

# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

University of Arizona and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.



## the Cochise County Master Gardener

# NEWSLETTER

VOL. 4, NO. 12

DECEMBER 1992

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### *Pinus eldarica*

Barbara Kishbaugh  
Staff Writer

If you are planning to purchase a containerized tree for Christmas this year, an eldarica pine would be a good choice. It is a strong and healthy grower and does well in our alkaline soil.

About six years ago we planted an eldarica at the corner of our driveway after we had used it indoors as a Christmas tree. It was 7' tall when purchased and is now over 20' plus high with a trunk diameter over 2 feet. It is a full evergreen with dual needles 4 to 6 inches long. The needles have sort of a soft feeling. The cones are rather small and can easily be used when making a holiday wreath.

The eldarica we planted has been backed over twice; once by a pickup truck and once by a dump truck. The tree not only survived undeformed, but seems to have tolerated the abuse well. We placed lights on the tree the past two years during the holidays and it was a welcome sight on a cold winter night. We have also purchased aleppo pine and Arizona cypress and transplanted them successfully after the holidays. However, the eldarica is the most enthusiastic grower.

A containerized evergreen for holiday use is a sensible choice environmentally. When you plant a tree, you are contributing to resource renewal instead of resource depletion if you cut a tree. If you decided to get one of these evergreens and do not wish to transplant, there are organizations in the county appreciative of such donations.

Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent,  
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## THE AGENT'S CORNER

**Robert E. Call**  
**Extension Agent, Horticulture**

**QUESTION:** Should I fertilize and water my trees during the winter? How about my house plants?

**ANSWER:** Fertilizing of trees and shrubs during the winter in the high desert should not be done. Fertilizer could stimulate plants to come out of dormancy and start to grow and winter damage could occur. These plants are "resting" above the ground but do have activity in the roots if soil temperatures are warm. Normally trees and shrubs that go into winter with adequate soil moisture do not need watering during the winter. Usually winter rains or snow provide enough water. Deciduous plants do not need much water because the leaves, where transpiration occurs, are gone and nutrients needed for growth are not required because there is no shoot growth. The same holds true for most evergreen plants such as pines, junipers, and native oak trees. When the soil and air temperatures are cold and sunlight is reduced why grow? That is what spring, summer, and fall are for!

Houseplants are generally tropical in origin and survive best in warm humid environments. Houseplants need to be watered because of the limited soil volume they are confined to. House temperatures are warm and allow plants to continue to grow. The best way to determine soil moisture is to stick a finger in the soil one to two inches. If the soil feels dry, water; if soil feels moist, don't water.

Fertilizing houseplants during the winter months is not encouraged because of reduced light from the sun. However, if you are "spoon feeding" your plants, that is giving a little fertilizer at each watering, cut back on the fertilizer by giving 1/4 to 1/2

the normal amount.

Many house plants need high humidity to be "happy", especially true with ferns. With forced air heating in many homes, house humidity can be lower during the winter than during the hot summer because of swamp cooler use. Humidity can be created by placing the potted plant on top of a pebble filled shallow dish. Fill the dish with water as needed, maintaining the water level near the top. The dish should have a diameter nearly as large as the plant diameter. The pebbles are important so that the potted plant is not sitting in water which will cause soil saturation and thus root rot. As the water evaporates, a humid environment is created in which a tropical plant will grow and thrive. This is much better than using a squirt bottle three times a day to try and humidify the plant!



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Virginia Westphal

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office by December 24.

## **CONSERVATION TREE SEEDLINGS FOR SALE**

**Arizona landowners have the opportunity to purchase tree and shrub seedlings for spring 1993 planting.**

The Tree Seedling Distribution Program is sponsored by the Arizona State Land Department, Forestry Division, in cooperation with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. This program provides low-cost seedlings and technical assistance to rural landowners in order to promote windbreak establishment, reforestation, erosion control, wildlife habitat, and Christmas tree plantations. Forty species of bareroot and potted tree seedlings are available, with selections suitable for planting in all regions of Arizona. Private landowners that own one or more acres of land can participate in the program if they agree to plant the seedlings for the previously mentioned conservation purposes.

The success of this program is demonstrated by the nearly 2.5 million seedlings which have been sold through Arizona since 1971.

Applications to purchase tree seedlings are available at local offices of the State Land Department, U.S. Forest Service, U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, the Cooperative Extension Service, State Parks, or the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Applications may also be obtained by writing to:

Arizona State Land Department  
Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima,  
Pinal or Santa Cruz Counties  
233 North Main Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85701  
Tel: 628-6016

Sierra Vista and Willcox pick-up days for the plants have been in March.  
(See back page for listing of available shrubs/trees.)

## **FORCING BULBS: BALM FOR THE WINTER-BOUND GARDENER**

**Jackie Dillon-Fast**  
**Staff Writer**

For northern gardeners, winter brings five long months of gardening withdrawal. To these hibernating souls, it must seem like gardeners in Cochise County barely catch their collective breath between when winter arrives and the first spring flowers emerge.

And yet, as many of us gardeners know all too well, southwesterners suffer from the same impatience with the lingering winter as our more northerly compatriots. Most of us manage to hang on until mid-March only to succumb to the lure of early spring bedding plants which become pansy-popsicles at the next frost.

Fortunately for both northern and southern gardeners, not to mention those poor unsuspecting bedding plants, there is a healthier alternative: growing flowering spring bulbs indoors. Growing bulbs indoors, also known as forcing, is even easier than growing bulbs outdoors since you alone control the climate (and bulb-eating critters) in your home or greenhouse. All you need is a little information, a handful of leftover bulbs, an assortment of planting mediums and containers, a little water, and a lot of sunshine.

