moisture. Plants look right at home in hanging baskets that accommodate their sweeping long , flattened stems. The hairy bits in the buds can be prickly!

The flowers, which last for weeks but usually appear only once a year, appear in late April in our house. Bud set seems best on the sunniest side of the plant. The buds pop out quite suddenly and are a pleasant surprise.

They need regular watering, occasional fertilizer and, once a year, a rest. The one period when they should not be watered is, conveniently, beginning in fall when they begin their annual rest. Ours seem to thrive on benign neglect.

Orchid Cactus The Epiphyllums



**big buds open to
spectacular blooms**



Orchid Cactus The Epiphyllums



**big buds open to
spectacular blooms**

ORCHIDS

A variety of Orchids have become very accessible in the last few years. I had never given them much thought until I was given several as gifts in the last two years. Of the four involved, I believe I have only killed one. Not bad for an indoor plant slacker.

It would seem a bit of trial and error is involved. Do they get enough light, are they damp enough, will the cat knock them over, will they actually re-bloom?

In the last year ours seem to have been reasonably happy. Three have put out new blooming stalks. The first was several months ago, and a cat actually did knock it over, breaking the flower off. This past month two more healthy blooming stalks are budding. I have tried the watering with an ice cube trick. Can't say for sure if it is great, but you don't have to worry about too much water in the drainage pot. It is rather fun to place ice cubes on plants. A little slow release fertilizer may also have been of benefit. I have never completely repotted an orchid, but did read recently that damp sphagnum makes a reasonable alternative to the bark you typically see.

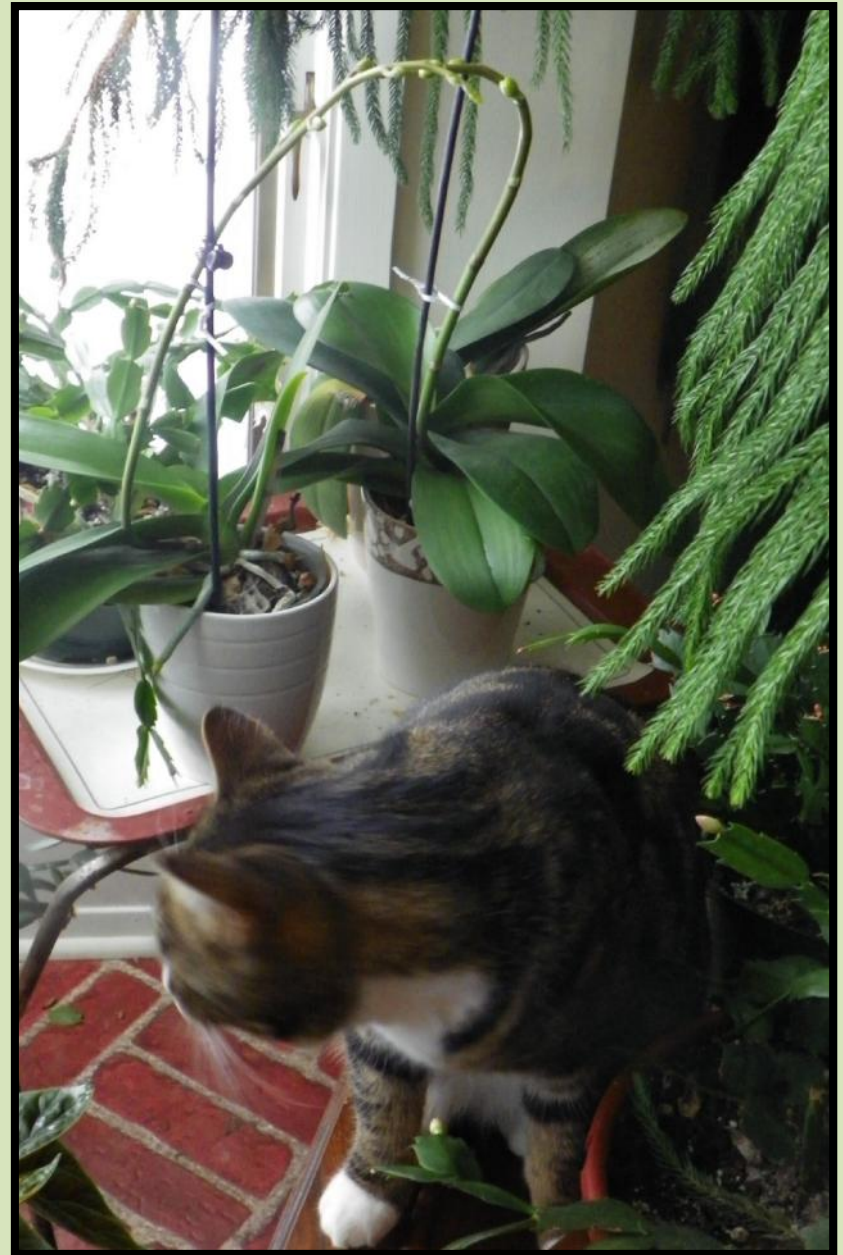
This is the most recent acquisition. I cannot get a true picture of its very deep burgundy color



This was one of the bizarre bluish-purple ones that are artificially created by having the plant absorb some sort of dye. This plant is ready to bloom again and I expect it will be a normal white color. Time will tell.



