



December is for Greenery, Lichens and Orchids



Fresh greenery for decorations



Using fresh greenery from your own landscape plants, wild plants or garden centers provides an opportunity to create your own outdoor and indoor holiday decorations. In the planter above, cedar and winterberry (from the cultivar 'Heavy Berry') harvested from outdoor landscape plants are mingled with Frasier and noble fir branches purchased from a garden center. Sometimes birds eat all the winterberries...

[Holiday decorating with fresh greenery](#)

Lichens



Lichens are an organism that is made up of an alga and a fungus. They live in a symbiotic relationship where the algae has chlorophyll essential for food production and the fungus prevents the organism from drying out. Lichens are not harmful to trees, but can occur in large numbers that may be alarming to homeowners. Above is the rock tripe lichen. Below are multiple lichen species on a tree trunk.



Lichens

Orchids



Orchids provide a colorful splash indoors, especially during the winter months.

Orchid selection, types and care



Phalaenopsis, or moth orchids, above, (North Carolina State image), are sold by many retailers, even grocery and big box stores. These orchids are among the easiest to grow for most indoor conditions, requiring less light, and they have long sprays of flowers that may last several months.

Phalaenopsis orchids (moth orchid)

Plants for winter food sources for birds



Birds that overwinter in New England are helped by landscape plants that provide food sources throughout the cold months. Above, cedar waxwings visit a native Hawthorn tree in late December. Many viburnums, winterberry, crabapples, hollies, inkberry and other plants will be a great source of food for our winter birds. Leave perennial plant seed heads intact or cut them and place them on the ground in the garden for birds like juncos and song sparrows to feed on.

Bird friendly gardens

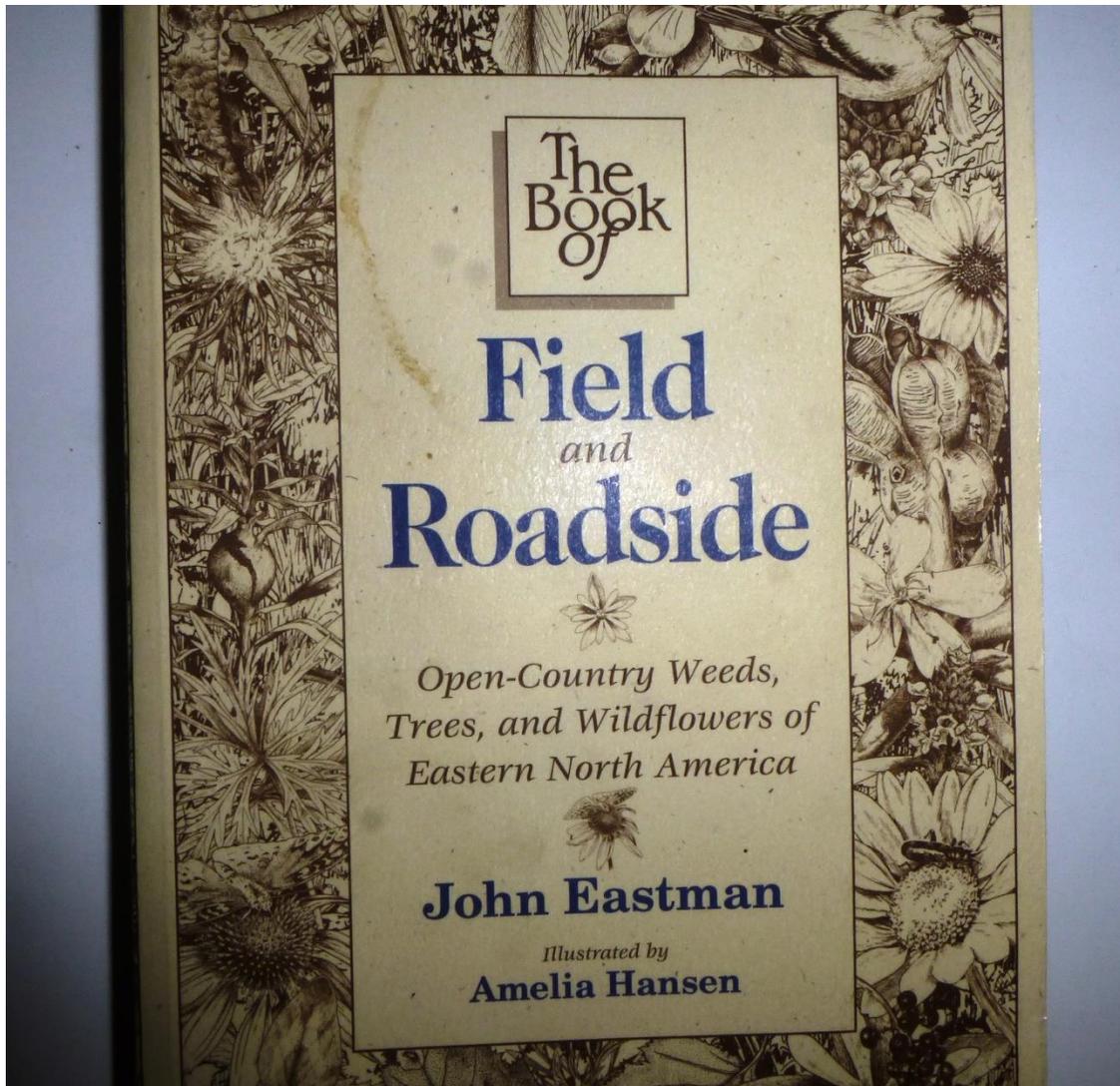
A Surprise in the Garden...



