

over the picket fence



Winter, 2021- 2022
December, January, February
The Mason County Garden Club
Quarterly Newsletter
(Since 1926-our 95th year)

www.masoncountygardenclub.org

Member: Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc
Central Region and National Garden Clubs, Inc
Club No. 140 – District V





Thoughts from our President:

As a gardener, I love spring and summer for the blooms in the woods and our gardens, the whole life cycle of the vegetable garden and wonderment of Mother Nature’s display. I love the fall for the harvest, the canning, and again, Mother Nature’s broadcast of reds, oranges and yellows, even browns. But as we approach the winter season, I am happy to sit back and rest a bit, read a good book while snow settles all around us. The blanket of white (mixed in with some Christmas lights) is soothing to me. It speaks to me of a time of rest for the plants around us, too. And the future replenishment of water by the melt of the snow pack. (OK, that’s a springtime sentiment.)

Winter is time to enjoy the brisk side of nature: your breath showing in the cold air, your cheeks getting red with a walk in the snow, the wrapping up in a good sweater. (I love sweaters!) And the knowledge that whatever you didn’t get done before the snowfall, can wait: it will be there in the spring when the snow is gone again. Enjoy your wintertime wonderland!

Sue Ann



December

- 1 Kim Genter
- 7 Mary Reeds-Mortensen
- 12 Debra Purtee
- 21 Bobbie Clingan
- 22 Linda Burns

January

- 1 Betsy VonSprecken
- 4 Sharon Morman
- 6 Jackie Christensen
- 6 Christine Fannesbeck
- 7 Gwen Jackson
- 9 Mary Margaret Scanlon
- 17 Patricia Gimbel
- 19 Mary Frances Peters
- 20 Dega Shropshire
- 31 Sharon Bluhm

February

- 2 April Quinsenberry-Alvarado
- 13 Elsa Witt





Gwen Jackson, co-editor of “over the picket fence” is this month’s featured member. She, with past member, Suzanne Townsend, started publishing the Newsletter (then just simply known at the Mason County Garden Club Newsletter) in 2006. In 2008, the Newsletter was named “over the picket fence.” Gwen has worn many “hats” during her membership in the Club, which she joined in 1998 and became a Life Member in 2008. She has served as President, been Secretary two terms, a Board Member, Committee Chair and has served on many committees.

Now, we must say “farewell” to this devoted member and friend as she and her husband, Coop, start on another journey in their 57 years of marriage. They have sold their home in Branch and will be moving to Ohio to be welcomed by three generations of family members.

Gwen was born in Coldwater, Michigan and moved to Portage, Michigan for her early childhood years. Both of her grandmothers taught her about gardening. Gwen worked alongside her grandmother in Kalamazoo, who grew vegetables for a local farmers’ market. She and her sisters spent part of their summers in Bronson, Michigan with her other grandmother who had a farm. Gwen’s dad was also a gardener.

The family moved to Benton Harbor, Michigan when Gwen was in the 8th grade. After graduation, Gwen returned to Kalamazoo to attend Bronson School of Nursing. She then moved back to Benton Harbor to work as the emergency room nurse, working alone, with no doctor in the ER. She treated many patients and even delivered three babies.

It was in Benton Harbor where she met Cooper Jackson. They have been married for 57 years. Gwen has a step-son and she and Coop have two daughters, four granddaughters and two great grandchildren (one girl and one boy). The boy is the first boy after three generations of all girls.

Gwen and Coop purchased property in Branch in 1978, where they camped, beginning construction on their home in 1980. When Gwen retired in 1996 as Manager of Medical Services in Whirlpool, they moved to Branch. They have created wonderful perennial and vegetable gardens on their property.

