

UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND  
EXTENSION

MASTER  
GARDENER 

# The Vine

Winter 2021

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## "A Message from Mariah" Submitted by: Mariah Dean

I hope that everyone enjoyed the holidays and got to spend time relaxing! 2020 was certainly not a stress free year but at least we learned Zoom! I am looking forward to all that we will accomplish in 2021!

Our December meeting went well and we made some goals for the upcoming year. We decided on doing approximately quarterly meetings in 2021. We are currently planning on having them all on Zoom. Please keep an eye out in your inboxes for the Zoom meeting invitation from me for meetings the first weeks of March, June, September, and December!

In addition to quarterly meetings we are also planning on publishing quarterly newsletters. Ann Buckler suggested publishing them the month before the meeting so that way we can remind people about the meeting the next month. Great idea Ann, thank you! Following this method means the newsletters will be published approximately the first weeks of May, August, and November. Please get your submissions to me via email with the subject line "newsletter submission" by approximately the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month before they are due. For example, for the spring newsletter, please try to have submissions emailed to me at [mrdean@umd.edu](mailto:mrdean@umd.edu) by April 15ish. It's ok if it is a few days after, the due dates for the newsletter submissions are on Fridays so that the grace period of the weekend is kind of built in.

The fall 2020 online basic training was a success! Maryland has shown that an online basic training class can be done successfully, even during a pandemic! Thank you to all of you that participated in the class and offered support! Multiple counties across the state are collaborating again in spring 2021 for another online basic training class! Class will start February 4<sup>th</sup> and end May 6<sup>th</sup>. They will be held on Zoom once a week on Thursday evenings. If you are interested in talking to the spring 2021 interns about projects in St. Mary's, please reach out to me so that we can plan and so I can send you the invite for the county specific Zoom meetings.

We are still looking for innovative ways to change our programming in St. Mary's County to virtual formats. A few of you have been doing this already and I appreciate all of your efforts! You have been helping our community during a time where people need all the support they can get. Stay tuned for more updates about virtual programming opportunities and please reach out to me with any ideas!

I hope that you all enjoy this winter and are happily planning for spring gardens! Thank you again for all that you did in 2020.



***Tobacco***  
***By: Fran Beale***

This plant grew from seeds that are probably 17 to 18 years old that hung in an old barn on my farm. It was from the last crop our family grew. I discovered the plant when it was the size of a quarter about 5' inside the barn. We had already had one or two hard frosts and I knew it would not last much longer. I dug it up and you can see it is about 3' tall now. I hope I will be able to get some seeds from the plant and continue to grow a few plants from my husband's last crop.



***The Christmas Cactus***  
***By: Sara Beth and Jon Everheart***

The winter holiday is time that can conjure for many, images of hanging lights, festive decorations and family. Most do not associate the season with a Cactus. Few however are the plants that are quite so beautiful or forgiving of the novice horticulturalist as the Christmas Cactus. The Christmas Cactus is a type of cactus house plant (genus: Schlumbergera) that typically blooms in the winter months. In the northern hemisphere you might hear it called the Thanksgiving Cactus or Christmas Cactus. In the southern hemisphere you might hear it called the Easter Cactus or May Flower. There are several different varieties, depending on what part of the world you are in.

The Christmas Cactus is a beautiful indoor plant to have during the winter months when you are not gardening (or not gardening as much) that takes minimal effort to maintain. It only requires partial sun (bright indirect light) and watering every 2-3 weeks (or if the top two inches of the soil feel dry). Blooms range in color from white, pink, red, to purple. This plant can be propagated and given as gifts (which is exactly what we did this year). We had been given a large Christmas Cactus and divided the mother plant into much smaller plants and placed them in some really nice potting soil that we mixed with some peat moss. The containers we used to put them in were pretty heavy duty, so the plant would not topple over once it starts growing taller. Our plants are kept on the kitchen window sill or in our sunroom, both of which get bright indirect sunlight every day. We highly recommend these as gifts during the winter time and just to have around the house, as they are beautiful and unique.

If it is your intention to propagate this plant, you will need approximately 6 weeks to allow the roots to regenerate. Simply cut at least 3 leaves of a particular stalk at the joint and place one leaf fully into a suitable growing medium (Indoor potting soil for preference) in a shallow pot no larger than 6-8 inches deep. Water every 3 days for 3 weeks as the plant will need to grow roots to absorb the water, which will take time. Water weekly for another 3 weeks then your plant should be stable enough to water every 2 to 3 weeks.

