

**U of A UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS**  
**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE**

# Beauty's Only Dirt Deep

## Howard County Horticulture Newsletter

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### *EDITED? Keep Dracula Away - Plant Garlic this Fall*

The exact origin of cultivated garlic, as we know it, is not known. However, we can find written references to it from the writings of the Greek, Egyptians, Romans, and Chinese. The name garlic comes to us from the Welsh word “garlleg,” which is transformed into the English word “garlic.”

Wherever it came from, there can be no doubt that garlic has captured the interest of gardeners and cooks alike. It is easily cultivated and persists in the garden for years.

Garlic, a member of the onion family, may be grown successfully in most Arkansas home gardens. Garlic is started by planting small cloves that are divisions of the large bulb. Each bulb contains a dozen or more cloves, and each clove is planted separately. The larger the clove, the larger the size of the mature bulb at harvest. Do not divide the bulb until you are ready to plant – early separation results in decreased yields. Select “seed bulbs” that are large, smooth, fresh, and free from disease.



Garlic grows best on friable loam soils that are fertile and high in organic matter. Gardeners who grow good onion crops can grow good garlic. Garlic does well at high fertilizer levels. Apply one pound of 10-20-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet three times during the growing season. Bulbs will be small if the soil is excessively dry and irregular in shape if the soil becomes compact.

Plant garlic cloves in the fall to allow enough time for the plants to mature by next summer. Early February is the latest garlic can be planted in Arkansas to permit full development.

Fall preparation of the soil is desirable if the soil can be fertilized, and planted with minimum tillage in the spring. Plant 3 to 5 inches apart in an upright position (to ensure a straight neck) and cover to a depth of one-half to one inch. Allow 18 to 30 inches between rows.

Bulbs may be harvested when the tops start to dry – usually July. Place bulbs on trays with screens or slatted bottoms, and remove the tops when dry. Mature bulbs are best stored under cool, dry conditions. If you grow only a few plants, braid the tops together with twine and hang the bulbs to dry.

## ***Unwelcome Guests May Be Coming to Your Home***

As the weather turns cooler, those crickets that fiddled all summer are now trying to get inside. The key to managing crickets in buildings is exclusion. Cracks and other openings from the outside that provide access to the building should be sealed, and special attention should be given to worn seals at door thresholds. In addition, cracks and crevices inside the building that provide hiding places should also be caulked or otherwise sealed.



Weeds and debris around the outside of the building should be removed to eliminate attractive habitats. Outside lighting can be changed to sodium vapor lights or yellow incandescent lights that are less attractive to crickets (and other insects). Garbage and other refuse that serves as food should be stored in containers with tight lids and elevated off the ground on platforms or bricks. If crickets do get inside, it may be possible to mechanically remove them from behind or under heavy furniture and appliances, or in other inaccessible areas, using a strong vacuum cleaner.

Insecticides should be used only when exclusion and sanitation cannot accomplish control quickly enough to stop the damage or nuisance level within a reasonable time. Use liquid sprays of an insecticide registered for use indoors as a spot spray in cracks and crevices and other areas where crickets may hide. Sorptive powders may also be blown into inaccessible areas. Apply liquid sprays around the perimeter of the building or in other outdoor areas if crickets cannot be controlled through sanitation. Some materials are labeled for both indoor and outdoor application. Never use a material indoors that is labeled for outdoor use only. Insecticide-impregnated baits or granular formulations of certain materials may also be used outdoors around buildings for cricket control. Granules are suitable in lawns and other areas subject to moisture or frequent watering. Avoid the use of baits or granules, if children or pets can gain access to them.

Cricket infestations are usually seasonal. Most often problems occur during the fall as evenings become cooler and the insects seek buildings for warmth and shelter. Because of this, applications of long-residual insecticides are not usually needed indoors for adequate control.

## ***The Tale of the Twig Girdler***

I've already had a few cases of these brought in to the office, so I thought I would tell the tale of the twig girdler. Let me start... About this time every year, homeowners report that their pecans, hickory, and other hardwood trees are losing branches – sometimes several every day. Is it a squirrel? Is it an overzealous gardener with pruning shears? NO. It's the handiwork of the twig girdler (*Oncideres cingulata*). Pecan, hickories, and persimmon are the preferred hosts, but other hardwoods, including oak and honeylocust, may be attacked.

In late summer and early fall, after mating occurs, female twig girdlers select a small twig about three-eighths of an inch in diameter and covered with just a thin layer of bark. The female beetle chews around the entire exterior of the twig until the twig is almost separated from the tree. This causes part of the twig to die – this process is called girdling.