This gray tree frog was accidentally raked out of the landscape where it was happily overwintering under some leaves. It was fine and put back under a bunch of leaves under a shrub. Sometimes these frogs end up in the house when they overwinter in potted plant containers. If found indoors in extreme cold, just leave them in the house and return outside in the spring. They do not need any food over the winter, but may trill a little when plants are watered.

Gray tree frog

Field Guides



John Eastman has written several field guides for specific habitats that interesting for hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. There are references to both native and non-native plants and their associations with insects and wildlife. Illustrations are helpful in identifying flora and fauna encountered in their specific habitats. His field guides include swamps and bogs, trees, wildflowers and fields, and roadsides. There are many wonderful field guides by other writers and societies like the Audubon that are easy to use and informative.

Upcoming Webinars



Join UMass, Rhode Island, and Connecticut Extensions in a series of webinars for vegetable growers this January and February. Topics will be added to website soon. To register, click button below.

[Southern New England Vegetable Growers Webinar](#)

Plant Highlight- Wintergreen



American wintergreen, *Gaultheria procumbens*, also called eastern teaberry is a native understory plant in the Ericaceae family that also includes blueberry. Useful as a groundcover in shady conditions, leaves have a wintergreen aroma when crushed.

Wintergreen

Bird Highlight - Red-breasted Nuthatch



Red-breasted nuthatches are frequently seen on native trees.

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Winter Tree Identification- Bark



It can be fun to try and identify trees from their fruits, nuts and leaves as well as leaf and flower buds. In winter, bark is a key identification characteristic, and coupled with bud and twig features, trees can be identified, although leaves really help make it somewhat easier. See how many of the images you can identify. Answers at bottom of page. Image above is number 1



Image above is 2



Image above is 3

Keep Apples Cold for Long Term Storage.



Apple Storage

Shop Local Connecticut Farmers and Farm Markets

Connecticut State Government – [site](#) that includes listings of where to get produce and meat from local farmers.

CitySeed – organizations that are operating an [outdoor, pre-order farmers market in New Haven.](#)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut – [map and directory](#) of farms, farmers markets, and farm stands.



This pattern of circular depressions was found in a dried up reservoir pond in the late summer of 2020. Fish made these depressions by sweeping their tails in sandy pond or lake bottoms for spawning sites or beds. Usually they are made in water that is 2-6 feet deep. Due to a severe drought this summer, the pond had fallen to a depth 15 feet below normal and these nests were now on dry ground.



Houston Chronicle image

[UConn Extension Vegetable Resource Page](#)

KNOWLEDGE TO GROW ON- Read our latest Ladybug blogs

[The Bark, Nuts, Roots and Seeds of a
Sweet Fall Flavor](#)

[How I Grew to Love Kale](#)

[Ubiquitous Yews are Unique](#)

[Season of Witches](#)

[Sign up to receive our blogs by e-mail](#)

Gardening Tips for December

- Many holiday cactus are available to brighten your holiday table. Seek out unusual colors at local garden centers.
- Remove decorative foil wrapped around festive plants to allow good drainage and keep root rot away.
- Harvest any leeks and other root vegetables still in the vegetable garden.
- Mark beds now with golf tees over new bulb plantings to remind you where to look for them in the spring. Marking also prevents planting new plants on top of the growing bulbs.
- Check stored garden bounty of fruits and vegetables weekly to sort out ones with soft spots and use these first.
- Once snow begins, lightly brush of accumulated snow load from evergreen branches to prevent breakage.
- Dream of new garden plans by reading all the plant and seed catalogs delivered to your mailbox.

For a more extensive list of tips visit [Gardening Tips for December](#)



Have Your Soil Tested for Macro- & Micro Nutrients

Send your soil sample in for testing now. For details on submitting a sample, go to [UConn Soil and Nutrient Laboratory](#).

Photo by dmp, UConn

[UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

Look out for these insects.

Springtails

Springtails are tiny arthropods that appear where there is moisture. They can form large colonies and can spring like fleas. Some are active even in winter and are called snow fleas.