Giving this plant as a gift to those that are not necessarily blessed with a green thumb is a beautiful way to get others started on their road to botanical success. Here are some pictures of our Christmas Cacti.

**Continue on page 3**

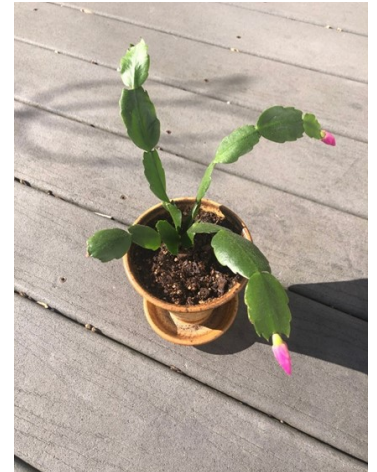


**Photograph 1.** If you purchase a Christmas Cactus online, it typically shows up without buds, and looks just like this, but 5 times the size. This photograph was taken after we had propagated the plant into smaller containers.

**Note:** Use a container for your propagated Christmas Cactus that is at least 6 inches deep. The roots need space to grow. As the plant continues to grow, you will need to transplant it into a larger container. Make sure the container is heavy duty, as these plants like to grow up and out. Avoid the plant toppling.

**Photograph 2.** This is the Christmas Cactus after the buds have started growing. The color that you see on the bud is what the flower will be when it blooms. This particular Christmas Cactus is from Jon's grandmother's mother plant. The original plant was around for about 40 years in Oregon. This piece of it has been growing in this pot for about 3 years. It started off as a tiny portion (maybe 2-3 segments) and has really flourished.

**Note:** The buds will fall off if the plant is under stress (too much sunlight or if it is not watered enough), so keep a good eye on the amount of sunlight and your watering schedule and check to see if additional water needs to be added in between waterings (if the top 2 inches of the soil is dry). These plants can live up to 100 years with proper care.



**Photograph 3.** Here is the Christmas Cactus that we gave as a gift to our friends at Christmas who followed our instructions of care. They have pink and purple flowers on this particular plant. As you can see, this plant is getting the indirect sunlight that it needs.

**Note:** You can have multiple colors in one plant, or just one color for all of them. The buds can be forced to bloom if they are exposed to temperatures of about 45 Degrees Fahrenheit for 3 to 4 nights in a row. Generally, the buds will flourish at temperatures of around 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.



**Photographs 4 and 5.** These are close ups of the flower in full bloom.



## ***Buddy the Gnome***

***By: Marlene and Bill Smith***

What was the highlight of your holiday season? Ours (mine and my husband's) was a small project that started out as a simple holiday decoration on the afternoon of December 21, but which quickly grew into a life-like character, Buddy the Gnome. We have always admired garden gnomes made out of plant material, so we gathered some pine branches, an old tomato cage, some twine, a stocking cap, a stuffed nose, and red felt cut to resemble mittens. The result was a simple garden gnome.



Little did we know this creation would come to life. After posting a photo on our personal Facebook page, a friend's 8-year-old daughter gave our gnome a name. "She's chosen Buddy. She wants you to know that he's 10 years old and loves to collect things in the forest like a crow. His favorite thing to collect is leaves in the fall, preferably large and colorful." We thought this was so cute that we decided to share "The Adventures of Buddy", a daily FB post that started on December 23 and lasted through January 2. Buddy was quite the character and quite busy. He went for a walk with our dog, visited with Santa, watched football, ate lunch on the deck, had photos taken with our Christmas trees, had a few drinks to prepare for the New Year, and rang in the New Year in style.





The festivities ended when Buddy strolled off into our woods on January 2, with a promise to his followers, "I'll be back again someday." Much like Frosty the Snowman.



What started out as a simple winter garden project to create a gnome decoration brought lots of smiles and laughter to us, as well as our friends on Facebook. Despite the challenges 2020 brought, it gave us great joy to brighten the holidays of others by sharing the adventures of Buddy the Gnome.

We miss Buddy since he left us the first weekend of January, but we were so happy to come across his baby picture while framing some family photos the following weekend. We shared his baby picture on Facebook and thought you, too, might like a glimpse of Buddy as a baby.



