



Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, a deciduous holly native to Michigan, brings vibrant pops of color to the winter landscape with its bright red berries. These berries provide essential food for birds and wildlife during the cold months, making it a great addition to your garden for supporting local ecosystems.

This hardy shrub thrives in wetland areas but can adapt to various garden conditions, offering year-round beauty with its lush green leaves in summer and stunning berries in winter.

Photo by: University of Minnesota Extension

The Oakland Gardener

January 2025

Gardening for Health: Rose Hips

Article and photos by Kelly Stanesa

Wandering through my mom's yard on a warm day last month I noticed her rose bush was full of rose hips and I got curious. What exactly are these colorful little fruits and, do people use them for anything?

The answer is yes! A little bit of investigating



revealed that rose hips are packed with antioxidants and vitamin C and offer many health benefits. Throughout time humans have been making foods, medicines, and cosmetic products with rose hips. **The National Library of Medicine** reports that recent research has studied rose hips for, "*potential application as a treatment for several diseases including skin disorders, hepatotoxicity, renal disturbances, diarrhea, inflammatory disorders, arthritis, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, obesity, and cancer.*" Indigenous people have used rose hips for centuries and they are a staple in many cultures.

How can we incorporate the benefits of rose hips into our diets? Rose hips can be enjoyed fresh or dried for use in various recipes. Popular ways to consume them include teas, jams, and jellies. These tasty products are widely available online, or you can try making them yourself. Harvesting rose hips is simple—they form on the plant after the flowers fade in late summer and are best collected in the fall, just after the first frost. Here are a few helpful websites with tips on harvesting, drying, and cooking with rose hips.

Rose Hip Recipes

Rose Hips - From Growing to Harvest and Uses Rose Hip Jelly and Jam Made From Wild Fruit

If you plan to harvest and prepare rose hips for consumption, there are a few important safety measures to keep in mind. First and foremost, it's crucial to know the history of the rose bush or bushes you are harvesting from. Ensure the plants have not been treated with pesticides or fertilized with products containing pesticides, including those purchased from garden centers or nurseries. Like any fruit or vegetable, avoid growing your rose bushes in contaminated soil and take precautions to prevent the soil from being exposed to toxins.



For more safety precautions about ingesting rose hips, visit these websites:

MSU Extension - Herbal Tea

Medline Plus - Rose Hip

WebMD - Rose Hip Uses, Side Effects, and More

I recently harvested a bowl of rose hips from my mom's bush to make tea, but since they're taking their time drying, I decided to purchase some rose hip tea and rose hip powder to try in the meantime. To me, the tea tastes like hot lemon water and brews into a wonderful amber-red color. Next, I plan to experiment with it as an iced tea by mixing it half-and-half with regular black tea for a healthier version of an 'Arnold Palmer'. The rose hip powder is versatile and can be added to smoothies, drinks, or various dishes to boost their nutritional value. I'm looking forward to sampling and trying it in all kinds of dishes.

For more information about rose hips visit these websites:

WebMD - Rose Hip Uses and Risks



Too Few Windows and Too Many Plants

Photos and article by: Jamiel Dado

Years ago, when I started collecting houseplants, I would grab whatever caught my fancy at the nursery. It wasn't until several plants kept succumbing to one tragedy or another that I started actually looking into their needs. It seemed that there were many I had not considered. As

I made my way down the list and corrected various issues that I was presented with, I suddenly hit a wall with a very basic element. It occurred to me that my house had very poor lighting for my newfound hobby. Out of my entire house, it became clear that I only had a few modest windows that offered acceptable levels of lighting, and even those failed to reach a level that would be considered adequate for "high light" plant needs. However, instead of throwing in the towel, I decided to push forward, undaunted, and find a solution. I ended up finding not one, but two ways in which I could fill my somewhat dim dwelling with lush greenery.