**Two plants with
blooming stalks and a
potential for damage.**



“The Seeding Frenzy”

By February most gardeners have had some time perusing seed catalogues and quite possibly have seed orders arriving. Whatever your seed source, the excitement of getting seedlings underway is an annual experience.

We have , over the years, sown many seeds from January onward. This year in spite of so-called restraint, we fell prey to eighteen packages of rather unusual seed from The Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Soc. Seed Exchange. They included many that needed special treatment and in the long run quite a bit of patience. Others will be a bit more straightforward. The ORG&HP Soc. has a very extensive database which is available online and provides [germination information](#) for a host of plants.

In recent history Seed Companies have also been providing better germination and growing information. Once seeds are sown, it seems logical that there be some form of record keeping so one knows what worked and what didn't. This can be a Garden Journal of some nature. Many years ago I used a date book to keep tabs on things. For the last fifteen years or so, I have adapted Excel and used my computer to maintain a “Planting Calendar”. Bear with me and I shall share some of the features.

Seeds Planted

much or little info can be added, these are the initial “basics”

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
grew	cold warm	Planting Calendar 2016							
±	Plant Date:	Planted		To Transplant Next *					
	' week of '	Name	Treatm't	Germination Notes	Transplant Date	~ No.	Harden Off Record	Plant'g Site	Source
	cold Jan. 19th	Allium senescens 'Blue Eddy'	sow, give cool period, then warm	in fridge					ORG_HPS
	warm Jan. 19th	Lilium lankongense	sow warm til sprouts, then cool for 3 mos+/- if none						ORG_HPS
	warm Jan. 19th	Paeonia emodi	sow warm til radicle sprouts, then cool for 3 mos+/-	in bag with wet sphagnum under lights					ORG_HPS
	warm Jan. 19th	Paeonia peregrina	sow warm til radicle sprouts, then cool for 3 mos+/-	in bag with wet sphagnum under lights					ORG_HPS
	cold Jan. 19th	Thalictrum rochebrunianum	Expose to fluctuating outdoor winter temperatures including freezing for 3 months. Gradually increase light and temperature in spring.	place pack in sunporch					ORG_HPS
	warm Jan. 19th	Verbascum phoeniceum	(Surface sowed) Sow @ 20°C. Seed germinates within 3 months	tiny seeds					ORG_HPS
		Verbena bonariensis	Sow @ 20°C. Seed germinates within 3 months						ORG_HPS

Screen shot of seeds planted Jan.19,2016

update to Verbascum seeds, germinated Jan.23
That was fast!

Seeds Planted

info added as the season & growth progresses

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
grew	cold warm	Planting Calendar 2015							
+	Plant Date:	Planted	To Transplant Next *						
	' week of '	Name	Treatm't	Germination Notes	Transplant Date	~ No.	Harden Off Record	Plant'g Site	Source
4	Mar. 12th	Thyme	surface sow	chucked					
5	Mar. 12th	Rudbeckia, Prairie Sun	slightly covered	one or two Mar. 20th, slowPOOR overall	Apr. 9th	~6			
6	Mar. 12th	Papvaer miyaneianum	surface sow, seed a couple of years old	start Mar 20th	Apr. 14th	12			
7	Mar. 12th	Petunia, Easy wave White	surface sow ~10-12 seeds	start Mar 16	Apr. 14th	8			
8	Mar. 12th	Petunia, Easy wave BLUE	surface sow ~10-12 seeds	start Mar 17	Apr. 14th	12			
9	March 23rd	Basil, Genovese	slightly covered	up Mar.27	Apr. 20th	24			
10	March 23rd	Basil, Sweet		up Mar.28	Apr. 20th	24			
11	March 23rd	Pepper, Calico(decorative) 2013Lin	used little heating mat under seedling trays	most starting ~ Mar. 31st+/- good color on many	Apr. 20th	14			
12	March 23rd	Pepper, Purple Flash,		slower than Calico, still					Lind

typical record from 2015
all the blanks don't always get filled in, but the basic info is there

