



## Traditional Gardening

Gardening means different things to different people. Thousands view gardening as a hobby, a relaxing escape from the pressures of an urban environment. For these people, the food produced may be almost secondary. Growing fresh vegetables, herbs, or fruits provides a great sense of joy and accomplishment. A vegetable garden can also reduce the family's food budget, and it can be a source of hard-to-find vegetables. One of the main reasons that people garden is that vegetables from the supermarket cannot compare in taste, quality, or freshness with vegetables grown in the home garden.

The vegetable garden has traditionally been located in an area separate from other parts of the landscape, because it was considered unsightly. With proper planning, however, the garden can be both functional and attractive. Landscape designers today often incorporate the home landscape and ornamental plants such as flowering annuals into the vegetable garden. This gardening philosophy, coupled with our favorable climate, can offer gardening opportunities nearly all year long.

If you are a beginning gardener with an average-sized family, you will not need a lot of space for a vegetable garden. An area 25 feet square should be adequate. Be careful not to start with too large a space; it is easy to "bite off more than you can chew."

Regardless of size, there are factors to consider in selecting a garden site. The first is sunlight. All vegetables need some sunlight. The garden should receive at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day. Eight to 10 hours each day is ideal. Vegetables should therefore be planted away from the shade of buildings, trees, and shrubs. Some leafy vegetables such as broccoli, collards, spinach, and lettuce tolerate shadier conditions than other vegetables, but if your garden does not receive at least 6 hours of sunlight daily, you will not be successful growing vegetables.

The second consideration is distance from the house. The closer the vegetable garden and the easier it is to reach, the more you will probably use it. You will be likely to harvest vegetables at their peaks and thus take maximum advantage of garden freshness. It is also more likely that you will keep up with jobs such as weeding, watering, insect and disease control, and succession planting if the garden is close.

The third consideration is soil. You do not need to have the ideal type of soil to grow a good garden. If possible the soil should be fertile and easy to till, with just the right texture -- a loose, well-drained loam. Avoid any soil that remains soggy after a rain. Heavy clay and sandy soils can be improved by adding organic matter. Of course, gardening will be easier if you start with a naturally rich soil.

The fourth consideration is water. Including rain and irrigation, the garden needs at least 1 inch of water per week. Therefore, it is essential to locate the garden near a spigot or some other water source.

The fifth & last consideration is good air drainage. Avoid locating the garden in a low spot such as the base of a hill or the foot of a slope bordered by a solid fence. These areas are slow to warm in the spring, and frost forms more readily in them because cold air cannot drain away. Vegetable gardens located on high ground are more likely to escape light freezes, permitting an earlier start in the spring and a longer harvest in the fall.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>Poinsettias and Peppers for Holiday Color</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Garden Calendar</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Repairing Storm-Damaged Trees</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Caring for a Real Christmas Tree</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Quick Bites Programs</b>	<b>6</b>

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Forrest County  
Phone: (601) 545-6083  
Email: mtt52@msstate.edu

George County  
Phone: (601) 947-4223  
Email: h.steede@msstate.edu

Hancock County  
Phone: (228) 467-5456  
Email: C.Stephenson@msstate.edu

Harrison County  
Phone: (228) 865-4227  
Email: tim.ray@msstate.edu

Jackson County  
Phone: (228) 769-3047  
Email: evan.ware@msstate.edu

Lamar County  
Phone: (601) 794-3910  
Email: rosso@msstate.edu

Perry County  
Phone: (601) 964-3668  
Email: b.odum@msstate.edu

Pearl River County  
Phone: (601) 403-2280  
Email: eddie.smith@msstate.edu

Stone County  
Phone: (601) 928-5286  
Email: hbj4@msstate.edu



**Eddie Smith, Ph.D., C.A., Co. Coordinator & Extension Agent  
MSU-ES Pearl River County  
Phone: (601) 403-2280 E-mail: eddie.smith@msstate.edu**



**Christian Stephenson, Ph.D., C.P.H., C.A., Co. Coordinator & Extension Agent  
MSU-ES Hancock County**  
Phone: 228-467-5456 E-mail: [c.stephenson@msstate.edu](mailto:c.stephenson@msstate.edu)

## Poinsettias and Peppers for Holiday Color

Poinsettia plants are a Christmas favorite and are the top-selling flowering potted plant in the United States. Poinsettias are now available in a wide variety of color, giving many options for adding these attractive plants to holiday decorations. A few simple steps can help make sure that your poinsettia stays beautiful throughout the Christmas season and possibly quite a bit longer.



