

# The Leaflet

December 2016



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## O Christmas Tree!

By René Kriek

**I**t's that time of year again with Christmas around the corner and chances are you probably already have your Christmas tree up and decorated... or you might still have your tree set up from last year! (Hey, we don't judge!) A tree that's as varied as the history of its origin. From great, big, tall statement-makers to small, intimate mood-setters. Whether freshly cut from a tree farm or old plastic branches held together by duct tape; they all tell the same story.

So why a Christmas tree? Where did this now world-wide tradition begin? What is its meaning? According to the internet

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## Thanks to Our 2016 Officers

**T**hanks to Jeanne Protsman and Douglas Buck for serving as 2016 RCMGA president and vice president. Our officers dedicate significant time to ensure the ongoing success of our Association. Thanks to Lynn Stenglein and Shelley Pritchard for their 2016 service as officers and for agreeing to serve as 2017 officers.

### MESSAGES FROM 2017 OFFICERS:

As another year draws to a close, I can't help but be excited about what lies ahead in 2017. I'm

excited about our new members joining us and getting involved in our projects and giving back to our community. Volunteering on projects is the heart and soul of our association. Not only are we investing our time and effort into the community, whether it's helping someone less fortunate or bringing awareness to a cause, it's an opportunity to teach fellow community members about the joys and fundamentals of gardening. Sharing

our knowledge and skills with each other and continually learning about a passion we share is what makes RCMG members such a special group of people. My hope and vision for this coming year is that each and every one of us take on a project - old or new - get involved, get our hands dirty and make a difference in our beautiful Robertson County! Rene Kriek, 2017 President

Please let me know what you would like to learn about this year. Send your suggestions for program topics and speakers to [lcsqts@hughes.net](mailto:lcsqts@hughes.net). Lynn Stenglein, Vice President

RCMGA dues due at January meeting except for 2016 class members whose dues are waived. Get your expense reports in promptly! Shelley Pritchard, Treasurer



### 2016 and 2017 Officers

*From left: Shelly Pritchard, 2016-17 treasurer; Trina Fulton 2017 Secretary; Lynn Stenglein, 2016 Secretary and 2017 Treasurer; Doub Buck, 2016 Vice President; Jeanne Protsman, 2016 President; and René Kriek 2017 President*

### NEXT MEETING

**Jan. 25, 2017  
7 pm**

Program:

**2017 Projects**

The Robertson Co. Master Gardener Assoc. meets the fourth Thurs. of every month.

Meetings are at 7pm at the UT Extension Office, 408 Main Street, Springfield, TN

## RCMGA Participates in Kids Gardening Club at Stokes-Brown Library

Rose Wooten, Children's librarian at the Stokes-Brown Library in Springfield, contacted our Robertson County Master Gardeners Association about participation in the newly formed Garden Club for Kids which meets at the library the second Tuesday of each month from 3:30—4:30. Lynn Stenglein volunteered to help out in the October class; twelve gardeners (ages about 7-12) enthusiastically added fall plants including pansies and Swiss Chard to the Kid's garden at the Library. Rose attended our October 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, shared her ideas for the classes, and asked that RCMGA members participate in teaching and mentoring the kids at the classes.

Members agreed that the classes are a good opportunity to build interest in gardening and an important part of the Master Gardener mission. The library staff does publicity, provides a garden area and indoor dirt-and-water-friendly classroom, and already has a group of interested gardening class participants. Rene Kriek, Lynn Cantrell, and Lynn Stenglein volunteered to follow-up, i.e. to suggest classes, recruit volunteer teachers, and coordinate with library staff.

Michelle Adcock, assisted by Lynn Cantrell and Ann Rausch, taught a Worm



Rose Wooten and Michelle Adcock teaching the children about worm composting.



Composting class on December 13<sup>th</sup>. Ursula Otto volunteered for a "Greenhouse-in-a-Bottle" class in January, and JoAnn Slate will teach a "Container Creation for Your Valentine" in February. Master Gardener teaching assistant volunteers are needed for these classes. At least one Master Gardener teaching assistant is needed in each class.

