



# The Spade & The Hoe

Issue 1 Volume 12

December 2003

## December Dinner

Instead of our regular meeting on December 11th, Thursday, we will all gather for a holiday dinner at Gusto Ristorante in Carillon Square on Waukegan Road at 6:30 P.M. Spouses and/or significant others are invited to join us. We will be able to order from the menu, so pre-payment is not necessary. However, reservations are necessary, so please, please let Jane Prentis know if you plan to attend. Her number is 729-3230.

## Dues are Due!!!!

Dues for 2004 are now due and payable. Kindly send your check to Joan Ruehrmund, 2745 Karen Lane, (or give it to her at the dinner) for \$30 for singles or \$35 for couples.



The November workshop was such a good one! Holly Jansen brought her technical knowhow and boxes of artificial flowers and greenery, berries and branches, florist's foam and glitter to help all of the participants create marvelous holiday baskets. Joyce Fridall brought ribbons for the finishing touch! Esther brought glue guns and enthusiasm to help those who were 'stuck'. Jane Prentis was the hostess for the evening. The strong wind that had been with us all day had suddenly subsided by the time everyone was to leave with their creations, thank goodness. I had visions of people scampering across the parking lot after their boughs and berries! Thanks to all who made this evening a big success!

## Through the Garden Gate

I have good news to report: the other day two blue jays came to my bird feeder, the first ones here since West Nile Virus did its dirty work. And, the first junco arrived from Canada on October 20th, right on schedule! I just love those little birds! I'm still hoping some black-capped chickadees will venture into this barren locale and brighten up my days.

As I was tidying up the south beds for their winter slumber, I suddenly decided to remove some annoying spreading plants and replace them with a few vegetables next spring. I cleared out a nice area and I am very happy to have a spot for a few tomatoes, Italian broad beans, and maybe a few snow peas. What more could anyone want? I have a good place for a hill or two of zucchini, too. I have been busy this fall with transplanting, clearing out, planting, and planning. Wow! If everything works out, it'll be pretty nice next summer.



### January Meeting

We'll kick off our programs for 2004 with one about our feathered friends. Robbie Hunsinger, of the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, will present an audio/visual program on the methods of preventing bird collisions with our lighted windows. Plan to attend this informative program.

### Planning Ahead...

Plant pansy seeds now so you have sizable plants to set out in April. You will need a bright, cool place to grow them this winter. A plant stand with grow lights is the next best thing to a greenhouse. Use the mix of perlite and brown peat moss. Moisten the mix and fill the seed-starter tray. Sow the seeds, moisten the tray and cover it with plastic wrap. Set it under the lights so it is kept at 70°F. With the lights about 2" above the tray, seedlings should appear in a week or so. Remove the plastic and raise the lights as the plants grow. Keep them in the tray until the time to plant them outdoors. Then, very carefully, lift them with the aid of a wooden label and set them into the soil, in a hole you made with a pencil or dibble and fertilize them.

### Dues are Due!

Send your dues to Joan Ruehrmund, treasurer, or give them to her at the Holiday Dinner.

### So True...

Three Wise Women  
would have...  
Asked directions,  
Arrived on time,  
Helped deliver the baby,  
Cleaned the stable,  
Made a casserole,  
Brought practical gifts, and  
There would be  
Peace on Earth.

### HOW ARE YOUR ONION SKINS?

Onion skins very thin,  
Mild winter coming in.  
Onion skins thick and  
tough, Coming winter very  
rough.

- Cotswold saying

The days leading up to the winter solstice, on December 22nd, are the darkest days of the year. The sun is at its farthest point from earth. As the days got darker, fires were lit by our ancestors and greens gathered in tribute to those spirits who controlled the seasons.



### In December, remember to:

- ✓ go easy with water on your house plants; if you did not repot them with an artificial soil mix, they may stay too wet and may not survive. It is not too late to repot them.
- ✓ houseplants bought from retail outlets can be kept in the original pots for 1 or 2 years without repotting; do not fertilize them until they become acclimated to conditions.
- ✓ whiteflies and mites are common pests of herbs brought in for the winter; combat them with insecticidal soap.
- ✓ with all the rain we have had in November, trees, shrubs, and perennials are well prepared for winter, so put away your garden hoses after draining them.
- ✓ read through the garden catalogs that are beginning to wend their way to your mailbox; take time out from holiday preparations to relax a little and dream big dreams....

*A Very Merry Christmas,  
Happy Hanukkah,  
and a  
Happy New Year  
to all  
our members!*

### Some great houseplants are

African Violet, Aloe Vera, Amaryllis, Asparagus Fern, Begonia, Boston Fern, Burro's Tail, Cactus, Cast Iron Plant, Chinese Evergreen, Christmas Cactus, Clivia, Crown of Thorns, Dieffenbachia, Dracaena, English Ivy, Grapefruit, Grape Ivy, Jade Plant, Norfolk Island Pine, Oleander, Orchids, Philodendron, Poinsettia, Pothos, Rubber Plant, Sansevieria (Mother-in-law's Tongue), Schefflera, Spathiphyllum, Spider Plant, Stephanotis, and Weeping Fig.

### For a spectacular table

**centerpiece**, use a stemmed bowl and fill with a pineapple, oranges, apples, grapefruit, grapes on their stems, and a squash. Fill in 'holes' with glossy evergreen foliage and add short-stemmed roses and alstroemeria at the last minute. The flowers will easily last an evening or more to delight all your guests.

*The mistletoe hung in the  
castle hall,  
The holly branch shone on the  
old oak wall.*

- T. H. Bayly

### December Flower

Known to most people as the poinsettia, the true name of this plant is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, the most popular houseplant to use for Christmas decoration. It originated in Mexico where it was discovered in 1851 by Joel Poinsett, a Frenchman. The elliptic, bright green leaves are slightly lobed. The scarcely-significant little yellow flowers are surrounded by deep crimson (or white, pink, or speckled) bracts which make the plant so attractive. When I lived in New Orleans, a 2-storied plant grew adjacent to the stairs of the building next door. The women living there in the upstairs flat cut 2 armsful of flowers for me to decorate our tiny 3-room flat. I had flowers in every vase, picher, and bottle I could find. Our home looked like Santa's house with its very tiny 2-foot tree surrounded by poinsettias and the presents our families sent down to us.

'When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer. It had a little driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.'

### What's Blooming Table

Thanks to everyone who brought their special plants to show us during the year. We will resume the What's Blooming Table with the January meeting. Until then, take care of those lovely houseplants and make plans to bring some of them to the January meeting! We all enjoy hearing about your favorites!

#### Questions, comments, payment of dues?

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