The female beetle then gnaws a V-shaped small notch in the dead or dying part of the twig and lays her eggs in the notch. The twig usually falls to the ground. When the eggs hatch, the emerging larvae continue to live in the twig, feeding on its dead wood. The larvae grow, and eventually construct a mass of frass in which they pupate. After they pupate, the larvae have changed into adult beetles, and they chew their way out of their twig. Adult beetles fly away to new host trees.



Initially, the foliage at the ends of the twigs turn brown prematurely, and the damage can be scattered throughout the crown of the tree.

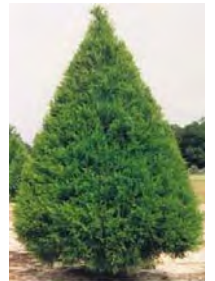
Shortly afterwards, especially after a windy day, the twigs fall to the ground. The dropped twigs look like they've been neatly cut from the tree with a pruning shear. The injury will have slightly rounded edges and will feel a little rough from the beetles chewing on it.

Trees damaged by the twig girdler will usually recover. Older, larger trees might have smaller twigs damaged, resulting in minimal damage to the crown. In young trees, however, damage can be severe from the resulting deformed stems and reduced vigor. No control is recommended, although gathering and destroying the damaged twigs will help reduce future infestations.

- Poinsettias prefer moist soil. When the top of the soil feels dry to the touch, water thoroughly with warm tap water. Allow excess water to drain from the bottom of the container and discard.
- Although most poinsettias do not require additional nutrients during the holiday season, a standard houseplant fertilizer can be used to maintain healthy foliage and blooms. Follow the fertilizer recommendations listed on the package.

## *Christmas Tree Choices*

**Red Cedar:** This was a favorite 19<sup>th</sup> century Christmas tree. It is an aromatic evergreen with prickly, scale-like leaves. It is not a conifer since it produces dark blue berries, with a whitish bloom that contains 1-2 seeds each. These fruits are very attractive to wildlife, including the cedar waxwing. Even if it's not your choice for the family tree, its branches are very useful in making wreaths or decorations because of its blue berries.



**Pines:** The pines have long needles in bundles of 2-5. Pines are particularly desirable as Christmas trees since they will hold up well over a long period in a warm house. **Scotch Pine** has a lovely conical shape, which makes it very popular.

**White Pine** has bundles of feathery soft, bluish needles. It is generally one of the less expensive Christmas trees.

**Firs:** Needles on the firs are longer than those of the spruce, but they are not as stiff and sharp. The trees have a nice shape and take decorations well. **Balsam Fir** holds its needles well in a warm room, and it will fill the room with its fragrance. It has deep green



## *Poinsettia Care For the Holiday Season*

Before too much longer it will be that time of year when a variety of festive, brightly colored poinsettias adorn our homes, offices, and public spaces. While poinsettias generally require little care, the following tips will ensure that your plants remain healthy throughout the holiday season.

- Exposure to extreme heat (above 80°F) or cold (below 50°F) stresses poinsettias and often results in a loss of leaves, or in some cases, early death of the plant. Make sure that the plants are protected and covered when transporting them from the greenhouse, florist, or other retailer to your car and home. Once inside, avoid placing plants near hot or cold drafts that may injure them.
- Rough handling of poinsettias may also cause stem breakage and/or leaf loss. Carefully remove plants from their paper or plastic sleeves to avoid damage.
- Poinsettias perform best when placed in bright environments – such as near a window – and provided with moderate temperatures of 65 to 70°F.

needles banded with white on the underside, which give it a beautiful silvery cast. It has been the most popular Christmas tree in this country for years. *Douglas Fir*, which is sometimes marketed as *Montana Fir*, is not a fir at all. Despite its similar appearance, it is a pine. Its inch-long needles are flat and soft. It is a good choice, as it holds onto its needles for a long time.

### **Christmas Tree Preservative**

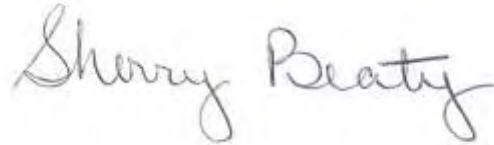
¼ C horticulture iron (ask for Green Garde)  
1 gallon hot water

2 C light corn syrup  
4 tsp. chlorinated household bleach

Mix the above ingredients. The Green Garde will not dissolve completely – it will produce a blue-green mixture with particles that will settle on the bottom. Cut an inch from the base of the trunk, and crush the fibers with a hammer. Stand the tree in a water-filled holder.

All meetings and activities announced in this newsletter are open to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (large print, audiotapes, etc.) should notify the county Extension office as soon as possible prior to the activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherry Beaty".

Sherry Beaty  
County Extension Agent-Agriculture