If you are interested in creating your own garden gnome from greenery, we used the following videos as a reference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LyF0c24uNQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjmvOiSPMa4>



## *Glycerin Preserving Leaves*

### *By: Marlene and Bill Smith*

Every fall, I struggle with the shorter days as the foliage in the gardens gives way to colder weather. So this past October, I gathered some pruners and headed outside to gather some of the leaves I loved most that hadn't been too badly damaged by the weather or bugs. My first two attempts at preserving the leaves were met with disappointment. I tried a decoupage medium first (a glue, sealer, and finish designed for craft and art projects). The leaves looked good for a few days, but they all started to brown and darken quickly. I then tried simply pressing them between newspapers and paper towels, but those results weren't much better; the leaves became too dry, brown, and brittle.

My final attempt was preserving them with glycerin. I gathered seven varieties of leaves on October 31 and submersed them in a solution of 1 part glycerin to 2 parts water, weighting them down to ensure that all parts of the leaves and stems were covered. After several days in dilute glycerin, I began removing them on November 5, with the larger, thicker leaves left in until November 7. After removing them from the glycerin, I left them for a couple of months between newspaper and paper towels to allow them to dry thoroughly. I did not weigh them down while drying, as I did not want to press them at this point. Finally on January 10, my husband Bill helped me frame them using floating picture frames. I am so pleased with the results.



Native Christmas fern

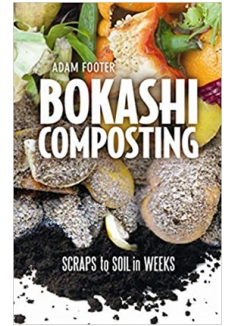


Okra, hosta, hibiscus, native oak leaf hydrangea, and hydrangea

I should point out that not all leaves responded well to the glycerin solution. I tried to preserve some lovely coleus leaves, but they did poorly with this method (and the other methods, too). Based on the varieties that I tried, I think the thicker the plant material, the better the results; the more tender the leaf, the less successful the preservation techniques were. During my research, I even read where you can preserve whole branches by placing the cut stem in a vase. I haven't tried this yet, but it's on my list of things to try this year.

If you are interested in trying your hand at this, it really is quite simple and inexpensive. I followed the instructions on the following websites: <https://todayshomeowner.com/how-to-preserve-fall-leaves.../> and <https://craftbits.com/.../preserving-leaves-with-glycerin/>, as well as this video: <https://www.redtedart.com/how-to-preserve-leaves-6-methods/>

## ***Bokashi Composting*** ***By: Claudia Knowlton***



In late summer I was reading about composting and learned of a method commonly used in Japan and Southeast Asia called Bokashi composting. As an ardent composter for years, I had used only traditional methods. Bokashi was of interest to me because one could use it inside (thinking of winter cold trudging to our compost bin), and it seemed ideal for those living in apartments who might need compost for smaller porch gardening, or in an office where workers have kitchen waste.

*Bokashi Composting: Scraps to Soil in Weeks*, by Adam Footer became my guide as his book includes the history of Bokashi, the science and use of fermented food waste and more. It is a very thorough text but meant as an introduction to the method. It is available at Amazon.

First, what is Bokashi?

“Bokashi is a form of composting that uses a specific group of microbes to anaerobically ferment organic matter, resulting in a finished product that can be rapidly digested by the soil biota.” (pg. 1.)

This is important to understand. Bokashi is acidic anaerobic composting rather than aerobic composting. It is a closed system and doesn't require mixing green and brown waste and doesn't generate the heat of greenhouse gas.

Bokashi bran is necessary to the process: it is sprinkled over kitchen waste after being placed in the Bokashi bucket. Why? Because it is a carbon substrate that is inoculated with specific beneficial microbes needed for fermentation of the kitchen waste. “Kitchen waste” includes any organic material such as bread, vegetable scraps, fruit, dairy, meat and coffee grounds. Benefits of a closed system include that there is no odor, no rodent problem, no need to turn on a regular basis and all types of kitchen waste can be used. The process is also fast; within 30 days you have compost filled with beneficial organisms ready to plant.