Springtails

Bagworms on trees and shrubs

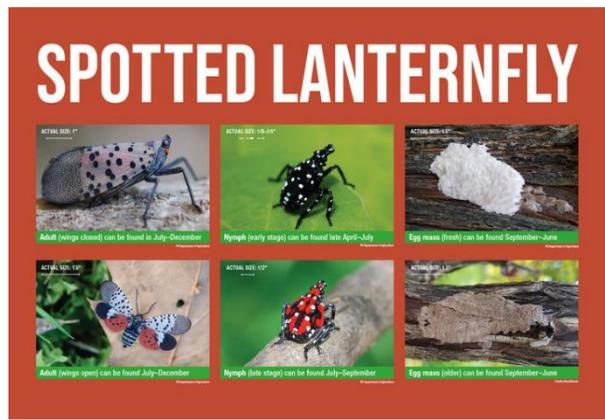




Bagworms are serious pests of evergreens like Arborvitae and junipers and are now found on native white pine, willow and cherry, oaks, ornamental evergreens like some cedars and other woody plants. Caterpillars make durable silken bags and tack on needles or leaf pieces to hide them. Eggs overwinter inside the bags. If found, remove bags and discard in the trash or destroy.

Bagworms

Spotted Lanternfly



The spotted lanternfly is an invasive sap-feeding planthopper that was discovered in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 2014. It is native to China, India, and Vietnam. It attacks many hosts and has the potential to severely impact Connecticut's farm crops, particularly apples, grapes, and hops, as well as a number of tree species like maple. In the fall, adults can often be found congregating on tree-of-heaven (Ailanthus), willows and other trees. They will lay egg masses on trees and almost any nearby surface. The public is urged to report potential sightings of this invasive pest to ReportSLF@ct.gov. Submission of a photograph with any report is encouraged.

Spotted Lanternfly

Click on the Following Links to Visit Any of Our Sites:

UConn Extension

UConn Food Safety

UConn Home & Garden Education Center

[UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)

[UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory](#)

[UConn Science of GMOs](#)

[UConn Master Gardener Program](#)

[UConn Garden Master Classes - All open to the public](#)



[Connecticut
Invasive Plant
Working Group
\(CIPWG\)](#)

[Invasive Mobile
Apps](#)

Invasive Mobile Apps:
Download these
Invasive/Early Detection/
Reporting Apps on your
mobile device!

Events and Things to Do

[International Year of Plant Health](#)- The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health.

[CT DEEP](#) Connecticut's system of state parks and forests, state boat launches, and waterways offer fabulous outdoor recreation.

[Connecticut College](#) consider walking on some of the trails on the Connecticut College campus- the Arboretum's native plant collection is open now. They have a wonderful native spring wildflower section.

[Wickham Park](#)- located on the border of Manchester and East Hartford, this park has many unique gardens including one with a pond containing lotus.

[Harkness Park](#)- located in Waterford, expansive grounds and coastline offer opportunities to tour the gardens, have a picnic and go fishing

[Milford Point/Wheeler Marsh](#)- Wheeler Marsh and Milford Point are one of the healthiest remaining tidal marsh/barrier beach systems in Connecticut, and as such host several uncommon plant species.

[Florence Griswold Museum](#)- visit the Artists' Trail, a half-mile walk around the Museum's riverfront landscape and gardens.

[UConn Master Gardener auction](#)- online auction and fundraiser

FOOD FOR THOUGHT-

Glass gem corn *Zea Mays* is considered by some to be the most beautiful corn in the world



extension.umaine.edu

[glass gem corn](#)

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT-

What fruit plants you can prune right now

[fruit pruning](#)

How to prepare trees and shrubs for winter.

winter protection for trees and shrubs

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center

The UConn Home & Garden Education Center (**HGEC**) is a horticultural informational resource for the citizens of Connecticut and beyond. The staff at the Center reach nearly 400,000 citizens in outreach efforts each year. We're ready to assist you.

You are receiving this email because you have provided us with your email address either when having your soil analyzed or testing the horticultural prowess and investigative abilities of our incredibly well-versed staff at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center! If you do not wish to receive our monthly email updates on gardening tips, pest problems, events and other information, please email us at ladybug@uconn.edu and ask to be removed from this list.

We Need Your Support!

If you enjoy our efforts to keep you informed about horticultural and UConn-related items, please show your support by liking us on Facebook, following us on Pinterest or Instagram, checking out our weekly Ladybug blog, or visiting the Home & Garden Education center website.

Tree Identification

1. Shagbark hickory *Carya ovata*
2. Ironwood or American hophornbeam *Ostrya virginiana*
3. American Sycamore *Platanus occidentalis*



[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

UConn Extension Home & Garden Education Center: We are on a collaborative journey.

How. We co-create knowledge with farmers, families, communities, and businesses. We educate. We convene groups to help solve problems.

What. Food, Health, and Sustainability.

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