



# A Gardener's Vocabulary...

## Forced Blooming:

This process is usually done with bulbs by exposing the bulbs to 30 – 40 degrees F for several weeks then planting in the greenhouse or home to bloom out of its normal season. Paperwhite Narcissus, hyacinths, daffodils, crocuses, and certain types of tulips are examples of bulbs that can be coaxed into bloom indoors well before their normal outdoor blooming time.

### HOW do you force bulbs?

Choose high quality, plump, heavy bulbs from varieties recommended for forcing. Most often, catalogues and garden centers indicate if a bulb is suitable for growing indoors.

Plant the bulbs in fertile, well-drained soil in clay pots with drainage holes. An equal mix of garden loam or potting soil with peat moss and a bit of sand for drainage is a good mixture for forcing bulbs. Plant bulbs more closely together than in an outdoor garden. A six-inch pot could hold five tulips, three hyacinths or nine crocus. Leave about an inch of space between the bulbs. Most bulbs should be covered to their tips with soil. Allow about a half an inch between the top of the soil and the pot for watering. Water thoroughly after planting.

Once the bulbs are planted, **most types** (except Paperwhite Narcissus) need several weeks of cold and darkness to allow roots to form. Place the pots in an unheated garage, basement, shed or cold frame, ideally at about 35 to 48 degrees.

Keep the soil moist, but not wet, by watering about once a week.

Bring bulbs indoors any time after they have developed a good root system. (**Refer to next page**). Don't shock the bulbs with too much heat and light all at once. Place them in a cool room with dim light for a week or so. Then put the bulbs in a sunny room until the flowers open. To make the blooms last longer, move the bulbs into a cool room at night.

If cared for properly, most forced bulbs can be planted outdoors and coaxed to bloom again in a year or two. After the forced bulbs bloom and fade, gradually reduce water, and place in a cool room or shed. Plant out in the garden as soon as the ground can be worked in the spring.

# Bulbs for Forced blooming:

Different kinds of bulbs have individual requirements and are ready to bring indoors at different times:

**Crocus** - Plant about one or two inches deep. Store in cold and dark for about eight weeks.

**Daffodils** - The top of these bulbs should be about an inch below the soil surface. Place in cold storage about eight weeks.

**Paperwhite Narcissus** - These can be forced into bloom without cold storage right after purchase if the bulbs have been given a cold period to break dormancy. Ask your dealer. Simply place bulbs in bed of pebbles, gravel or soil and add water up to root disk of bulb. Place in sunny window. Keep at cooler temperatures (50 to 60 degrees). Fragrant flowers will bloom in about four weeks. For a continuous series of blooms, start new bulbs every two weeks, storing unused bulbs in the refrigerator.

**Tulips** - Only certain varieties of tulips will force well. Ask your nursery worker or read bulb cartons for advice. Plant bulbs with the flat side toward the pot, about one-half inch deep. Store in cold and dark for 12 weeks.

**Hyacinths** - Plant bulbs one-half inch below the soil surface. Store in dark, cold place for about eight weeks. Then bring inside to a warmer (70 degrees) dark place, such as a closet. Water occasionally. When the leaves grow 8 inches tall, move the plants to a sunny window or well lit area.

**Scilla, grape hyacinth, freesias, and some types of lilies** can also be forced into early bloom. Consult a complete gardening guide for more information.



# *Invasive plant:* *“Kudzu”*

*Pueraria thunbergiana*

**Origin:** Asia

**Introduction to US:** Kudzu was first introduced to the United States in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Japanese constructed a beautiful garden filled with plants from their country, and American gardeners quickly started using the plant for ornamental purposes.

**Type:** Perennial

**Description:** Legume, deep-rooted, long lived, coarse-growing vine with runners which often grow *50-100' per season*. Produces few seeds, but once established can be a serious pest.

**Benefits:** Erosion control; fixes nitrogen in the soil; feed for cattle and sheep and a starch/vegetable for humans.

**Threats:** Kudzu has and continues to smother forests in the south-eastern United States by preventing them from getting sunlight and breaking them under the weight of its vines. Some forests have been strangled in as little as two to three years. Kudzu also threatens riparian areas and watershed health.

**Controls:** Where possible, mowing, grazing and burning repeatedly over several seasons will deplete root stores. Herbicides are also a common and expensive option to control kudzu. Read and follow label directions carefully. Different herbicides are recommended depending on the type of nearby plant or tree that kudzu has covered. Some herbicides make kudzu grow better and many have little or no effect. At least four years of repeated treatments are recommended. Some kudzu takes as long as ten years to kill, even with the most effective herbicide. **Consult your extension agent for further information.**





# Winterberry Holly

## A Virginia Native Plant



Also known as fever bush or alder, this holly is a great addition to your landscape. Enjoy some bright red color in your winter garden with the addition of Winterberry Holly – (*Ilex verticillata*). This deciduous holly will shed its foliage unlike other non-deciduous hollies in the fall and the bright berries will attract songbirds to your garden during the winter. Color AND the chirp of happy birds in the cold winter months, what could be better? Along with the birds, other small mammals, game birds and deer will also be attracted to them. The berry-laden stems are also a favorite of florists

It is native to the swampy eastern areas of North America. The winterberry prefers full sun and average moist soil, but will grow in less than ideal spots. The many varieties of winterberry offer a size range of 3' to over 8'. As a native, it is seldom susceptible to insects or diseases and is excellent in mass plantings, shrub borders or along side pond, creek or bog. You should purchase your winterberries, yes, more than one, with at least one of them a male specimen to ensure that the females will bear the berry fruits.

# What to do with all those leaves!!!

- As temperatures drop and the garden goes dormant, why not use all your fallen October leaves to your soil's advantage! Try out these great ideas:
  - Begin a compost pile!
  - Incorporate leaves into your existing compost pile. To make incorporation into compost easier, shred dried leaves with lawn mower.
  - Use leaves as mulch around plants. Matted clumps of partially decomposed leaves are more effective at keeping in moisture and nutrients ; however shredded leaves work too but will decompose much more quickly.
  - For fewer weeds next spring, pile leaves in paths between raised beds.
  - Fill bags with leaves and use as insulation for cold frames.
  - Till leaves into your garden to make next year's soil more workable and nutrient filled as well as to allow for better water penetration and retention.
  - Reduce erosion by using leaves as winter mulch on bare ground.

# How can I get rid of those pesky squash vine borers??



Mary Foley Benson, USDA. Property of Smithsonian Institution.

**Description** – Larva: white up to 1 inch long

**Common host** – Squash, pumpkin, gourds and cucumbers

**Damage** – Bores in vines, eats holes in stem near base of runner. Runner wilts.

**Lifecycle** – The pupae overwinter in the soil. From early to mid summer the adult moth appears and lays brown eggs at the base of the plant. In 7 to 14 days the larvae appear and tunnel into the plant stems. For two to three weeks the larvae feed inside the stem. At full growth the larvae enter the soil and spin a cocoon where they will pupate in the spring.

**Control the borers** –

**Organic:** No known organic control for squash vine borer.

**Chemical:** Treat with a registered insecticide and follow label directions when vines begin to run. Apply to bases of plants four times at seven day intervals. **CAUTION: HONEYBEES ARE NECESSARY FOR GOOD FRUIT SET AND INSECTICIDES ARE TOXIC TO BEES. APPLY IN THE EVENING WHEN FEWER BEES ARE WORKING.**