Gwen’s favorite part of gardening is watching for new growth in the spring and enjoying all the shades of green. Her favorite plant is the iris. She has iris from her grandmother and also rhubarb, both which she has already dug up to carry on the family tradition at their new home. We hope their new yard in Ohio will provide her with unexpected joy. Gwen’s future gardening and growing season will be a bit longer than in Mason County, but we know part of her heart will always be with those of us she has grown to know through the Mason County Garden Club.

We wish Gwen and Coop years of happiness in the Cincinnati area as they enjoy creating new gardens and spending more time with family.

Gwen, you are going to be missed, but never forgotten for all your hard work and contributions to the Garden Club. Submitted by Deb Gundersen and Diane Davis



Looking Back On 2021 as a Member of the Mason County Garden Club:

As we get ready to “hunker” down for the Winter, lets look back on the past Garden Club year. Not quite the normal one we usually have, but, all-in-all, a very memorable one. In spite of Covid, we were able to get together (usually “masked up”) and carry on with meetings and events: Hopefully, those of us who stay to “weather” the cold, snowy, Michigan Winter months, will be able to be with each other in January and February for our Winter get togethers.

Thanks to our dedicated Board for a wonderful Garden Club Year...in spite of a lot of hurdles that had to be faced:

March: Due to Covid...unable to meet in person, but did have a Zoom Meeting.

April: Sue Ann and Gloria Savory (and a few members) braved the cold for a presentation of Maple Syrup Processing.

May: A good turnout for Petunia Planting...

May: We were able to return to the Church (without masks) and have a meeting, refreshments and May baskets.

June: A successful Plant Exchange and White Elephant Sale on a beautiful day.

June: A good turnout for our field trip to Crystal Gardens.

June: Meeting and program at the Church. (no masks).

July: A wonderful day spent at a Garden Party at the historical property of member, Sharon Bluhm.

August: A successful Flower Show at the Mason County District Library.

August: A field trip to Lake Bluff Audubon was enjoyed by many members.

September: A successful Fall Plant and White Elephant Sale on a day without rain.

September: Meeting, program and Landscape Design and Civic Beautification Awards at church (masked up again).

October: Meeting and making of scarecrows with instructions by member, Julie Tews (masked up). At church.

November: Meeting, election of officers and workshop of pumpkin flower arrangements. At church

December: Holiday Luncheon and Installation of Officers (at church).



Let us be grateful
to people who
make us happy.
They are the
charming gardeners
who make our
souls blossom.

- Marcel Proust

Historic White Pine Village Memorial Gardens Report for 2021:

This year the Gardening Angels started in the gardens on April 20, 2021. We work every Tuesday morning from nine to noon for about 16 weeks. This adds up to approximately 1000 donated hours, using an average of 12-18 Angels per Week. We now have a total of 22 Gardening Angels on our roster. Not all are Garden Club members.

This season, we amended all the garden beds of approximately 20, and a large vegetable garden, plus 14 planters. A new rose arbor was built and the rose canes trimmed back for it, located at the Rosw Hawley Museum. This Arbor was designed and constructed by Gary and Josh Powers in the Village Forge.

One of our Angels, Gail Burkhart, applied for an Espoma Organic supplies grant and was awarded \$250.00 in products, which were used at the Burns Farm House, and other gardens. Plus, the Mason County Garden Club donated \$150.00 to have the flower/herb boxes rebuilt at the farm house.

The Historical Society of Mason County was generous in donating \$300.00 so the Angels could purchase flowers for all the individual containers and several gardens. Due to the pandemic issues, our usual contributing garden centers were unable to donate this year. Some of our Gardening Angels also donated plants and monies to purchase perennials and annuals for the various other gardens throughout the Village. However, we did have two garden centers, Majors and The Giving Tree that did contribute this year.

