

# THE DIGGERS

Dorchester Garden Club

February, 2015

## Mark Your Calendars

### FEBRUARY, 2015

- 13 **DGC "Turning Over a New Leaf – Leaf Manipulation"** Eastern Shore Hospital Center  
11:30 am presented by Susie Middleton.  
Pre-registration required
- 16 **President's Day**
- 25 **Veteran's Memorial Book Dedication** Rawlings  
Conservatory, Baltimore 2:00-3:30 pm
- 28-8 **Philadelphia Flower Show** Pennsylvania  
Convention Center through March 8

### MARCH, 2015

- 4 **District I Annual Meeting** Talbot Country Club
- 8 **Daylight Savings Time Begins**
- 13 **"Passing of the Trowel"** DGC Annual Meeting  
and Installation of 2015-17 Officers, 11:30 am  
Cambridge Yacht Club
- 13-15 **American Rose Society "Baltimore Celebrates  
The Rose"** Cylburn Arboretum Vollmer Center
- 20 **First Day of Spring**

### APRIL, 2015

- 3-4 **"50 Years of Daffodils. Reflecting Our Past"**  
50<sup>th</sup> Daffodil Show Somerset County GC  
St. Andrews Parish Hall, Princess Anne, MD  
Friday 1pm-5pm, Saturday 10am-3pm
- 4 **First Day of Passover**
- 5 **Easter Sunday**
- 9-12 **2015 National Daffodil Convention**, American  
Daffodil Society, Williamsburg, VA  
Fort Macgruder Hotel and Conference Center
- 10 **DGC April Meeting**
- 14 **Talbot Garden Club Garden Symposium and  
Luncheon Fundraiser "A Bloomin' Affair"**  
The Milestone, Easton
- 19 **Chicone Village Day**, Handsell, Indiantown Road  
Vienna, VA
- 22 **Earth Day**

### MAY, 2015

- 9 **MD House & Garden Pilgrimage** Dorchester Cty

*Information for programs sponsored by other Clubs is  
at [http://www.fqcofmd.org/Calendar\\_of\\_Events.html](http://www.fqcofmd.org/Calendar_of_Events.html)*



*"Roses for Valentine's  
Day"*

Original Watercolor

By Kay Smith

Big Spring, TX

*Happy  
Valentine's  
Day!*

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## “Plantable” Valentines

...by Ruth Meharg for [HGTVgardens.com](http://HGTVgardens.com)



These handmade hearts make perfect Valentine's Day decorations and gifts.

Make them with your favorite seeds and plant them for lovely flowers or vegetables later in the year. This craft is great to make with kids—even little ones can participate and enjoy.



**Supplies** These plantable hearts don't require many supplies, and you probably have everything you need at home. The most important supplies are paper and seeds, but you may find that a blender and a heart shaped form, like a cookie cutter, may come in handy. Use any paper that isn't shiny, and even mix different types of paper. Construction paper and tissue paper work great, but you can use newspaper, printer paper, almost anything. If your paper isn't the color you want you'll need a bit of food coloring for dye.



### 1. Tear your paper

Begin by cutting or tearing your paper into small pieces. This is a great opportunity to put little ones who love cutting things to work. Two full sheets of cut up paper will make approximately 12 hearts, depending on size and thickness.



### 2. Add Water

If you are using a blender, place your little pieces of paper in the blender and add water until the paper is fully submerged. Blend into a pulp.

If you aren't using a blender, place the paper in a bowl and add water until the paper is covered. Let sit for a couple of hours, then use your hands to massage the paper into a pulp.



### 3. Texture

Your water-to-paper ratio will change depending on the type of paper that you use. The texture of your final pulp should be just thick enough to loosely hold its shape. Add more water or paper as needed.

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**4. Create your Shapes** If you are going to use a cookie cutter or other mold, set it on a smooth surface. Cookie sheets work great for this. If you want your paper to dry a bit faster, add a layer of felt before shaping your hearts. Place a glob of paper pulp in the mold and spread it out to the edges using your fingers. You will need about a tablespoon of paper, depending on the size of your mold. It should be about an 1/8" thick when spread out. Gently lift the mold and repeat.