Seeds Planted

Apr14th	Impatiens, accent Midnight Rose	surface sow/ no bottom heat	all very poor germ. Signs by ~Apr.26+/-				
Apr14th	Impatiens, Accent Violet	surface sow/ no bottom heat					
Apr14th	Impatiens, Super Elfin Blue Pearl	surface sow/ no bottom heat		2015 record			
Apr14th	Impatiens, Super Elfin White, more seeds	surface sow/ no bottom heat					
April 23rd	Begonia grandis(tubers)	potted up Apr 23rd ~ 1 prop. Trays(28), tray 3" pots(18), Prop tray (~15 with other Beg.)Tray with 32 in 4-cell	sprouts doing OK ~Apr. 28th				1st week June
April 23rd	Begonia, Crimson (new) 3		growing well		3		1st week June
April 23rd	Begonia, White 3				3		1st week June
<div> 2016 Planting 2015_Planting 2014_Planting 2013_Plant'g 2012_Plant'g 2011_Plant'g 2010Planting 2009Plant'g 2008Plant'g </div>							

The bottom of the sheet shows the “history”, tabs represent a sheet for each year, enabling a look back to find a host of information. This particular file goes back to 2001

Other Record Keeping Categories

Inventory of Seeds and Seed Orders

Record of new plants acquired, site planted and performance, again done annually

Record of fall bulbs, garlic plantings

Your needs are the only limit! Several varieties of Garden Software are available, but may or may not suit your purposes

Another Aspect of Record Keeping "The Virtues of Labels"

Reasonable labelling of newly planted or existing plantings.
NO, you are not necessarily going to remember the name of that new expensive AA Selection or Proven Winners plant.

Labels can be as exotic or simple as you wish, but having some is quite a good idea.

You do not have to strive for botanical garden quality labels.
Fancy "Lee Valley " types are not always practical, especially in a large application.

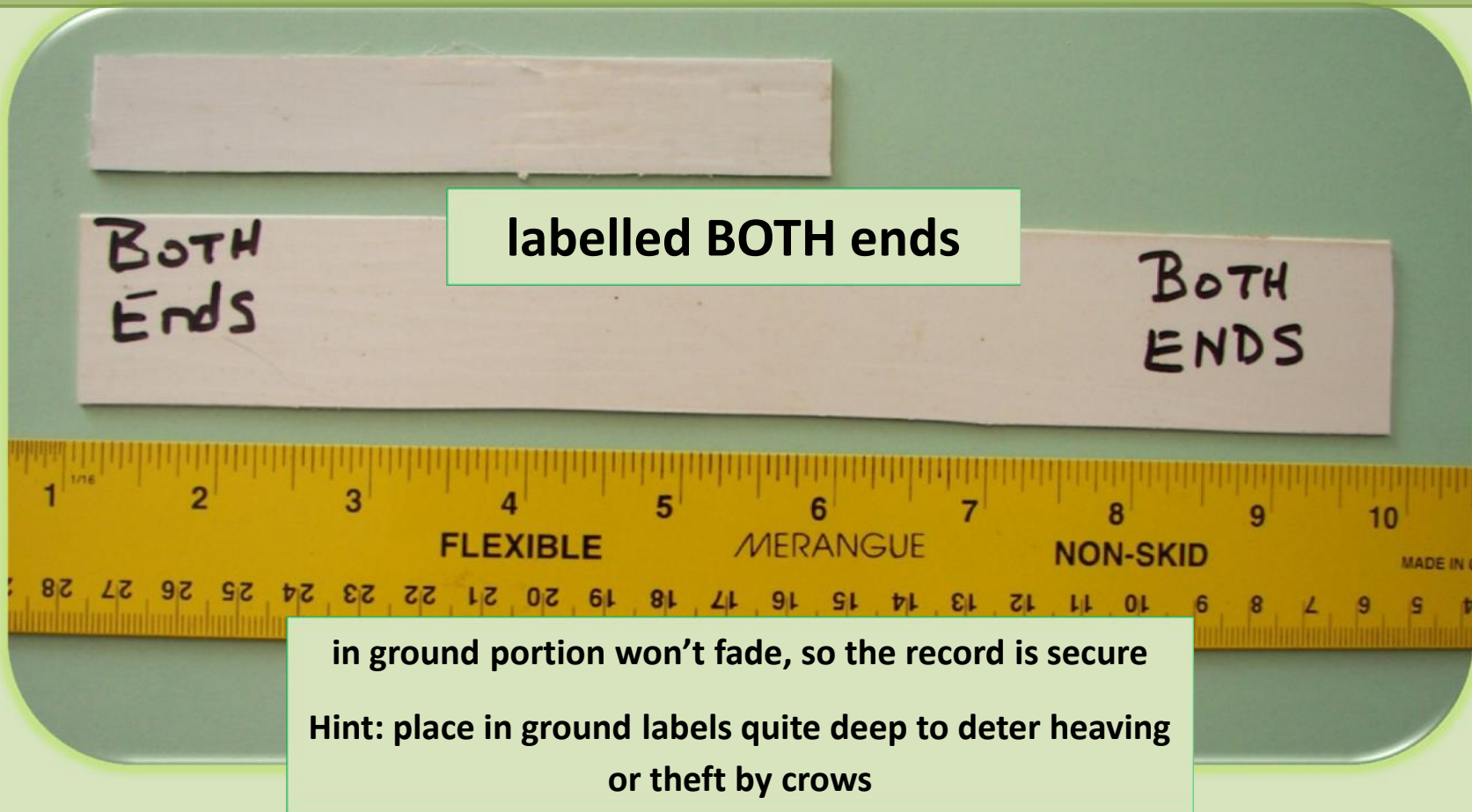
Labels don't have to cost much money (other than perhaps a good marker) One should strive for a sturdy material that will survive the rigors of the outdoors. Markers can be a bit of trial & error. Regular Sharpies will fade in time, but they have a new one (Sharpie Extreme)we are anxious to try. The marker designed for cattle ear tags is purported to be fade-proof. It is a little cumbersome, however.