The first, and admittedly easier, option that I found was to accept my lower light situation and collect some plants that were happy with what my house had to offer. Luckily, there are a surprising number of **houseplants** that do fine without all the brightness. Plants such as the Snake plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*) and the ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) not only require less light than most other plants, but they also provide the added benefit of being rather easy to take care of. They seem to thrive with neglect and need only be watered when they have completely dried out, every three weeks or so. Other lowlight plants that I have filling up my house include such popular choices as Pothos, Philodendrons, and Spider plants. Indeed, if you wanted to keep it simple, you could exclusively stick with low-light plants and be done with it. Your home would be no less green for it.



If however, you are like me, and do not want to be limited in your choices, then **artificial lighting** is your answer. When searching for plant lights, you will notice the wide array of choices that you are presented with. Fluorescents are an affordable and popular choice. They come in varying lengths of tubing and service different lighting needs. It is



important that they supply **acceptable** levels of red and blue wavelengths from the color spectrum. I have several T5 full spectrum lights in my grow tent that I've used for starting my garden plants that work beautifully. Unfortunately, I find that I do not like how they would look hanging over my houseplants. This led me to the use of LED lights. LED lights not only emit the correct levels of red and blue lights that my plants require, but they also come in compact and user-friendly sizes

that are perfect for my aesthetic purposes. I have found that I am partial to small “ring” shaped lights that sit atop clear plastic sticks that I insert into the plant pot and can adjust the height. When my plants inevitably become taller, I set the lights up in decorative bottles where I can adjust the height accordingly.

When using lights, you will find that having them set to timers becomes essential. You could, of course, turn them on and off manually every day, and if this is something that you feel that you could actually remember to do day in and day out then I applaud you. Personally, this would result in utter failure, so I use timers. Luckily, we live in a “smart” world, and there are many wonderful choices beyond the old-fashioned kind that can be somewhat confusing, at least to me they are. If you have some light in the room, then 12-14 hours of **supplemental light** a day should suffice. If you live in some sort of dungeon with no windows at all, then you will require 16-18 hours a day.

Whichever way you decide to go, just be sure to not let a lack of window light stop you from having the indoor jungle of your dreams.



Gardening Activities To Do In Winter

Article by: Liz Will

As the weather turns colder and the garden moves into its natural slumber, it can feel like gardening comes to a standstill. For those of us with gardening on the mind all year long, this can seem like a test of patience and creativity, as we

wait for the growing season to return while finding ways to stay connected to our love of gardening. Fortunately, winter is the perfect time to dive into activities that get set aside during the busy growing season.

Whether you're reflecting on past successes, preparing for the future, or caring for indoor plants, there are plenty of ways to stay connected to your garden. A bonus is that these activities will set you up for a successful growing season next year!

Plan and Prepare for the Next Season

Winter is the ideal time to reflect on your garden's past performance and make plans for the future. Start by reviewing what worked well and what didn't. Did a particular tomato variety thrive while another struggled? Did you have gaps in

bloom times or find certain plants outgrew their space? Jot these notes down so you can make adjustments.

Once you've reflected, start planning for the new season. Sketch out garden layouts, decide what to grow, and create a wishlist of seeds and supplies. Speaking of seeds, now is the time to inventory what you have left and order new ones before popular varieties sell out. This is a great time to research plants you've always wanted to try. Winter is also a great time to determine if you should complete a **soil test** to determine if your soil is lacking in one area or another. A little planning now means less stress come spring planting season!

Start Seeds Indoors

For those of us itching to get our hands dirty, starting seeds indoors can be incredibly satisfying. Cool-season crops like lettuce, spinach, or kale can be started indoors now for an early spring harvest. If you're a flower enthusiast, consider starting slow-growing annuals or perennials, like snapdragons or pansies.

To ensure success, invest in good-quality seed-starting supplies, including trays, seed-starting mix, and a grow light if natural light is limited. Starting seeds indoors not only gives you a jumpstart on the growing season but also allows you to grow plants you might not find at local garden centers.

Care for Indoor Plants

Your houseplants deserve a little extra attention during the winter months. Start by dusting their leaves to maximize photosynthesis and checking for pests. If any plants are outgrowing their pots, now is the time to re-pot them. Be mindful of watering—most houseplants need less water during the winter since they're not actively growing.