## 5. Plant Seeds

Once all your pulp shapes are laid out, sprinkle seeds across the top. Use your finger to gently press them into the wet paper.



**6. Finishing Touches** When your paper is fully dry—which may take up to 48 hours—gently peel it off the cookie sheet. Punch a hole in the valentine and add a string to hang it with. If you are using them for decoration, consider stringing them together into a garland of hearts.

## 7. Plant!

When the time is right for your seeds to be planted, you can plant the entire valentine in a pot, yard or garden. The paper will break down quickly under the soil and with a little water and sunshine you'll soon have plants grown with lots of love.



## Another Cute Valentines Gift Idea for Gardeners...

Replace the fattening chocolates in a box of candy with miniature succulents in an assortment of colors



## Scheduling your Garden...

... from Kathy Jentz of *Washington Gardener* magazine

Plan your ornamental and vegetable gardens around your annual schedule. In other words, don't plant tulips that peak in May, if that is when you are away at a business conference, or cucumbers that produce in August, if that is your annual vacation time.

Such a simple concept but one we often don't think about. Garden planning is frequently based on the idea that there are certain things we should have, as if there were a universal garden to aspire to and we fail by not achieving parts of it. But really, if you're going to miss seeing or harvesting something, why bother even growing it?

Now, I'm going to tweak this a bit. Can't help it about the tulips, though if that business conference is only a week you can always find some that peak earlier or later. But vegetables can be scheduled to some extent. Here are some suggestions for achieving that cucumber or tomato harvest even if you're away during August.

1. Know the maturity period for what you're planting. Seed packets and/or seed catalogs should provide you with a days-till-harvest number. This will usually mean from seeding if the crop is customarily grown by putting seeds directly in the ground (e.g. cucumbers), or from transplant if plants must be started inside or bought as seedlings (e.g. tomatoes). Remember that different varieties may have considerable difference in maturity dates. (Also, maturity may be affected by local conditions.)
2. Know when plants or seeds can be safely put in the ground. Warm-weather plants such as tomatoes shouldn't be planted outside until the chance of frost has diminished to close to none. There's not just one date on which you can plant each crop, but a long range of dates. For example, cucumbers can be planted (by seed outside) from early May to early July.

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3. Do the math and put together a schedule that works for you. Maybe you want to plant your cucumbers as early as possible, using a variety that matures quickly, and harvest a lot in July before you go away. Or put your tomatoes in quite late and plan for a September harvest. (You may need to start your own tomato plants in this case, since nursery supplies dwindle and/or get over-mature by June. But there is no rule stating that you need to start tomato plants in March! Relax and wait.)
4. If you're the competitive sort, think about using season extension techniques (tunnels, row covers, cloches, wall-o-water-type devices) to rush the season and harvest the earliest tomatoes in your neighborhood. Perhaps choose a determinate variety to get an early harvest and pick over a short period of time. Learn about canning or freezing to preserve that large harvest.
5. Also consider combinations of varieties that will give you both early and late harvests, like some early plantings of bush beans, along with longer-producing pole beans, followed by even more bush beans. If you really like beans.
6. Whatever you end up planting, remember that your plants will need watering and caring for while you're away. Trade favors with a neighbor, hire someone, or set up a drip irrigation system with a timer (but still get someone to check that it's working, and that the health of your garden as a whole is good, and to harvest what doesn't decide to stick to the schedule). Mulch well to limit the amount of weeding necessary. Stake your plants so they don't overgrow and flop.

Using the knowledge you can glean from available information resources, you can come up with your own list of techniques for other extended absences. If it's May you miss and you never get to enjoy fresh spinach, consider planting it in the fall and giving it some mulch for protection, or a tunnel or cold frame, to enjoy very early spring harvests. Or try some winter-hardy greens like mache or claytonia. Or grow spinach-like plants that can be harvested in the summer, like chard, New Zealand spinach, or Malabar spinach. Or just hang on for fall.

