

Master Gardener Newsletter



January 2007

University of California
Cooperative Extension
YUBA & SUTTER COUNTIES
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Train up a fig tree in the way it should go, and when you are old sit under the shade of it. Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Timely Garden Tips

By Edie Young

Even in the rainy season there are some plants that need to be watered. Plants under the eaves of your house often go un-watered, so check them. Remember to water the plants in your greenhouse too.

House plants tend to dry out more quickly in your heated home. Be sure to check them as well. If your house plants have shiny leaves that are dusty, wipe them off so that they will be able to breathe. If the plants have fuzzy leaves, give them a light spray to take the dust off.

When you have frost on your lawn, don't walk on it. The grass will be damaged.

Now that it is Christmas time, you may be thinking about giving gifts. How about giving a potted plant, or a subscription to a gardening magazine, or better yet, a book about gardening?

Keep your poinsettias out of drafts and on the cool side, temperature-wise. Set your thermostat to 65°F to 70°F in the daytime and 55°F-60°F at night to maintain good bloom quality.

Buy living Christmas trees. I buy them so that they can be planted after Christmas and they don't add to the landfill. Also, they have less chance of catching fire.

Tree of the Month

Chimonanthus praecox-Winter Sweet
Calycanthaceae

USDA Zone 7

Sunset Zone 4-9, 14-21



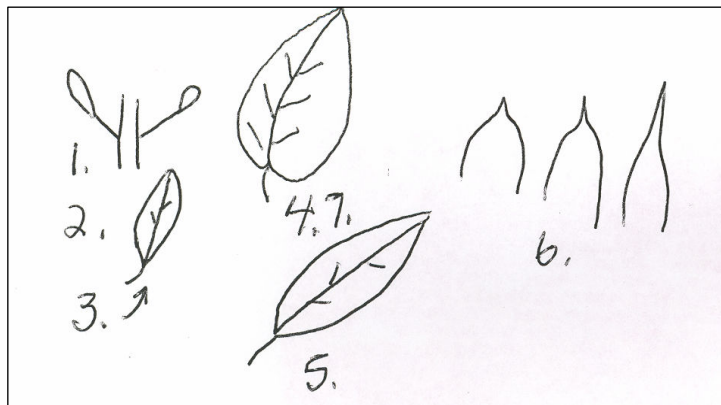
Chimonanthus praecox in Curtis Botanical Magazine

Winter Sweet is a slow-growing deciduous shrub that is native to China and Japan. It reaches a height of about 20 feet. Winter sweet belongs to a primitive flowering plant family allied to the magnolia family. Its extremely fragrant flowers open in winter and remain on the stem for many weeks.

Winter Sweet prefers some afternoon shade in our hot climate and likes a well-drained soil. Remove old wood in late winter and prune back to one foot tall to rejuvenate old plants. Leaves are opposite, simple, glossy dark green, elliptic-ovate to ovate-lanceolate, acuminate, rough to the touch (glabrous) and entire. See below for descriptions and new section of the newsletter.

NEW FEATURE!

When trying to figure out the identity of an unknown plant, one of the most challenging tasks a non-botanist faces is deciphering botanical terminology. In this and future newsletters, we will introduce some of the more common terms for plant features with “plain English” translations:



1. **Opposite**-describes how the leaves are positioned on the stems. Leaves are positioned directly opposite each other on the stem.
2. A **simple** leaf is one with only one definite segment (**petiole**) present between the stem and the end of the blade.
3. **Elliptic**-defines leaf shape and is described as broadest at the middle, with the ends rather equal.
4. **Ovate**-leaf shape is egg-shaped and connected at the broader end.
5. **Lanceolate**-leaf shape is narrow and broadest at the base.
6. **Acuminate**-describes the leaf tip, which is pointed with the two margins somewhat pinched in before joining at the extreme tip.
7. **Entire**-describes the margins of the leaves as being smooth, having no teeth or lobes.
8. **Glabrous**-leaf surface is described as rough to the touch (not sticky or waxy) and without hairs or projections.

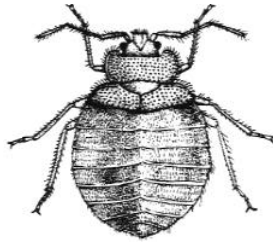
Website of interest

Oregon State has a great plant ID section at their Extension website. It has excellent pictures and very good identification descriptions. The website is:

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants>

Insect of the Month

Bedbugs-*Cimex lectularius*



University of Virginia Cooperative Extension

A girlfriend stayed a large, luxurious hotel in Las Vegas recently and found a bed bug on her person the next morning. Needless to say, she pitched a fit, wrote a letter, etc... and was told it couldn't have been a bed bug, not at THEIR establishment! She even showed the staff the bug! So, at the risk of making you scratch from delusory parasitosis, (<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7443.html>), let me remind you that bed bugs are staging quite a comeback. Why you ask? Because folks are recycling beds and other furniture. As nation, we are using more and more pyrethroids to control household pests. These insects develop resistance, needing increased doses of pesticide to kill them. Also, we have fallen out of the habit looking for the little buggers.

Bed bugs are oval, wingless and about ½" long. A female bed bug can lay 200-500 eggs in one lifetime. Common hiding spots (places to look when renting motel/hotel rooms, not to make ya'all too paranoid) are the seams of mattresses and box springs, cracks in bed frames, under loose wallpaper and inside furniture and upholstery. They will bite and the injected saliva can cause itchy welts and can become infected. Happy New Year!

An excellent, if somewhat disturbing article on this subject is available from the University of Kentucky Entomology Department at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef636.htm>

Weed of the Month

Poa annua – Annual bluegrass

Annual winter weed

Some parts of this are copied from the UC IPM website,
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7464.html>

This annual weed appears in late fall and early winter. It can be a large problem in lawns, where it looks like Kentucky bluegrass, but it dies as soon as temperatures exceed 75°F. Ugh, big dead spots in your lawn! It is a common impurity in lawn seed. Annual bluegrass is a misnomer because there are two types of annual bluegrass: a true annual (*P. annua* var. *annua*) and a perennial type (*P. annua* var. *reptans*). While the two types are not easy to distinguish from each other, the annual type is more upright in its growth habit and produces more seed than the lower-growing perennial type. The annual type also tends to produce a higher percentage of dormant seed. The perennial type produces seed that germinate readily under optimum conditions. Depending on the site there may be a predominance of one type or a mixture of both. The perennial type is common in such sites as golf course greens, while the annual type may be more common in lawns and parkways (although both types can be found in either of these situations).

The annual form of annual bluegrass is a rapid and prolific seeder. Each small plant can produce about 100 seeds in as few as 8 weeks. Viable seed can be produced just a few days after pollination, which allows the plant to reseed even in frequently mowed turf. The seed is amber colored and about 1/16 inch long.

Annual bluegrass has a fairly weak and shallow root system and needs available moisture from rainfall or frequent irrigation to survive. It grows well in moist areas in full sun. However, it can also do well in semi-shaded conditions. Annual bluegrass also can grow in compacted soil conditions. In coastal regions or in moderate temperature areas where turf is frequently irrigated, annual bluegrass may persist all year. In warmer areas, it usually dies in summer.

Control includes cleaning your mowing equipment after use in an area that has annual bluegrass, establishing a vigorous lawn with good care; not over-watering, over-fertilizing or mowing too short. Chemical control is difficult due to the fact it is a grass in your grassy lawn so prevention is the key.

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