Many houseplants also benefit from increased humidity during the winter, as indoor heating can dry out the air. Consider grouping plants together, using a humidifier, or placing water trays nearby to help them thrive.

Winter is also a great time to start an indoor herb garden. Basil, parsley, and chives thrive indoors with a sunny windowsill or grow light. Another fun project is growing microgreens—they're quick, easy, and packed with nutrients!

Winter Pruning

Winter is the perfect time to prune many trees and shrubs, especially while they are dormant. Pruning helps improve structure, remove damaged branches, and encourage healthy growth. If you have fruit trees, proper winter pruning can enhance airflow and boost fruit production next year.

A word of caution: Avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs like lilacs and forsythia in winter, as this can remove their flower buds. Save those for after they've bloomed.

Wildlife-Friendly Gardening

Don't forget about the wildlife in your garden during winter! Leaving seed heads on plants like coneflowers and sunflowers provides food for birds. You can also hang bird feeders and keep a freshwater source available.

Learn and Explore

Winter is also the perfect season to expand your gardening knowledge. Dive into

gardening books, attend webinars, or take an online course to learn something new. You might even find inspiration for projects like creating a terrarium or forcing bulbs like amaryllis and paperwhites for indoor blooms.

For a change of scenery, visit a local garden center or conservatory. Seeing lush plants in the middle of winter can be incredibly motivating and might spark new ideas for your garden.

While your outdoor garden may be resting, there's no shortage of gardening activities to keep you busy during the winter months. From planning and pruning to caring for indoor plants and supporting wildlife, these tasks help you stay connected to your garden and prepare for a successful year ahead. So grab your gardening notebook, roll up your sleeves, and make the most of the winter season—spring will be here before you know it!

Anything but just Serviceable

Article by: Louise Sloan

Common myth holds that the plant we call serviceberry earned its name from marking the end of winter and a time to finalize funerals. Preachers would hold services, the story goes, to properly bury those settlers who had died during the frigid period when the ground was frozen. I like stories like this that help to explain plants' common names, but often end up disappointed to learn the

truth. **Research** shows that, in fact, the serviceberry name is in reference to the color of its berry. Proto-Indo-Europeans used the word *sorbus*, with *sor* meaning reddish-brown, to describe the rowan tree. Serviceberries are easily mistaken for the rowan, but the *sorbus* stuck and mutated into *service*.



Although I might be disappointed that the first story isn't true, I am anything but disappointed in the *Amelanchier* genus. This large group of multi-stemmed shrubs and trees belongs to the Rosaceae family and has a native presence in North America, including right here in Michigan. Known under many names, such as juneberry, shadbush, or sarvis-tree, all *Amelanchier* share the characteristic five-petal flowers of the Rosaceae family. Many species are available to gardeners, but *A. arborea* and *A. laevis* stand out as those we see frequently used. Michael Dirr in his *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* points out that these species are so similar that it's near-impossible to distinguish the two without leaves present.

Dirr also speaks to the ornamental value of serviceberries in our landscapes and his explanations give pause as to why this isn't a shrub or tree more commonly used. The gray bark of the multi-stems, or single stem if trained to be a tree, ages to be ridged and can have red undertones in the longitudinal creases that form. Light-colored flowers bloom shortly in the spring and develop into red fruits that ripen to purple. The fruits of the *Amelanchier* are edible, as long as you get to the berries before the birds. In his descriptions of the genus, Dirr mentions twice that serviceberries make the most delicious fruit pies. Native Americans, though not likely making pies, did enjoy these berries. The fruit, tasty as they are, are just one other ornamental reason to enjoy serviceberries. The leaves offer a changing color from budding to fall. Emerging leaves tend toward purple, darkening to lush green, and then putting on a final show in fall. Depending on the species, leaves

can be gold, orange, and sometimes bronze.