My next step after reading the book was to purchase the supplies needed begin Bokashi at home. All supplies pictured were readily available on Amazon for \$53. I chose to set our Bokashi system up in a small downstairs service room. Since the system is sealed there was no discernable odor. It comes with a list of helpful tips for composting indoors including breaking or chopping large waste into smaller pieces. I found that although there are only two of us living in our home, it was very easy to fill the Bokashi bucket. It would therefore never replace our need for traditional outside composter.



You will notice that there is a spigot on the Bokashi bucket to drain Bokashi tea that is a by-product of fermentation. This is then mixed with water and may be used to feed houseplants or plants in the garden.

Would I recommend Bokashi? Yes, but only as a supplement to traditional composting due to the small size of the Bokashi bucket. It has its place in our efforts to reduce and re-cycle waste for the benefit of our garden.

***A Sort of Short Note About Continuing Education Opportunities...  
Happy Zooming: Linda Brooks Crandall***

Hello, I hope this note finds you all well and finding ways to stay occupied along with planning your spring gardens.

With that in mind, and with the idea of also wanting to share with you one of my passions, I wanted to let you know that continuing education opportunities, and the chance to learn more ways to improve your garden and landscape, are alive and well.

This past week I 'attended' the Home Gardener Day that was put on by the Virginia Horticultural Foundation. Normally this event takes place in the Hampton Roads area, and over the many years I have attended the event it has been held Newport News, Virginia Beach, and Norfolk. This year it took place online as a ZOOM event. The theme of the day was "Growing Wild", and the focus for the day was the important role native plants play in our local ecosystems and how we can plan to incorporate more of them into our home landscapes.

The speakers for the day were all great, and most of them well-known in the gardening world. Doug Tallamy, Ryan McEnaney, Ian Caton, and one of my favorite speakers to see in person... Brie Arthur filled the day with interesting information. In their different sessions the speakers talked about why we should all plant (at least some) natives, the breeding of cultivars, using natives in food gardens, and how to propagate these plants. Each speaker was knowledgeable, and informed about their topic and also how their topic related to the overall focus for the day.

For those who have not had the opportunity to see Doug Tallamy, Ryan McEnaney, Ian Caton, or Brie Arthur this spring will give you many opportunities. Normally you might have to travel hundreds of miles, or through rush hour traffic to see speakers of this caliber, but the upside to COVID (And I bet your thought there would never be one!) is that almost all of the conferences, symposiums, and workshops that are planned for gardeners every year... and that are all over the country, are moving online as ZOOM events so they are easy for us all to 'attend'. What this means is that you can see Doug Tallamy (with Rick Darke, Heather Holm, and Susan Martin) in April at the Master Gardener Society of Oakland County, Inc. (Michigan) 2021 Educational Conference (tickets go on sale in February), or you can see Brie Arthur (with Nancy Lawson, and Vincent Simeone) at the Northern Neck seminar ("Be Intentional: Create Livable, Edible, Sustainable Garden Spaces") in March (tickets also go on sale in February). All of this without leaving your home, and because you are home, all of this is without the frustrations of traffic, long walks, or long waits. For me this means it will be an exciting spring!

As you are planning your spring garden, I hope you will decide what direction you want to go as you work to improve your space and then get on the internet to find gardening experts who will help you work towards a happier, healthier, and more sustainable space.



### ***Thru the Garden Gate January 2021***

Winter chill may keep gardeners inside, but not away from exploring and savoring all things related to gardens. January's "Thru the Garden Gate" offers a selection of temptations to keep the fire of your passion for gardening burning bright this winter.



#### **"The Biggest Little Farm" Documentary Film**

If you own a farm, or dream of farming your own land, "The Biggest Little Farm" will give you inspiration to renew your dedication to transforming the land using biodiverse and environmentally sustainable methods. While the film is instructive, it is also charming. It tells the story of Molly and John Chester who in 2010 decide to leave their work in Los Angeles to buy a neglected 200-acre farm in Moorpark, California.

The film is visually captivating as it tells the riveting story of the eight years it took to transform the acreage into "Apricot Lane Farms." Alan York, one of the world's most well-respected soil, plant and biodynamic consultants, is their guide and friend before his death in 2014. Life on the farm is filled with hard labor, successes and failures, anger and deep happiness rooted in living in harmony with nature.

Visit the Apricot Lane Farms website (<https://www.apricotlanefarms.com>) to learn more and shop for foods, recipes, and delightful books about life on the farm. Check out their recipe for spiced mulled cider and enjoy it while you watch.