The colorful part of the poinsettia plant is the modified leaves called bracts. Poinsettia growers can apply plant dyes to the plant leading to many more color options. The poinsettia flower is the tiny yellow bead like structure that can be seen in the middle of the bract. A mature flower is slightly swollen with the cup showing nectar. When buying your poinsettia, check the maturity of the plant. Avoid buying a plant from which the flowers have dropped. You should also look at the leaves and bracts of the plant before buying. There should be no tears or discoloration, and they should not show drooping or wilting. The foliage of the plant should be dark green and should cover the stem to the soil line of the plant. The plant should also be the right size for the container it is in. As a general rule, the plant should be about 2 ½ times the size of the container. Lastly, be sure there are no insect pests, such as aphids or whiteflies, on the plant.

The stems of poinsettias are brittle and can be broken easily, so it's important to be careful when transporting the plant. Plants are often sold with paper or plastic sleeves, and these can hide damage. Be careful when you remove the sleeve to make sure you do not damage the plant. Poinsettias need six hours of indirect sunlight a day and do best when the temperature is 72°F during the day and 60°F at night.

A common misconception is that poinsettia plants are toxic. Fortunately, this is not the case and eating poinsettia leaves does not present a significant danger to children or pets. Eating a few poinsettias may cause an upset stomach due to irritation, but the leaves also have an unpleasant taste so this is rarely a problem. People with sensitive skin or allergies to latex should wash their hands after touching poinsettias as the sap can cause irritation.

Ornamental pepper is another great option for bringing in some holiday color. These plants produce peppers in many different shapes, sizes and colors. Colors of ornamental peppers include purple, white, red, yellow, orange, brown and blue. A single plant can have as many as three different colors of peppers. The shape of the pepper makes them look a little like lights on a Christmas tree, making these a wonderful option for a holiday houseplant. Ornamental peppers also grow well as a landscape plant here in South Mississippi. Ornamental peppers need full sun or bright light and should be watered regularly. However, the growing plant needs little fertilization. Peppers do best in rooms that stay between 50 and 70°F. Ornamental peppers have a bitter taste and are very hot and so it is not suggested that they be eaten.

If you have questions about these or other plants in and around your home, please contact Christian Stephenson at the Hancock County office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service at (228) 467-5456.



# Garden Calendar: December

Now is the time of year that Cabin Fever and garden catalogs in our mailboxes get us dreaming about getting out into the garden.

## Planning

- Start plans on paper for changes or improvements in the garden.
- Order seed for early planting.

## Equipment

- Repair and sharpen mowers and tools. Order new pots and markers.
- Check condition of sprayers.

## Planting

- Set out trees and shrubs.
- Plant Sweet Peas, Poppies, and Larkspur.

## Fertilizing

- January - March is the proper time to fertilize trees and shrubs.
- Apply lime to lawns if needed.

## Pest Control

- Scale on broad-leaf evergreens should be sprayed with dormant oil for control.

## Pruning

- Trim Nandinas.

## Mulch

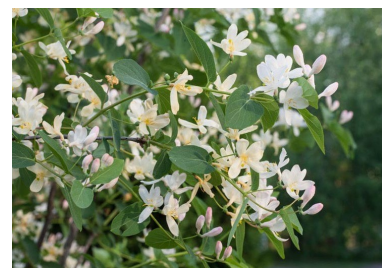
- Mulch Lilies with compost.
- Protect tender plants during periods of extreme cold.

## Miscellaneous

- Keep bird feeders stocked. Provide water for birds.
- After freeze, check to make sure plants have not heaved out of the ground.