Amelanchier are adaptable to many different settings and zones, many which would grow happily here in Michigan. Serviceberries do well along a wooded edge but can also be stand-alone specimen trees. *A. canadensis*, nearly interchangeable with *A. arborea*, works especially well in swampy or boggy situations and can spread through sucker growth. *A. arborea* has pages of cultivars to choose from and more recent cultivars may offer resistance to disease. Since they are part of the Rosaceae family, *Amelanchier* are unfortunately susceptible to fire blight, cedar rust, powdery mildews, leaf spot, and can host many undesirable insects. The list sounds like a reason to avoid this plant, but

integrated pest management will certainly help serviceberries avoid these issues. The serviceberry would be a great addition to any landscape for its adaptability, fruit production, and beauty. Given the various species and cultivars, there is certain to be one that will work in your specific situation. It will provide year-round interest as it changes with the season and will encourage birds to visit your yard—unless of course you pick the berries first to make one of the Dirr endorsed serviceberry pies.

Photos by North Carolina Gardener Tollbox, Danny Barron & Jim Robbins



Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards. The goal is to equip gardeners with a "tool kit" of research-based knowledge to use immediately at home. Whether choosing plants, using garden chemicals, fertilizer or applying water, gardeners need to understand the long-term impacts on their communities. For more Smart Gardening information click [here](#).



Ask Extension

Call the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 1-888-678-3464 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to noon)

Upcoming Events

Join Us! January Horticultural Trivia Night

Join MSU Extension for the third of our Winter '24-'25 monthly trivia series about gardening. This is a chance to test your knowledge about all things plants, insects, and garden-related in Michigan.

There will be 30 multiple-choice question/answers during this live event and a prize awarded to the top two scorers. Trivia night is open to gardening enthusiasts, trivia lovers, Extension Master Gardeners, or anyone else who wants to play.



Jan. 22, 2025 @ 7-7:45 p.m. ET (via zoom)

Trivia
Registration



The Meadow Brook Garden Club Monthly Meeting

Friday, January 24, 2025

Meadow Brook Hall, 350 Estate Dr.,
Rochester MI 48309-1904

Coffee and refreshments will be served at 9:15 a.m. with program to follow at 10:00 a.m. featuring guest speaker, Richard Thomas, Head Horticulturist at Oudolf Garden Detroit. The Oudolf

Gardens are intended to accent plants which not only have color throughout the growing season, but have winter interest such as seed pods and a variety of textures. Richard will discuss plants and their growth and dormancy habits to help us create beauty in our winter gardens.

Monthly meetings are held in person and are virtually live streamed. Non-members who wish to attend virtually, please send an email, including your phone number to **MBGCmembers@gmail.com** to request a link that includes a link to make a \$5.00 guest donation. Please submit your request no later than Wednesday, January 23, 2025. Guests are welcome in person and reservations are not required. There is a \$5 non-member fee. For more information, call 248-364-6210, email **MBGCmembers@gmail.com** or visit **www.meadowbrookhall.org**.

Visit our
Website



Registration is now OPEN for the winter webinar favorite—PLANT QUEST!

If you are on the hunt for garden-worthy trees and shrubs, perfect perennials, amazing annuals, or natives to nurture...Join Michigan State University Extension as we host nationally known experts on a vast exploration of plants.

PLANT QUEST 2025's speaker line up is going to thrill you! Noted authors, educators, and horticulturists from across the country will share their knowledge of woody and herbaceous plants highlighting favorites featuring dynamic foliage, show-stopping color, and stalwart natives during this four-part webinar series. It's easy to access. Join by ZOOM LIVE every Monday evening in January or anytime at your convenience using the recording link sent to you each week. Just in time for holiday giving, the webinar series is going to warm your winter with visions of beautiful plants and lush gardens. Register and complete payment by January 5 to receive an early-bird discount. Save \$10!

Click on the link below to register any time before January 26th to receive notification of all live and recorded sessions. Share this link with your gardening friends!

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/PlantQuest2025/>

Have a wonderful December and we hope to see you at PLANT QUEST in January!

*Several partial scholarships are available for this program series. Please indicate your interest on the registration form and Diane Brady will be in touch with you.