If long trips or busy schedules make growing some vegetables just too much trouble, remember that gardens can be prioritized toward less labor-intensive crops, and that no matter where you go, there is probably a farmer's market where you can buy big delicious tomatoes, crunchy cucumbers, and whatever else your heart (and stomach) desires.

## Junipers Help Birds Cope with the Cold

.... From National Wildlife Federation's NWF.org



**These native trees provide wildlife a steady supply of food and shelter from harsh weather conditions**

WHEN THE COLD WINDS BLOW and the snow piles up, Ron Johnson knows which trees will be sought out by birds and other animals in many parts of the country.

“Junipers help pull wildlife through tough times,” says Johnson, a professor emeritus in wildlife biology at Clemson University. Not only do native junipers produce abundant food, their dense branches also offer crucial protection from the effects of winter. When spring finally arrives, mockingbirds and other songbirds often shelter their nests deep inside these conifers.

According to Johnson, many types of trees and shrubs will provide one, or perhaps two, of these benefits. But junipers are among the few plants that do it all. “They’re one of the top 10 plants for wildlife,” he says, pointing out that even one juniper in your yard can give birds and small mammals a boost. Everything from eastern bluebirds and evening grosbeaks to wild turkeys and sharp-tailed grouse devour the fruit. On a frigid day, some birds may gulp down more than 200 of the berries. Plus, the berries add splashes of brilliant blue to backyards during the cold months.

Experts note, however, that there are a few downsides to junipers. For one, they should not be planted near apple or crabapple trees because they are susceptible to cedar-apple rust, a fungal disease. Juniper pollen also can cause hay fever. If you live in a fire-prone area, do not place these highly flammable conifers near your home or other buildings. In addition, the trees can take over nearby meadows or prairies. “If you have a grassland right next to you,” says Johnson, “proceed cautiously.”

Another point to consider: Nearly all species of junipers are dioecious, which means male plants produce only pollen and female plants produce only fruit. If there are no other junipers in your neighborhood, you must include a male in your yard or the females will not set fruit. One way to determine the gender of junipers is to buy them in fall or winter when females are fruiting. In milder regions, those seasons also are good times to plant junipers.

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## How Old is Too Old? Testing Seed Viability

.... By Vicki Mattern for Earth Mother News



Stories of viable, 1,000-year-old seeds from Egyptian tombs aside, seed viability depends on the plant species and the seeds' storage conditions. Under ideal conditions — dry and dark, with a temperature in the 40-degree-Fahrenheit range — some seeds will germinate well for five or more years. Others will germinate strongly for only a year or two.

Iowa State University's Department of Horticulture gives the following average seed storage limits for common crops. Seeds aged past these limits will have lower germination rates, and plants that do germinate will grow with less vigor.

Onions: *One year*

Corn and peppers: *Two years*

Beans, carrots, peas: *Three years*

Beets, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, watermelons: *Four years*

Broccoli, cabbage, cucumbers, lettuce, cantaloupes, radishes, spinach: *Five years*

If your seeds were stored near or beyond their expected shelf life, or in less than ideal conditions, you can gauge their suitability for planting by doing a simple seed viability test. Write the name of the variety on a paper towel with an indelible pen and then moisten the towel with water. Count out at least 20 old seeds of that variety onto the towel, roll up the towel and place it in a plastic bag. Put the bag in a 70-degree location. Check daily for germination. After some seeds have germinated and a week has passed without additional

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germination, compare the number of sprouted seeds with the number you started with. If the germination rate is 70 to 90 percent, you could use the seeds and simply sow them more thickly.

If germination is less than that, planting those old vegetable seeds would probably be penny-wise and pound-foolish. Yes, you might save a few dollars on seed this year, but your garden will most likely yield many fewer pounds to harvest than if you had planted fresh seeds. Besides, buying new seeds is a great opportunity to experiment with new varieties.



## Recycle Pallets into Garden Planters...



What a great idea. Inexpensive and easy to do. The shelves save space on a porch, patio, or deck!