This has been another enthusiastic season for the 'Gardening Angels' and their Labor of Love. The friendships continue to grow and it is a pleasure to work together. Historic White Pine Village looked terrific again this season and many thanks again to everyone that helped. This includes the staff and staff gentlemen who get to do all those 'odd jobs'. They have been a huge help to us gardeners. Looking forward to Spring when we can come together again and work in the gardens. **Submitted by Volunteer Angels, Co-Chairs, Carolyn A. Ptaszenski, Judy Olson, Barb Scherer**



On September 11th, we had a glorious day for the plant and white elephant sale. Garden Club members and local businesses donated plants and gift cards (that allowed us to buy more plants). Thanks to all involved, especially the committee lead by Karen Kluskowski and Marilyn Raymond.



At the September meeting, Landscape Design and Civic Beautification Awards were presented by Gwen Jackson to Westshore Market owners, Ivan and Rachel Hersberger and to Beacon Cremation and Funeral Service-Pere Marquette Chapel (owner, Kirk Barz, was unable to attend).



A few hardy souls met on Iris Road, Ludington, to refresh the irises that had initially been planted by our predecessors. Marilyn Austin, Sue Joslin, Gail Burkart, Dianne Miller (and her husband), and Sue Ann Hanson planted over 200 Iris Bulbs.



Members had fun at the October meeting, with instructions from our talented member, Julie Tews, creating their own Garden Scarecrow.



The Mason County Garden Club accomplished several goals at the November meeting: voting in a new executive board, supporting our local food bank, and creating holiday floral designs based on pumpkins. The pictures say it all:

1. We took in a BUMPER amount of items for the Lakeshore Food Network! Not only did we collect food items but also other personal items that are in need, too!
2. Our pumpkins were donated by Orchard Market and The Market, thanks to the ingenuity of several of our members.
3. The floral contents came from Down on the Farm (Oceana County) and All Occasions (Mason County/Ludington)
4. Our members' creative juices were FLOWING and many took home or delivered their creations.

Thanks to Sharon Morman and Julie Tews, who pulled this off on such short notice.



Cups of Cheer: Members met at the Ludington Senior Center in October and November to arrange Cups of Cheer to be delivered to the Ludington Senior Facilities. A total of 3,373 cups have been donated to the local nursing homes since its inception.



In November, I had a very good experience. I went to the Ludington Area Catholic school to teach 7th & 8th graders about flower arranging. Because there are only 8 students in those grades, I thought it would be easy to furnish pumpkins for them to work on. So I brought 10 pumpkins, some orange and some white, some big and some small. I had attached small cans (like we did at our Nov meeting) with wet floral foam in them. Eight were for the students, 1 for the teacher and 1 for me to use to demonstrate. I laid out the pumpkins with dried and painted Siberian Iris seed pods to match the pumpkin. I showed them how to set the height of the arrangement and how to do the sides with cedar and boxwood. I passed out the flowers in the colors that they requested. We used stems of mums with multiple flowers. The school purchased the flowers. After showing them where to put the center flowers, I turned them loose to pick out fillers from the myriad of plant material that I brought. Some of it was mine and some that Julie Tews gave me. The students were so enthusiastic!! And their creations were phenomenal! Such creativity! I'm only sorry that I don't have any pictures at this time to show you. I had my camera and asked if it was okay to take photos and the principal said that she would take the photos and send some to me (which she did!). **Submitted by Sharon Morman**



Teaching kids to garden is as important as teaching them how to swim! It gives them time to be active and experience nature. It can also be a great tool to teach valuable life lessons. Children who garden develop a bit of self-sufficiency, a knowledge about where their food comes from, and patience. They also learn science. They can measure how far apart to plant seeds, learn about the life cycle of plants, find out about how bacteria decomposes compost material, and so much more.