Stop by the library on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Springfield and visit the Kid's garden and classroom. Even in winter you can envision what we might do for future classes.

We could teach about pollinators, herbs, butterflies, beneficial insects. AND everyone who has sunk a trowel or spade in the Kid's Garden will testify, there is no better place for a raised bed lasagna garden.

Some of us are not comfortable teaching classes or have scheduling conflicts with teaching opportunities. Master Gardeners can participate by preparing materials and environment for classes, assisting the instructors, and offering ideas.

### Recipes For Your Indoor Plants

**Onion/Pepper Spray:** Mince one organic clove of garlic and one medium sized onion. Add to a quart of water. Wait one hour and then add one teaspoon of cayenne pepper and one tablespoon of liquid soap to the mix. This spray will hold its potency for one week if stored in the refrigerator.

**Tobacco Spray:** Take one cup of tobacco (preferably a brand that is organic and all-natural) and mix it in one gallon of water. Allow the mixture to set overnight. After 24-hours, the mix should have a light brown color. If it is very dark, add more water. This mix can be used on most plants, with the exception of those in the solanaceous family (tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, etc.)

**Soap/Oil Spray:** Mix one tablespoon canola oil and a few drops of Ivory soap into a quart of water. Shake well and pour into a spray bottle. Spray plant from above down, and from below up to get the underside of the leaves.

### Christmas Plants Delivered To Robertson County Meals On Wheels Clients

Thanks to everyone who brought poinsettias to the December Christmas meeting and to Lynn Cantrell and Lynn Stenglein for delivering the plants to the Meals' office. Special thanks, also, go to South Central Growers, who provided the additional plants.

### New Robertson County Extension Agent Announced

Jeffery W. Smith will be onsite February 1<sup>st</sup>. Jeff, a Montgomery County native, comes to Robertson County from the Eastern Kentucky region office in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. Jeff emailed the RCMGA that he is looking forward to meeting everyone and working with the Master Gardener volunteers.



Meals on Wheels Asst. Dir., Evelyn Waymick and RCMGA member, Lynn Cantrell

## 2016 Christmas Party



### ○ Christmas Tree continued from p. 1

there are many different beliefs and traditions that surround what we now call the “Christmas tree”.

“The evergreen tree was an ancient symbol of life in the midst of winter. Romans decorated their houses with evergreen branches during the New Year, and ancient inhabitants of northern Europe cut evergreen trees and planted them in boxes inside their houses in wintertime. Many early Christians were hostile to such practices. The second-century theologian Tertullian condemned those Christians who celebrated the winter festivals, or decorated their houses with laurel boughs in honor of the emperor.

But by the early Middle Ages, the legend had grown that when Christ was born in the dead of winter, every tree throughout the world miraculously shook off its ice and snow and produced new shoots of green. At the same time, Christian missionaries preaching to Germanic and Slavic peoples were taking a more lenient approach to cultural practices—such as evergreen trees. These missionaries believed that the incarnation proclaimed Christ’s lordship over those natural symbols that had previously been used for the worship of pagan gods. Not only individual human beings, but cultures, symbols and traditions could be converted.

Of course, this did not mean that the worship of pagan gods themselves was tolerated. According to one legend, the 8th century missionary Boniface, after cutting down an oak tree sacred to the pagan god Thor (and used for human sacrifice), pointed to a nearby fir tree instead as a symbol of the love and mercy of God.

Not until the Renaissance are there clear records of trees being used as a symbol of Christmas, beginning in Latvia in 1510 and Strasbourg in 1521. Legend credits the Protestant reformer Martin Luther with inventing the Christmas tree, but the story has little historical basis.

The most likely theory is that Christmas trees started with medieval plays. Dramas depicting biblical themes began as part of the church’s worship, but by the late Middle Ages, they had become rowdy, imaginative performances dominated by laypeople and taking place in the open air. The plays celebrating the Nativity were linked to the story of creation—in part because Christmas Eve was also considered the feast day of Adam and Eve. Thus, as part of the play for that day, the Garden of Eden was symbolized by a “paradise tree” hung with fruit.