(Released in 2018, available on Amazon and at St. Mary's County Library.)

#### ***A Pinch of Yum***

What is there about winter that brings on a desire to bake, and make luscious new culinary creations? Maybe it is being confined inside wrapped in heavy sweaters and seated in front of the fire or TV that brings on the munchies. Plus, there is always a need to expand your collection of recipes that are favorites, especially those using winter vegetables, your dried herbs, flavored vinegars, or your delicious jam rich with fruit from your trees.

A blog that may help is A Pinch of Yum (<https://pinchofyum.com>) filled with simple, fresh, healthy and delicious recipes. Each have nutritional information. In January vegetarian recipes were featured. Check out their "12 Healthy Winter Recipes" to find many that use root vegetables plus meats and fruits to enjoy. There is a sections on gluten free, sugar free, vegan and "lighten up" recipes as well. The blogger, Lindsay, lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota so understands the nutritional and hunger needs of winter gardeners!



***The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature***  
**By: Sue Stuart-Smith (New York Scribner, 2020)**

*Come forth into the light of things,  
 Let Nature by your teacher.*

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

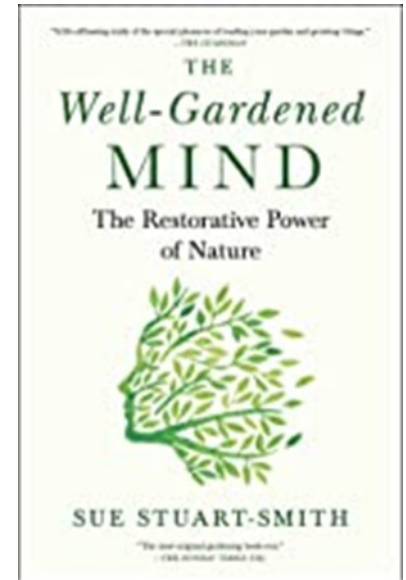
Winter often provides welcome quiet time for indulging in long hours of reading. *The Well-Gardened Mind* is perfect for snuggling into a large chair and making a new friend of author Sue Stuart-Smith. Dr. Smith, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, is married to Tom Stuart-Smith, a celebrated garden designer. Over thirty years they have created Barn Garden in Hertfordshire England.

Within the pages of this eloquently written book, the author explores the impact of the deep connection human beings have with plants and with their gardens. Every Master Gardener knows this truth.

“In a garden filled with light and suffused with the energy of new growth,

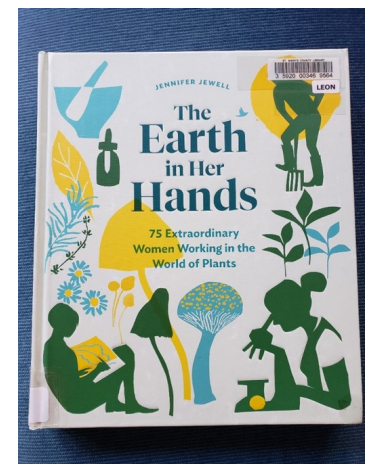
the green pulse of life can be felt at its strongest. Whether we conceive of the natural growth force in terms of God, Mother Earth, biology, or a mixture of these, there is a living relationship at work. Gardening is an interchange through which nature gives life to our reparative wishes, be it turning waste into nutritious compost, helping pollinators thrive, or beautifying the earth.” (pg. 29)

The book explores the positive impact of gardening through real life stories. Connecting literary and historical references with horticulture, sociology and psychiatry. The power of gardening to enrich the lives of those in prison, the poor, especially in urban environments, the aged, and those at the end of life is included. One of the most interesting chapters deals with war and gardening and another explores the healing power of gardens at hospitals. To read this book is to make a new and interesting friend who shares her knowledge and understanding of the power of nature to shape every life for good.



**“The Earth in Her Hands” book review by Patricia Armstrong**

From the local library, this book entitled "The Earth in Her Hands", by Jennifer Jewell, is a delightful book about 75 extraordinary women working in the world of plants. The hardbound book has beautiful photos and tells the stories of women working in fields such as botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food justice. It's a beautiful book and so relaxing to read the personal stories and insights while enjoying a cup of hot tea on a winter afternoon.