Tews Tips and Tricks:

Putting the garden to bed for winter-

- Throughout the final clean-up and pruning process, be sure to make notes of what worked and what didn't this year. Reviewing these notes later will help plan for next year.
- On these grey days, take the time to winterize your tools so they're ready for next spring. Give them a good cleaning, sharpening and oiling. Don't forget the lawn mower blade.
- Store pesticides in a place they won't freeze so you'll be able to use them again next year.
- When you are finished watering, it is a good idea to disconnect the hose from the faucet and empty any remaining water in the hose. Otherwise the water may freeze and damage it.
- Keep bird feeders clean and full during the winter months to attract birds to the garden throughout the season.
- Provide a source of water for birds in the winter. Try a birdbath with a built-in heater or add a birdbath heater to keep the water from freezing. **Blessing this holiday season- Julie**

How to Clean Garden Tools for Winter

A good first step in preparing garden tools for winter is to thoroughly clean all your tools. Use a coarse metal brush, like one used for cleaning grills, to scrape dirt off of the metal parts of your tools. Follow up with a dry rag and, if necessary, a damp rag. Rub any rust away with a piece of sandpaper. Once your tool is clean, wipe it down with an oiled rag. Motor oil is fine, but vegetable oil is just as effective and less toxic. Remove any splinters from your wooden handles with a piece of sandpaper, and then wipe the whole handle down with linseed oil.

Read more at Gardening Know How: Winter Garden Tool Storage: How To Clean Garden Tools For Winter
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/tools/winter-garden-tool-storage.htm>



ZingerBug.com

MGC Friday Morning Member Meetings on Zoom*

Interested in all things gardening? You will be surprised at the Educational topics we cover in these special sessions only available to MGC club members.

1st and 3rd Fridays, 10 –11 AM

Find the username and password at www.migardenclubs.org website located on the **Member** side and see below for topics and presenters.

Added bonus: Zoom sessions on many different topics are available on the website to play for yourself or at a club meeting. **Don't be shy, just try!**

***All Zoom sessions produced and delivered in a secure environment and are only available to MGC club members through use of the Passcode and Meeting ID.**

Upcoming Events Calendar for Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc.

December 2021

3	<i>Holiday Décor</i>	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting
17	<i>Using Grasses in the Garden</i>	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting

January 2022

7	<i>Our Connection with Central Region</i>	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting
21	<i>Fill in the Blanks</i> –Completing the President's and Club of Distinction Reports	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting

February 2022

4	Friday Member Meeting	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting
18	Friday Member Meeting	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting

March 2021

4	Friday Member Meeting	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting
17-20	Destination: National Parks by 2B	Lansing Home & Garden Show	18 Friday Member Meeting
	10 —11 AM	Zoom Member Meeting	
26	<i>GLOS Orchid Show and Sale</i>	11 AM—5 PM	MSU, East Lansing
27	<i>GLOS Orchid Show and Sale</i>	11 AM—4 PM	MSU, East Lansing



Reminder: Mason County Garden Club Luncheon, December 9, 2021.

Some of you are concerned about the rise in COVID cases in Mason County and what it means for our luncheon. The Executive Board has discussed this and we are going to practice safe protocols and we **WILL have our luncheon** on Thursday, December 9th at 1:00. The Executive Board is supporting the following: (this is from the e-mail that was sent out by Sue Ann).

- MASK UP,
- Limit close contact to one another,
- Limit ourselves to 4 per table, and
- Use the hand sanitizer that will be readily available.

The church has cleared us for our meeting as long as we MASK UP while in the building, except to eat and drink while sitting at a table.

SO, here are some common sense things to think about before attending:

- COME if you are vaccinated and feel comfortable in a group setting
- STAY HOME if you are not feeling well
- COME if you're willing to MASKUP
- STAY HOME if you've recently had surgery OR if you plan to have surgery (or if someone in your family)
- COME if you are feeling well and healthy

ALSO, **2022 DUES are NOW due.** If you have not yet paid your dues and will not be at Thursday's meeting, please send them along to MCGC, PO Box 193, Ludington, MI 49431, as soon as possible.

Coming Events: If we are unable to meet in January and February for our "Winter Luncheons", as we have in past years, our next get together will be in March, 2022 for a business meeting and social potluck. Hopefully, we won't have to wait that long. But we must be SAFE!!