Cranbrook Conservatory Greenhouse



Looking for a great place to visit in the dead of winter? Then make a point to visit the Cranbrook Conservatory Greenhouse. This

- Located at 380 Lone Pine Rd in Bloomfield Hills
- Parking available onsite, at the House & Gardens parking lot, and along Lone Pine Rd.
- Special Members only presale on Thursday, February 6th from 11:00am - 2:00pm
- Public sale begins on Friday, February 7th from 10:00am- 3:00pm and finishing on Saturday, February 8th from

beautiful space is open year-round on Mondays and Thursdays from 11:00am - 2:00pm for you to enjoy and explore. And for a very special three days in February, they open their doors for one of the most incredible **sales** around!

10:00am – 2:00pm.

Don't miss out on this exciting event! Proceeds go towards the preservation and upkeep of amazing facility!

Article and Photos by Jamiel Dado





Join Us For Our 11th Annual
Educational Garden Conference!

Save the Date!
Gardening and All That Jazz –
Garden Potpourri
Saturday, April 26, 2025 – All Day



In 2025, we're moving to a beautiful new location:
The Oakland Center, Oakland University
Rochester Hills, MI

2025 Garden Conference Speakers will be:
Charlie Nardozzi, Bob Iames, Stacy Hirvela and Susan Martin

Mark your calendars! MGSOC sponsors one of the premier educational conferences in the State. We have 4 of the finest nationally-known garden speakers/authors who will have books to sell and sign that day. It also includes approximately 20 first-class garden vendors, raffle prizes, food, take-away plants and live jazz! MSUE Extension Master Gardeners will receive 5 educational hours for the day. The ticket price will be \$95.

We are looking for volunteers to help with the planning and implementation of this fine event! Some of the set-up will be done late afternoon and early evening of Friday April 25. We have a number of sub-teams such as registration, set-up/tear down, preparing name tags, putting together the folders and handout materials, raffle prizes, food, individuals to help with the Q & A during the presentations, and individuals to help with door prize distribution, gift plants, etc. We hold Zoom meetings about once a month.

Anyone wishing to be part of our Conference Team please contact Betty Peters, MGSOC Conference Chairperson at 248-930-9062 or e-mail to: betty@peters-inc.com. It's a lot of work but great fun! This also counts as your required volunteer hours as the conference is an annual approved event.



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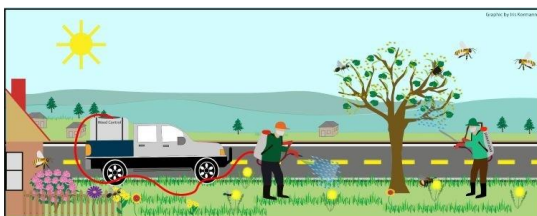
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News You Can Use



Free online courses on pollinator protection offer a restricted use pesticide (RUP) credit for Michigan certified pesticide applicators

Ana Heck, Michigan State University Extension - December 06, 2024

These courses are self-paced, allowing students to review course materials at their own pace and on their own schedules. Each course takes about an hour to complete, and both courses are free of charge. While these online courses are intended for certified pesticide applicators, they are open to anyone who wants to learn about pollinator protection.

[Read More](#)



FOG Registration open until January 29th, 2025

Foundations of Gardening (FOG) is a comprehensive 10-week online MSU Extension course. This course is designed for any adult who wants to learn the science behind great gardening and is also the first step toward becoming an MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteer. To learn more about the structure of the class, click on the following link for the **Foundations of Gardening Course Syllabus**

[Visit our Website](#)



Growing amaryllis, a favorite holiday plant

Lindsey Kerr, Michigan State



The Shocking Truth About Topsoil

Barslund Judd, Michigan State University Extension - December

University Extension - December
16, 2024

Updated from an original article
written by Diane Brown.

The vibrant, colorful flowers of
amaryllis can transform any room into
a cheerful oasis during the winter
months. What is commonly referred to
as an “amaryllis” actually belongs to
the genus Hippeastrum, a group of
bulbs native to Central and South
America.

**Read
More**

06, 2024

Updated from an original article
written by Gretchen Voyle.

Almost every gardener has said at
some time, "We need to buy some
topsoil." Whether it is to fill flower
beds, build a vegetable garden, or
help establish lawns in sandy or clay
soils, you may have needed to
purchase either bulk or bagged
topsoil. But do you really know what
you are getting?

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