Some of the more popular and successful bulbs for forcing are amaryllis, paperwhites, hyacinths, and crocuses, although any spring bulb can be made to flower indoors if given the right conditions. Hyacinths, tulips, and daffodils need a period of cooling in order to bloom, something which occurs naturally outdoors during the winter months. Simulate this cooling by storing the bulbs in an unheated garage, cold frame, or refrigerator for twelve weeks prior to planting. The bulbs should be moved from cooling after twelve

weeks (some bulbs may even have started shoots!). Some spring bulbs, such as paperwhites, do not need cooling, so it is important to read the label on the bulb package to be certain.

Once the bulbs are ready for planting, you need to select the proper planting medium. Most bulbs can be grown in a quality commercial potting soil or a mixture of one part peat, one part perlite, and one part garden soil, and can be crowded together in a pot much closer than is recommended for planting outdoors. Plant the bulbs point up and deep enough so that only their tips show above the soil. Water them thoroughly and place them in a south or west window where they will get plenty of light. Ideal growing temperatures are between 55 and 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep the soil moist but not soggy and make sure to provide for drainage. Growth should be rapid at this point with blooms appearing in three to five weeks (depending on the type of bulb).

Hyacinths and paperwhites can also be grown in a low shallow dish filled with pebbles to support the bulbs. Keep the water level in the dish just below the bulb base; any higher and may rot the bulb, any lower and you will dry out the tender new roots.

A favorite tropical bulb for growing indoors is the amaryllis, largely because of its big, bold flower. The amaryllis is one of the few bulbs grown indoors that will bloom in successive years. Many bulbs that are forced resist blooming a second year. To prolong the productive life of your indoor bulbs, and outdoor bulbs for that matter, keep the leaves healthy for as long as possible since they will be providing the energy for the next year's bloom.



## HOLIDAY WREATHS

**Barbara Kishbaugh**  
**Staff Writer**

A holiday wreath can be made quite simply by cutting a donut circle in plywood and then using a glue gun to attach pine cones, nuts, dried fruit, fabric or ribbons. You can also buy straw and foam bases at craft stores and use wire to secure your decorations. Recently I noticed a wreath with pomegranates and it was striking in texture and color. Another was made with dried and painted yucca seed pods (I think the natural grey colors of the pods would be even more eye-catching) which are sort of tulip shaped. This wreath was remarkably simple, but elegant.

A friend goes hunting with her husband, and while he is actually hunting she stays in camp and gathers her supplies for wreaths. In the December issue of *Horticulture Magazine*, directions are given on preparing a beautiful wreath. Moss is attached to a wire frame and succulent plants are inserted in the moss.

You could probably make a unique wreath with something you have growing around your house!



***Happy Holidays!***

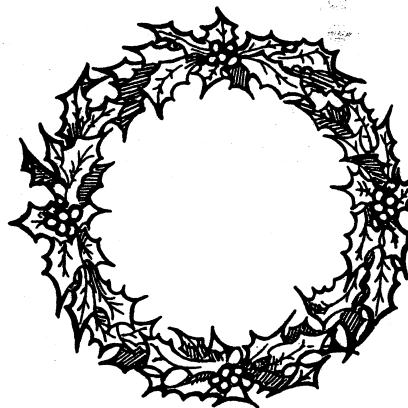
## DECEMBER GARDENING EVENTS CALENDAR

Dec. 5 & 6, 5:30-8 pm  
Tucson Botanical Gardens, 2150 N.  
Alvernon Way, Tucson  
(602) 326-9686  
Festival: Holiday luminaria in the gardens.  
Fee: Non-members \$3.50.

Dec. 12, 10-11:30 am  
Tucson Botanical Gardens  
Class: Making natural holiday ornaments.  
Fee: \$12/\$10.

Dec. 12, 10 am-2 pm  
Arboretum at Flagstaff, P.O. Box 670,  
Flagstaff, AZ  
(602) 774-1441  
Sale: Herb, desert plants, and crafts.

Dec. 30, 10 am  
Arizona Global ReLeaf, State Land  
Department, 1616 W. Adams, Phoenix  
(602) 542-6191  
Meeting: Monthly open meeting



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TUCSON, ARIZONA 85721

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Address correction requested

**1992 BARERoot SEEDLINGS**  
**Sold in Lots of 50 only (same species)**

Annually 100-150 thousand seedlings are sold at nominal costs to rural Arizona landowners. Below you will find a listing of seedlings to be offered.

**SHRUBS:**

Caragana  
Cotoneaster  
Cliffrose  
Chokecherry  
Lilac  
Native Plum  
Squawbush Sumac  
Nanking Cherry  
Mountain Mahogany

**TREES:**

Siberian Elm  
Honeylocust

Hybrid Cottonwood  
Russian Olive  
Arizona Ash  
Lombardy Poplar  
Narrowleaf Cottonwood  
Coyote Willow  
Ponderosa Pine  
Scotch Pine  
Pinyon  
Limber Pine  
Rocky Mountain Juniper  
White Fir  
Austrian Pine  
Colorado Blue Spruce

Douglas-Fir  
Aspen  
Golden Currant  
Four-Wing Saltbush  
Apache Pine  
Smoothbark AZ Cypress  
Roughbark AZ Cypress  
Quetta Pine  
Foothills Paloverde  
Blue Paloverde  
Desert Willow  
Honey Mesquite  
Sugar Sumac  
Tiny Capsule Eucalyptus