How to Feel Happy During a Cold Winter

Have you ever noticed how bad weather seems to drag the spirit down with it? There's nothing you can do about the weather, but there are various things you can do to keep your spirits up until spring.

1. Find things to enjoy about winter. A snowy, icy, cold, or rainy world can be beautiful and often has sounds and [smells](#) all its own. If you're an artist, photographer, or craftsperson, winter provides a great deal of inspiration and different colors to work with. Even if you don't feel that creative, simply watching a winter scene from the comfort of your home can be a pleasant way to relax and enjoy the peace.

2. Take part in winter activities. Enjoy [skiing](#), sledding, or [ice skating](#). Visit someplace nearby while the summer crowds are gone.

* If you're a beginner to snow sports, try learning in areas where you won't be worried about more experienced people crowding you out. Local parks and quiet cross country or downhill ski circuits are ideal starting points to encourage you to get out and give new winter sports a go.

*Making snow-men, snow-huts, and snow-lanterns are fun activities for both kids and adults.

3. **Stay warm.** Whether that means sitting by the [fire](#), snuggling up with a loved one or pet, piling on the blankets, or having a [warm drink](#), keep yourself warm. The best way to stay warm all the time is to wear layers of suitable clothes, especially woolen long-johns, undershirts, and sweaters. And don't neglect your feet – woolen socks and slippers are a must-have for keeping you toasty warm all winter.

*Remember: a significant proportion of body heat is lost through your head - so now is the time to whip out your most fashionable winter hats, berets, earmuffs, headbands, shawls, and other accessories.

4. **Find something to do besides stew about the weather.** This would be a great time to read that book that's been on your list—or even [write it](#). Play cards, clean the house, cook up a big pot of soup, take up a [hobby](#), or [knit](#) another warm sweater. It's also a good time to sort photos, computer files, fabric stashes, and anything else that has accumulated over the other months of the year.

*Go to the movies more frequently.

*Visit museums, art galleries, astronomy observatories, food-making facilities (for example, chocolate, cheese, etc.), and while away the cold hours in their heated rooms learning something new.

*Use indoor sports facilities such as rock-climbing walls, squash courts, [badminton](#) halls, etc.

*Read [How to keep kids entertained in winter](#) for ideas on keeping children happy in winter.

5. **Brighten up.** Winter comes with the shortest days and lowest light of the year. Go out if you can. If you can't, or if you're so far from the equator as to have little or no daylight, use [full-spectrum lights](#), [light or white walls](#), and perhaps some vibrant accent [colors](#).

*Learn how to make winter window decorations.

6. **Stay active.** As much as possible, get yourself outside. Bundle up and take at least a short walk. If the weather does not permit, move around inside. Walk up and down your stairs if you have them. Do a workout tape or use that treadmill or stair machine that is gathering dust. Exercise gets your body temperature up and your blood flowing. It also regulates such things as [sleep](#) and [diet](#). Move around at least a bit each day.

*If you have a dog, keep walking him during winter. It will do both of you the world of good and it's a regular routine that helps to get you outside exercising. Read [How to keep dogs warm in the winter](#) for tips on keeping your dog warm when walking.

*See [How to jog in cold weather](#), [How to walk in the winter](#) and [How to keep running during snow season](#) for lots of helpful winter exercise tips.

7. **Browse seed catalogs and plan your garden.** There's nothing quite as promising as the idea that spring is around the corner. You could even [start some plants indoors](#) under artificial light.

*See [How to grow winter salads](#) and [How to winter sow seeds outdoors](#) for more ideas.

*Take a walk in your garden or the local park and spotting how the wildlife survives and how the plants are coping. You might like to try identifying trees in winter as well.