These plays were banned in many places in the 16th century, and people perhaps began to set up “paradise trees” in their homes to compensate for the public celebration they could no longer enjoy. The earliest Christmas trees (or evergreen branches) used in home were referred to as “paradises”. They were often hung with round pastry wafers symbolizing the Eucharist, which developed into the cookie ornaments decorating German Christmas trees today.

The custom gained popularity and alongside the tree often stood wooden “pyramids”—stacks of shelves bearing candles, sometimes one for each family member. Eventually these pyramids of candles were placed on the tree, the ancestors of our modern Christmas tree lights and ornaments. By Edwin and Jennifer Woodruff Tait

With controversies surrounding almost everything these days, the Christmas tree is no exception. I never personally gave it much thought; it was just always something we did during Christmas time. But it is something fun to do as a family, it looks pretty and the smell of pine is amazing. It sets the mood to celebrate one of the most important events in history, the birth of Jesus Christ.

So whether you decorated a spruce, pine, fir or palm, may the blessings of the season surround you and your family not just once a year, but every day for the rest of your life!

Merry Christmas!

## South Central Growers Hosts Poinsettia Open House

On November 12 South Central Growers opened its doors to the public for its annual Poinsettia Open House. The public was treated to a stunning sea of red, pink, yellow and green poinsettias. Each guest was given a 4 in. poinsettia as a gift as well as the opportunity to purchase beautiful planters and large poinsettias at wholesale prices.

If you have the time, try to attend next year's open house. It is a great opportunity to learn more about this beautiful plant as well as see the unforgettable sight of thousands of poinsettias in one place.

### A Brief History of the Poinsettia

Although the poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherima*) is among the most traditional symbols of the Christmas season, it was cultivated by the Aztecs of Mexico long before the introduction of Christianity to the Western Hemisphere.

Poinsettias were first introduced into the United States in 1825 by Joel Robert Poinsett. While serving as the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, he had occasion to visit Taxco and found the plants growing on adjacent hillsides. Poinsett, a botanist of great ability, had some plants sent to his home in Greenville, South Carolina. After supplying his own greenhouses, Poinsett also distributed plants to various



botanical gardens and to some horticultural friends, including John Bartram of Philadelphia. Bartram, in turn, supplied the plant to Robert Buist, a nurseryman, who first sold the plant as *Euphorbia poinsettia*.

## Tips for Dealing with Seasonal Affective Disorder (For you AND your plants)

Having plants around your home is great all year around. Indoor plants can even help deal with Seasonal Affective Disorder. However, for them to be effective, plants need to be cared for during these months. Keep this in mind and take the necessary steps and you'll have a garden that lasts.

- **Watering:** neglect with respect. Most houseplants don't

need as much water during the reason season. Once a week test the moisture level. Only if the soil is dry at a 2 inch depth, the plant needs water. If the plant sits in a saucer, dump any excess water after an hour or so.

- **Fertilization:** Spring and summer are the feeding months. During winter feeding is not necessary.
- **Humidity:** Most houseplants prefer a humidity level of 40-50 percent. Contrary to popular belief, misting houseplants does not raise humidity. Fill a large saucer with gravel and add water to raise the humidity around the plant. Be sure the bottom of pot is not setting in water.
- **Repotting:** Do not repot in winter. Wait until new growth appears in the spring.

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## Upcoming Events

Jan 14 10:30 am	Vegetable Gardening: Spring and Fall	Green Hills Library
Jan 21 1 pm	Seed Swap	Shelby Bottoms Nature Center
Feb 4 10:30 am	Butterfly Gardens with Rita Venable	Main Library
Feb 18 10:30 am	The Edible Backyard	Inglewood Library
Mar 2-5	Nashville Lawn and Garden Show	Tennessee State Fairgrounds