Marker sample, seems it needs a warning!

Simple In Ground Label

vinyl strips (we use scraps of vinyl siding) cut to desired size, larger one for plants, smaller version for pots or seed packs



...speaking of labels

**embossable wired
aluminum labels**

**these are especially useful
for shrubs, trees**



“The Seeding Frenzy”

Most gardeners have acquired the skills necessary to successfully grow the seedlings they desire for their summer season. I will not venture into that territory. There is a very nice summary which you may find useful, courtesy of Garden Making [magazine](#).

Garden Making [Starting Seeds Indoors](#)

Garden Making [Starting Perennial Seeds](#) Indoors

Upcoming Events and News

**Lismore & District Garden Club invites District Garden
Club members and the public
Saturday, February 20, 2016 1:30 PM
at The Lismore Community Hall
“Getting to Know Magnolias”
Presentation by Sharon Bryson
“learn more about these beautiful plants and perhaps
arrange to obtain one come spring”**



**The Lismore Club will also be taking orders for High
Bush Blueberry plants, again with spring delivery.
‘Darrow’ and ‘Jersey’ varieties are offered.
They will be 18" to 24". Plants sell for \$8.00.**

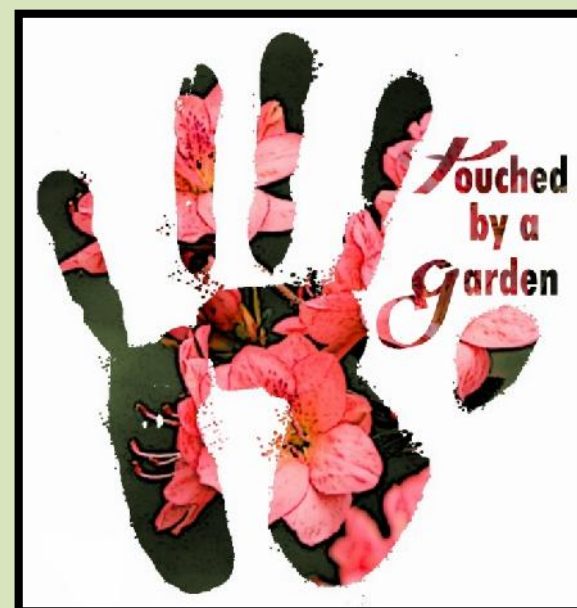
Here is a [reference](#) for High Bush Blueberry Varieties for N.S.



The Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Soc. Seed Exchange
The 2016 Exchange will be open to the public after February 29.

The list and ordering information is [online](#).
171 entries composed of Rhododendrons, Azaleas
and many Companion Plants

NSAGC Annual [Convention](#)
June 3-4, 2016
The Wellness Center, Westville Road
Register soon



Upcoming Events and News

Seventh Annual

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RARE & UNUSUAL PLANT SALE

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Horticultural Event



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May 22nd, 1-4pm
Farmers' Market Venue
downtown Annapolis Royal
across from the wharf.

For more information contact Jill @ (902)532-7777 or jill@bunchberrynurseries.ca

This is a great “plant event”



**A heartening
sign of spring
are the tulip
bouquets
that have
appeared in
the stores
courtesy of
[Vanco](#) farms
from PEI.
Treat Yourself**