8. **Eat properly.** You may tend to eat more in winter, whether because of holidays or because your body craves more energy. Either way, try to keep a [balanced diet](#) including whatever [fruits and vegetables](#) (dried or canned if necessary) you can. Try not to overdo it on the sugars and starch.

*Choose your carbohydrates wisely. It's natural to crave them during colder months and it's important to consume complex carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables and enriched whole grains) over processed food.

*Maintain your vitamin intake. Vitamin B is important, especially folate, to help stop you feeling the blues; this in foods such as lentils, peas, and spinach.

*Ensure that your intake of foods rich in tryptophan is increased because this is the amino acid required to manufacture serotonin, the neurotransmitter that helps you to feel good. Suitable foods include bananas, poultry, dairy produce, and peas.

*Keep up your intake of omega-3 fatty acids to help fight off the blues, eating such foods as cold-water fish and flaxseed and walnuts.

*Avoid any foods that cause you to feel sluggish, such as highly processed foods, saturated fats, and sugary foods. These can worsen any blues because they cause you to feel lethargic and often result in a crash after the initial energy burst. In addition, be careful with aspartame as it can interfere with serotonin functioning and leave you feeling moodier; if you notice any reactions to it, avoid consuming it.

9. **Keep in touch.** Call friends or make new ones. If you regularly attend club meetings, church, or other activities, try not to interrupt your routine just for bad weather. If transportation is a challenge for you, link up with friends or helpful people who can give you a ride to and from your usual activities.

10. **Remember that, without winter, no one would appreciate and love the summers many great qualities.** People manage to draw a lot of inspiration from winter, including spending more family together and using this as a chance to increase skills that will be useful when the weather warms up. Some people even choose to use winter to celebrate important life events, such as getting married in the snow. Whatever your take on winter, in contrast to our ancestors for many previous centuries, our modern lifestyle helps us to keep warm, travel safely, and continue life with a good amount of comfort during winter seasons, all sound reasons for finding something good about living through the coldest months.

Recipes submitted by Garden Club Members.



Pumpkin Pie Dessert

- 1 Yellow Cake Mix
- 1/2 Cup Melted Butter
- 1 Beaten Egg

Mix together with a fork and spread into a 9 x 13 greased pan

- 1 Large Can Pumpkin (29 oz)
- 3 Eggs
- 1/2 Cup Brown Sugar
- 1/2 Cup Granulated Sugar
- 1/2 Teaspoon Salt
- 1 1/2 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1/2 Teaspoon Ginger
- 1/4 Teaspoon Nutmeg
- 1/4 Teaspoon Cloves
- 1 Cup Evaporated Milk (Pet)

Mix together pumpkin and eggs. Add brown sugar and mix well. Add granulated sugar, mixing well. Add spices and mix. Lastly add the evaporated milk. Mixing for 2 minutes. Pour on top of crust.

Top with the following

- 1 Cup of Cake Mix
- 1/4 Cup of Granulated Sugar
- 1 Teaspoon Cinnamon
- 1/4 Cup of Butter

Mix ingredients until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of filling.

Optional, you may also top with pecan pieces

Bake for approximately 50 minutes @ 350

Check with a toothpick for doneness, when checking it should come out clean

Top with whip cream or Cool Whip.....**Submitted by Dianne Portwine**



BIRD SEED WREATH RECIPE

1 pkg plain Knox gelatin
1/2 cup warm water
3 Tbsp light corn syrup
3/4 cup flour
4 cups bird seed

EQUIPMENT

Bowl
Bundt or ring pan
Spoon or whisk
Non-stick oil spray
Wide ribbon or fabric remnant
Hook or metal ring

Dissolve the gelatin in warm water. Add the flour and corn syrup. Mix in the bird seed

Wait until mold is **completely** dry, 24-48 hours Cool seed wreath bird feeder...finished! "So fun and easy." Tie on the ribbon add the hook or ring and hang! Enjoy watching the birds!