## In Bloom

- Camellia, Winter Honeysuckle, Winter Jasmine, and in mild winters Flowering Quince







**Tim Ray, C.A., Extension Agent**

**MSU-ES Harrison County**

**Phone: (228) 865-4227**

**E-mail: [tim.ray@msstate.edu](mailto:tim.ray@msstate.edu)**

## Repairing Storm-Damaged Trees

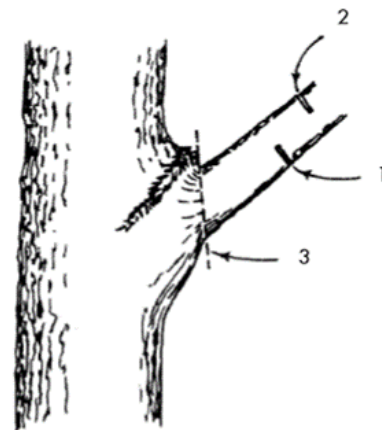
Storms like Hurricane Zeta can play havoc with our landscape and fruit trees. The type of care you give damaged trees depends on their size, the extent and type of damage, and the time required for surrounding soil to reach normal moisture levels. A tree's size largely determines its ability to recover. A small, vigorous tree is more likely to survive than a larger one. In general, a damaged large tree is weakened more than a smaller tree receiving the same kind of damage. Types of damage to trees include falling and being uprooted, broken and torn limbs, wounds, split branches, and exposed roots. In many cases, the damaged tree will have to be removed and replaced. Decide what to do with tree stumps. If you are going to leave them, cut them off flush with the ground. If you plan to have them removed, leave 4 feet of stump. Removal is cheaper and easier if stumps can be pulled out rather than dug out. Stumps can be cut at ground level and the remains removed using a stump grinder.

When removing broken and torn limbs, the tree must be pruned properly to avoid additional damage. Removing tree limbs is dangerous work, so you should hire a certified arborist for the job, if you feel the need. Cut off small broken or torn limbs 1 inch or less in diameter with a single cut at the branch collar to avoid unnecessary bark stripping. To remove large, heavy limbs greater than 1 inch in diameter, use the drop cut method as illustrated in Figure 1 to avoid ripping bark and wood. Never cut flush with the trunk or branch from which you are pruning. This will delay healing and possibly allow rot organisms an entry into the tree.

The amount of damage to the bark of trees inhibits the plant's ability to recover, especially when there is more than one type of injury. Just like when we cut our finger, it is important to "clean" the wound on a tree by removing all jagged and protruding wood and making smooth, clean cuts with a saw or chisel. It is important to remove and smooth out any rough places where water could accumulate and allow rot organisms to grow. Generally, wounds to a tree will heal themselves through the growth of callus tissue. This callus tissue will seal off, or compartmentalize, the damage from the rest of the tree. Sealing a wound can trap moisture and harmful organisms and stimulate the rotting process.

Leaning trees less than 4 inches in diameter can be straightened and staked back into an upright position. The staking/bracing may be required for an extended period, up to 2 years, but be sure to remove afterwards. Prune the damaged tree just enough to balance root losses but avoid severe pruning. Remove broken, diseased, and malformed branches to give the tree a desirable shape. Cover exposed roots and be sure to water the tree well to provide moisture. Trees larger than 4 inches can be difficult to fully straighten, but a certified arborist may be consulted. It may be best to remove the tree and plant a new one in its place.

Continue to care for the injured tree after repairs are completed by providing needed moisture and by adding the correct amount of fertilizer beginning in spring as leaf buds begin to form. Consult a certified arborist if you are uncertain as to the best procedure for repairing or replacing damaged trees. You may contact your county Extension office for the names of Certified Arborists in your area. For more information call your local Extension office or refer to Information Sheet 1355 at [extension.msstate.edu](http://extension.msstate.edu).



**Figure 1. Drop Cut Method:** (1) Make a cut  $\frac{1}{2}$  way on the underside of the limb, about 1 foot from the trunk or branch. (2) Make a second cut on the upper side of the limb, about 2 to 6 inches farther out on the limb than the first cut until the branch splits off. (3) Remove the remaining stub by making a single cut at the branch collar.



