

Master Gardeners of Bergen County

January 2022 – Potting Shed Mid-Month Update

HORTICULTURE

An evergreen shrub that speaks to you



Photo courtesy of Bruce Crawford

The broad stem segments, called cladodes, of *Opuntia humifusa* in November.

Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission, has chosen prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) as his January plant of the month.

By Bruce Crawford

I often look at a plant and contemplate what the plant is attempting to tell me. Yes, I realize plants may not be able to speak, but many are able to convey when they are getting dry, receiving too much or too little sun, or are simply cold. January is one month when plants can palpably tell you they are cold. Whether it is the leaves of rhododendron curling and drooping downward or the stems of prickly pear wrinkling and compressing against the ground, plants are talking! Many gardeners may not be acquainted with prickly pear, botanically known as *Opuntia*, but it is one of our more interesting evergreen shrubs and the species *Opuntia humifusa* is a native of New Jersey. . . Click [here](#) to read more.

(Horticulture, continued on page 2)

Rutgers Covid guidelines extended

Rutgers University has extended its ban on in-person activities including teaching and extension programs through Jan. 31. Anything scheduled during this time must be moved to an online format or be canceled.

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Links are clickable and are noted in [blue](#).

Meeting reminder: Tuesday, Jan. 25

Announcements at 7:20 pm; program to follow.

Click [here](#) to join the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Meeting ID: 926 9258 8641; password: 692429

Mushroom Mania

Fungi connect to more than 80% of the world's plants through their roots, called mycorrhizae. Dorothy Smullen, mushroom lover and nature and garden club speaker for 35 years, will discuss the fungi kingdom and its importance in our world. She'll cover morels to bracket fungi to puffballs during her presentation. Dorothy will include applications such as dyeing wool and silk with specific fungi and papermaking using shelf fungi.



Dorothy Smullen

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Have you renewed your membership?

MG of BC dues are only \$20 for the year. We hope you'll renew your membership. Dues are to be paid by current MGs and those who have recently been certified from the Classes of 2020 and 2021.

Please complete the membership renewal form, make your check payable to the MG of BC, and mail to a new address — MG of BC, PO Box 71, New Milford, NJ 07646 — which is on the form.

You'll find the form on the home page of our [website](#). As you scroll down the home page, a box will pop up with the headline "Renew your membership now." Thanks to those who've already paid!

(Horticulture, continued from page 1)



Photos by Janet Schulz

At left, the leaves of *Helleborus x hybridus* waiting to be cut. At right, *Helleborus niger*, aka Christmas rose.

Hellebore: To cut or not to cut

By Janet Schulz, Class of 1988

If you're like me, you usually want to work in the garden regardless of the season. If you grow hellebore, there's usually something you can do on a nice day during late winter or early spring.

Helleborus niger, also known as the Christmas rose, has white flowers and blooms here in Zone 6 [using the USDA hardiness zone map prior to 2012] starting around or just before Christmas, hence the name.

Helleborus x hybridus, also called Lenten rose, blooms in many different colors starting in March or April, just around Easter time, hence the name.

Both varieties are a group of late winter or early spring flowering perennials in the buttercup family

(Ranunculaceae). They are acaulescent, which means each stem with a single leaf or single flower rises directly from the rhizomatous root system to form clumps that may reach 2 feet tall and wide. The leaves of both varieties are evergreen, but the *x hybridus* varieties tend to get rather messy looking with flopping ratty-looking leaves.

The perfect time to cut the leaves is just before the flowers emerge. There's no reason to look at an ugly leaf in your garden. When a leaf looks bad it's time to cut it back regardless of the season. By cutting back brown and ragged leaves, you're also eliminating the possibility of disease and insect problems.

Hope this is an answer to the dilemma of to cut or not to cut.

Mt. Cuba Center hydrangea trials

The Mt. Cuba Center, Hockessin, DE, is a great resource based on its research of plants in our Mid-Atlantic states. Mt. Cuba conducts trials, such as the recent wild hydrangea trial for the Mid-Atlantic region. Click [here](#) for the summary of the trial and a 20-page photo guide that you can download. Click [here](#) for a summary and photos of the top-performing hydrangeas.

- Liz Gil, Class of 2019

Tons to do in the garden, even in January

Even though it's January, there's plenty to do in the garden, says Bruce Crawford, manager of horticulture, Morris County Park Commission. Click [here](#) to read Bruce's "gardening notes" on the Garden Club of New Jersey website. He's got four pages of suggestions for both indoor and outdoor gardening.

Five house specials, please



Photos by Miriam Taub, Class of 2011

These mouflons have taken up residence at the Bergen County Zoo in Van Saun Park during the Let It Glow event, which features lanterns and illuminated animals. (Above they look like stars without makeup; they look better at night.) Hours are 4-9 pm, Thursdays-Sundays through Jan. 30. Click [here](#) for ticket information; tickets are timed. Below a flamingo is poised to dine in the zoo's herb garden, one of our MG of BC volunteer sites. Van Saun is located at 216 Forest Ave., Paramus.



HORTICULTURE GRAPEVINE

Jan. 19, 6-8 pm, Hasbrouck Heights Garden Club, Municipal Building, 320 Boulevard, 2nd floor, Hasbrouck Heights. Speaker: Kerri Heck, Great Swamp Bonsai Society. Topic: Introduction to Bonsai. Refreshments at 5:30 pm.

Jan. 20, 7 pm, Garden Club of Teaneck via Zoom. Speaker: MG Janet Schulz, Class of 1988. Topic: A Plant Collector's Point of View. Click [here](#) to join the meeting. Meeting ID: 970 6784 5817; password: 099326.

WEBINARS

All times are Eastern.

Jan. 18, 7-8 pm: University of Iowa Extension and Outreach sponsors Planting Design Graphics. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 19, 7 pm: Native Plant Society of New Jersey sponsors Backyard Transformation in Just 3 years - Re-creating Nature. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 23, 3 pm: University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension sponsors How Native Plant Cultivars Affect Pollinators. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 24, 6-7:15 pm: University of Maine Cooperative Extension sponsors Hydroponics at Home. Fee: Sliding scale from \$0-\$10. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 25, 2:30 pm: University of Illinois Extension sponsors Spring Ephemerals. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Jan. 27, 1 pm: University of Florida Master Gardener sponsors Urban Ecology for Citizens and Planners. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

Feb. 2, 1-2 pm: Kansas State University Garden Hour sponsors Indoor Seed Starting. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for the 2022 series.

Feb. 3, 7-8 pm: Penn State Extension speaker series sponsors Creating a New Garden - Scratching the Surface. Free. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.