Bird Seed Ornaments:

What You'll Need

Equipment / Tools

Medium or large mixing bowl
8 large or 12 medium cookie cutters
Nonstick saucepan
Skewer
Wire cooling rack
Wooden spoon or rubber scraper

Materials

1/2 cup water
3/4 cup flour (any type)
3 tablespoons corn syrup (regular or light)
2 1/2 teaspoons unflavored gelatin, such as Knox
4 cups birdseed
Nonstick cooking spray
Wax paper or parchment paper
String, yarn, or twine, cut into 5- to 8-inch lengths

Instructions

1. Gather Your Ingredients: Choose your birdseed and other ingredients from a range of options. The flour can be any brand or type (whole wheat, all purpose, organic, etc.), as can the corn syrup. For the [birdseed](#), choose seeds that most appeal to your backyard birds. The ornaments pictured were made with a blend of two cups general mixed seed, one cup of [black oil sunflower seeds](#), and one cup of [white proso millet](#). The ornaments could easily be made with just sunflower seeds or millet, or you can customize your blend with [peanut chips](#), [sunflower hearts](#), [cracked corn](#), or dried fruit as desired. Just be sure the total amount of seed is approximately four cups or the ornaments may not form properly or could fall apart. It is best to measure out each ingredient before beginning.

2. Gather Your Tools and Supplies: Choose cookie cutters that are 1 inch thick, as they will be fully filled to create the seed ornaments and a thicker ornament will be more stable and more easily hung. Select cutters without very fine details that would easily break; chunkier shapes work best. The cutters can be either plastic or metal.

The skewer to create the hole in the ornaments can be any similar type of tool, so long as it is thick enough to create an effective hole. A lollipop stick, ballpoint pen, plastic straw, screwdriver, awl, chopstick, or unsharpened pencil can work well. Precut the string for hanging the ornaments. Any type of string, twine, yarn, ribbon, or raffia is suitable. Avoid fishing line, however, as it can be harmful to birds. After the ornaments are eaten, the leftover string can become [nesting material](#) for birds.

3. Spray the Cookie Cutters: Spray each cookie cutter with [nonstick cooking spray](#). This ensures the ornaments will release from the molds easily, so coat the insides thoroughly to prevent any sticking, including every bend and crevice of the cutter. Arrange the sprayed cookie cutters on the wax paper or parchment paper. If desired, spray the paper as well to be sure the warm ornaments do not stick at all.

4. Boil the Liquid Ingredients: Add the water and corn syrup to the nonstick saucepan and bring them to a [boil](#). Reduce the heat to low and add the gelatin, stirring or whisking continually to dissolve the powder thoroughly. Clumps may appear but will gradually vanish as you continue to stir. This will create a syrupy, sticky liquid that will bind the ornaments together. Heat this mixture only until the gelatin has dissolved; boiling the liquid down too far will reduce the quantity available to bind your ornaments, and they may fall apart more easily.

5. Add Flour: Transfer the syrup to your mixing bowl and add the flour. Stir the mixture until well blended; it will have a consistency similar to a medium brownie batter or thick cake batter, and there should be no large clumps. If it is too thick to stir easily, add additional hot water, one tablespoon at a time, until it is properly thinned. If the mixture is too thin, add flour one tablespoon at a time to reach the right consistency.

6. Mix In Birdseed: Add the birdseed and thoroughly mix it with the flour batter to coat all the seed. This will be a thick, stiff, but it is important to blend it well otherwise the ornaments will not hold their shapes. Spraying a rubber scraper or spatula with nonstick spray for the mixing can help ensure a good mix without too much seed sticking to the utensil.

7. Fill the Cookie Cutters: Spray your hands thoroughly with nonstick cooking spray and fill each cookie cutter to the brim with the [birdseed](#) mix. Press it into every corner of the mold as firmly as possible, as loose seed will fall apart more easily. The birdseed mixture can dry out quickly so it is wise to have help with this step (great for kids!), or else cover the mixture in the bowl with plastic wrap while you fill each ornament. Fill only one ornament at a time; they will start to dry quickly, and extra seed added at the end will not adhere as well to the finished ornament. You may need to spray your hands with nonstick spray after every two to three ornaments so the seed does not stick to you.