**Evan Ware, Extension Agent**

**MSU-ES Jackson County**

**Phone: 228-769-3047 E-mail: [evan.ware@msstate.edu](mailto:evan.ware@msstate.edu)**

## **Caring for a Real Christmas Tree**

After a difficult year, many of us are ready to relax and enjoy the holiday season. What better way to get into the holiday spirit than decorating your home with bright lights and colors of the season? Picking out and decorating a fresh-cut Christmas tree is often a treasured holiday tradition; a real tree is also a great way to support your local Christmas tree farmer.

Before heading out to a farm to pick out your tree, make sure to measure both the height and width of the area where you want to place your tree. A tree in a field or open area may appear much smaller than it does once it is indoors – you don't want to end up with a tree too large for your space.

If your tree has been cut for more than 6-8 hours by the time you are ready to place it in a tree stand, you will need to recut at least an inch from the base of the tree. Recutting ensures that the tree can take up water. Use a stable tree stand that holds an adequate amount of water – you will need about one quart per 1 inch of trunk diameter. Be sure to fill the stand daily with cool water and to check water levels frequently. The tree will use a lot of water the first week or two after placement. A well-watered tree is a safe tree and decreases fire risk.

Make sure to keep your tree out of direct sunlight and away from any heat sources such as warm-air vents, stoves, or fireplaces as these will dry out the tree quickly. Use only approved ornamental lights in good condition that produce low heat such as LED or mini lights. Don't forget to turn off the lights whenever you leave your home or at night before going to bed.

We have several Christmas tree farms within our region. With open air and plenty of room to socially distance, a trip to a Christmas tree farm could be a safe and fun way to spend time with your family. Not only will a freshly cut tree add beauty to your holiday décor, but your local Mississippi Christmas tree grower will surely appreciate your visit!





# Quick Bites

## *December 2020*

Quick Bites programs are offered through the Mississippi State University Extension Service and provide information in a wide variety of topics through Zoom. The programs are held during lunch (12-1 pm) on **Thursdays**. Sessions will be held in Bost 409 for those who are on campus. Contact your county office for more information.

**For County Offices:** Counties may sign up via the Zoom registration link if they plan to host a program within their office area according to the current face-to-face numbers and meeting space guidelines.

Or, counties may make the registration link available to their clients for the individual client to view the programs from their personal computers. Individuals will register for each program and will receive the program link automatically upon registration completion.

### December 3

#### **Traditions**

**Lynette McDougald, Instructor**  
**Plant & Soil Sciences**

Each of us have our own holiday traditions: preparing holiday meals and snacks, attending secular and sacred programs, and decorating our homes for a season of guests. The focus will be on creations with locally collected materials, the involving of young and old collaborations, and reviving old ornaments!

Zoom Registration Link:

<http://msuext.ms/qb2020-12-03>

### December 10

#### **Making Digital Memories**

**Dr. Mariah Morgan, Asst Extension Professor**  
**Center for Technology Outreach**

Need a project for the winter months? Use the opportunity to organize your digital photos. Mariah will share basic to advanced tips to upload photos from your phone, photo storage, printing photos, and online products for making digital memories to share with friends and family. Join in for the information and fun!

Zoom Registration Link:

<http://msuext.ms/qb2020-12-10>

*Developed by the Extension Center for Technology Outreach*

We are an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.



**The County Gardeners Extension Express  
newsletter team would like to  
wish you and your family a  
Merry Christmas!!**



## **Online Private Applicator Certification Program**

**A *private applicator* is a certified applicator who uses or supervises the use of restricted-use pesticides to produce an agricultural commodity on his or her own land, leased land, or rented land or on the lands of his or her employer. Private applicators must be at least 18 years old.**

In response to limited face-to-face training during the COVID-19 situation, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Plant Industry has approved an online private applicator certification program developed by the MSU Extension Service. Persons needing to obtain or renew their private applicator certification can complete the online training (two video training modules and a competency exam) by using the following link: <http://extension.msstate.edu/content/online-private-applicator-certification-program>. The fee for training and testing is \$20, payable online by credit card, debit card, or eCheck.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

MISSISSIPPI STATE, MISSISSIPPI 39762-5446  
PO BOX 5446

EXTENSION

MISSISSIPPI STATE  
UNIVERSITY™