## Feast Your Eyes on These Seasonal Recipes!

### *“Winter Pesto” submitted by Claudia Knowlton*

If you're having regrets that you didn't make enough pesto, or freeze enough when fresh basil was flourishing in your garden, do not despair. Here is a recipe especially delicious in winter.

3 cups packed spinach	2/3 cup olive oil
1 Tablespoon dried basil	2/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 cloves of garlic	3 Tablespoon butter, softened
1/4 cup walnuts	1/4 teaspoon salt

- Remove stems, rinse and dry spinach. Blend spinach with Basil, garlic, walnuts and olive oil until smooth.
- Pour into container with tight lid and mix in cheese, softened butter and salt.
- Use as sauce for pasta, spaghetti squash, or on zucchini noodles.



### *“Sweet Potato Gnocchi” submitted by Mariah Dean*



If you have a bunch of sweet potatoes and haven't tried gnocchi, this is a recipe for you! One tip I've learned with making gnocchi is after I cut them I gently roll both sides with a fork to make little indents. Those crevices hold the sauce well! I really like sweet potato gnocchi butter and sage. I plan on trying this with tomato sauce in the near future but I'll omit the nutmeg from the recipe when I do that. This also works well with the purple and other sweet potatoes! I found this recipe on [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com).

Ingredients:

2 (8 ounce, maybe considered medium) sweet potatoes	1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 clove garlic, pressed	1 egg
1/2 teaspoon salt	2 cups all purpose flour

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake sweet potatoes for 30 minutes, or until soft to the touch. Remove from the oven, and set aside to cool.

Step 2: Once the potatoes are cool enough to work with, remove the peels, and mash them, or press them through a ricer into a large bowl. Blend in the garlic, salt, nutmeg, and egg. Mix in the flour a little at a time until you have soft dough. Use more or less flour as needed.

Step 3: Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. While you wait for the water, make the gnocchi. On a floured surface, roll the dough out in several long snakes, and cut into 1-inch sections. Drop the pieces into the boiling water, and allow them to cook until they float to the surface. Remove the floating pieces with a slotted spoon, and keep warm in a serving dish. Serve with butter or cream sauce.



## *Continuing Education Opportunities...*

There are many continuing education opportunities available online and for free!

- \* Calvert County Master Gardeners will be hosting their annual Garden Smarter series virtually this year in collaboration with the Calvert County Library. For a list of topics go to: [https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/\\_docs/locations/calvert\\_county/2021%20Garden%20Smarter%20Revised%2012\\_15\\_20.pdf](https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_docs/locations/calvert_county/2021%20Garden%20Smarter%20Revised%2012_15_20.pdf)
- \* Montgomery County Master Gardeners will be hosting a speaker series from January-June 2021 called "A Fresh Start in the Garden". It is free but registration is required. To learn more, please go to: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-fresh-start-in-the-garden-un-nuevo-comienzo-en-el-jardin-registracion-134456788875?mc\\_eid=70141b417d&mc\\_cid=9037cb916b](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-fresh-start-in-the-garden-un-nuevo-comienzo-en-el-jardin-registracion-134456788875?mc_eid=70141b417d&mc_cid=9037cb916b)
- \* Greenscapes symposium that is held annually at Brookside Gardens will be virtual this year. For more information please go to: <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/brookside-gardens/greenscapes/>
- \* The Natural History Society of Maryland is hosting many free webinars in 2021, for more information please go to: <https://www.marylandnature.org/get-involved/events/category/lectures-workshops/>
- \* Maryland's Native Plant Society has some webinar recordings from 2020. Keep an eye out for upcoming webinars in 2021. For more information please go to: <https://mdflora.org/Webinar-Recordings>
- \* There will also be a statewide Master Gardener webinar series in late winter that has a fee of \$5-20 but it includes a seed starting kit. More information here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/seed-starting-webinar-series-tickets-137455726779>
- \* Keep an eye out in your email for more continuing education opportunities!
- \* If you would like to create some for your fellow Master Gardener's, please reach out to me!

UME-St. Mary's  
26737 Radio Station Way, Suite E-2  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
TEL 301-475-4120  
FAX 301-475-4483

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<https://extension.umd.edu/st-marys-county/home-gardening/master-gardener-program>



<https://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-County-Master-Gardeners-University-of-Maryland-Extension-111823550482511>