8. Roll Extra Seed Balls: Make use of any extra birdseed mixture you have left after filling all your cookie cutters by rolling it into small balls or firm cakes. These small shapes are great for adding to a platform feeder or [ground feeding area](#), or they can be used to fill a suet cage or similar wire or mesh feeder so that no seed will be wasted.

9. Create Holes for Hanging: Use whatever implement you have chosen as a skewer (a lollipop stick shown here) to create the holes for hanging each ornament. Push the skewer all the way through the mold, then press the seed firmly around the skewer. Locate the holes approximately 1 inch away from the ornament's edge to ensure a sturdy form. Wiggle the skewer slightly to be sure the hole is large enough for your string or twine and to compact the seed around the interior of the hole.

10. Let the Ornaments Dry : Gently move the ornaments onto the wire cooling rack to dry. Let them dry for at least 6 to 8 hours, but preferably overnight or for a full day if possible. Placing a small fan nearby or turning on a ceiling fan to increase air circulation will help them dry more quickly.

11. String the Ornaments: Remove the dry ornaments from the cookie cutters. Thread the ribbon, string, or twine through the holes in each ornament and tie a tight knot, leaving a loop for hanging. If the holes are too tight, use the same skewer you formed the holes with and poke it through again. The seed inside the holes may collapse slightly as the ornaments dry, therefore restricting the hole size. Another option is to use a wide-eyed tapestry needle to pull the ribbon or string through the hole.





Twas the night before Christmas and all through the yard...

Not a plant was left standing, the ground it was hard.
The tools were all hung in the garage with care
A well deserved rest now that the garden was bare.

The bulbs were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of springtime danced in their heads,
I in my Snuggie, my husband with our cat
Had just settled in for a long winter's chat.

When out in the hydrangeas there arose such a clatter,
I dropped my seed catalogs to see what was the matter.
Away to the front door I quickly dashed,
Half expecting to find my yard had been trashed.

When I opened the door, it was suddenly clear.
Here was a sleigh and eight tiny reindeer
With a little old gardener so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!

More quickly than crabgrass his coursers they came
And he whistled and shouted and called them by name.

"Now Holly! Now Ivy! Now Daisy and Rue!
On Rose, On Petunia, Fern and Lily too!

To the top of the trellis! To the top of the wall!
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!"

So up to the housetop the reindeer they flew
With a sleighful of gifts and St. Nicholas too.

I closed the front door and was turning around
When he slid down the chimney, hitting the ground.
He was dressed all in red, with Wellies on his feet,
And a poinsettia on his cap made him look really neat.

He stood up quite quickly and went straight to his work
With a composter for Cathy, a Dutch weeder for Dirk.

There were asters for Ann, a pine tree for Paul
And a garden design book for use by us all.
Next came a rain barrel. This was for Rob.
And finally, for me, a ginkgo key fob.

Then laying a trowel aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He ran to his sleigh and gave a quick whistle
And away they all flew like the seeds of globe thistle.

But I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight,

"Merry Christmas to all gardeners and to all a good night."

I hope you have enjoyed this edition of “over the picket fence.” It has been a challenge without Gwen’s input. Please help me out with future editions by submitting ideas, articles, recipes and suggestions. I want to be able to continue with the newsletter, as I feel it is important to be able to communicate in this way and you can be a big part in helping me do so. Stay safe and, hopefully, I will see you at the luncheon....Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God Bless....Diane D.

Club Collect

Keep us, O God, ever mindful of nature’s generous bounty May we always bear in mind it is ours in trust, to protect, to nurture and to enjoy.

Mrs. C.C. Caswell

