



Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month, September – May  
9:30 – 11:30 at College Station WW Facility  
2200 North Forest Parkway College Station, TX 77845

## NEWSLETTER : DECEMBER 2015

Friday December 11, 2015  
CHRISTMAS PARTY MEETING  
9.30 AM CS WW Facility

Slide show presentation by members who went on the  
November “Horti-Fun” trip to Guatemala,  
discussion of upcoming programs, and garden-related gift  
exchange

Garden Tip of the Month : Mary Aasterud  
**POT LUCK LUNCHEON**

### UPCOMING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY

**AVERAGE FIRST FROST DATE: NOVEMBER 30**

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Friday December 4, Board Meeting 1 pm – 3 pm  
Friday December 11, Christmas Pot Luck CS WW Facility 9:30  
Sunday December 13, (tentative) visit Old Fort Parker, for  
Christmas at the Fort  
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Tuesday January 5 Board Meeting 1 – 3 pm CSWWF  
Friday January 8 9.30 Regular meeting – Program Flora  
Williams,  
Brazos Co. Ext. Agent, Family & Consumer Services  
“Phyte” for Good Health with Fruits & Vegetables

## 2015-2016 OFFICERS

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Helen Quinn

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VP Yearbook/Web  
Sherron McKenzie/Sarah  
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VP Community Events  
Sherry Ellison

VP Hospitality  
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Member at Large  
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## NOVEMBER IN PICTURES

Everyone was excited to see Mr. Jim Johnson's program on "Holiday Designs" – even the non-designers, who were excited at the end of the program because we all believed "we can do it too"! Mr. Johnson is well known, not just in the Brazos Valley, but throughout the world for his designs and from when he was Director of the prestigious Benz School of Floral Design – we even learned that we can use bell peppers and broccoli in floral design!



The lucky winners of the raffled designs



## HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS TO :

Jane C-16<sup>th</sup>, Janice S-18<sup>th</sup>, Helen Q-20<sup>th</sup>, Melanie F-22<sup>nd</sup>, Sandra S-23<sup>rd</sup>, Helen K-24<sup>th</sup>, Mary H-28<sup>th</sup>,  
Kay H-29<sup>th</sup>, Joyce W-31<sup>st</sup>



## DECEMBER IN THE GARDEN

**PLAN:** For cold weather protection. Collect large cardboard boxes for plant covers. Clean up beds and prepare new ones. Burn diseased or bug-infested debris (if burning is allowed where you live!!)

**PRUNE:** Deadhead everything that is blooming as soon as flowers fade to encourage new blooms. Cut dahlia stalks almost to the ground, but remember the eyes for next year's growth are in that stalk. Lift, dry for 24 hours, and store with the tuber inverted to avoid shrinkage. Do not prune ornamentals this month. Consider cutting cannas back to the ground before they freeze and turn slimy and mushy!

**PLANT:** Jonquils, narcissus, daffodils, hyacinths and Dutch iris. Dormant trees, shrubs, and roses. Amaryllis, anemones, tulips (pre-chilled), pansies, petunias, carnations, poppies, snapdragons, larkspur, verbena and many others.

**FERTILIZE AND MULCH:** Only Sweet Peas (IF you remembered to plant them!!!)

**SPRAY & DUST:** After a hard frost treat figs for borer and mealy bugs as recommended by the County Agent. Spray for scale on shrubs and trees.

**WEATHER PROTECTION:** Prepare to cover tender plants if freeze is predicted. Keep watered enough to keep plants in good condition, but not so much as to start new growth. If the ground is dry and a hard freeze is predicted, water well.

**BLOOMING:** Alyssum, calendula, candytuft, mums, cosmos, Michaelmas daisy, petunia, verbena, jasmine, lantana, loquat, shrubs and vines.

Plant a fruit tree! If you have space for only one, be sure to choose a self-pollinator, and one with the number of chilling hours required to match your climate. I'm going for a plum this year – var. Methley, which is self-fertile with good disease tolerance and requires 250 chill hours. Santa Rosa is "Fairly self-fertile", and required 300 chill hours.

### VEGETABLES:

Continue sowing lettuce, spinach, and English and Snap Peas, depending on whether the weather continues to be warm. If you have a greenhouse, cold frame or hot bed, you can sow much more and much earlier.

### HERBS:

If you have bright light (but not direct sunlight) in your kitchen, several herbs can be grown inside. Unless you have overhead grow-lights especially for them, they will probably grow tall and lanky, but frequent harvesting, watering and feeding should keep them going. Sprouts are a good way to "get your greens" in winter and are easy to grow. Use Mung Beans, watercress, broccoli, radish seeds and snip them when they are 1" tall (some catalogs sell seeds especially for sprouting, and call them Micro Greens.)

## Loofah - (*Luffa aegyptiaca*) A "Fun" Gourd to Grow!

For those of you who haven't thought about it, growing loofahs is quite an exciting undertaking. For little time and effort, the reward is quite startling - imagine giving a loofah as a gift, and explaining to the recipient that it was grown in your back yard and not harvested from the sea ...

Once spring has arrived, the seeds can be sown directly into the warm ground, in the same manner as zucchini, making sure that plenty of support, such as a trellis, is available. Germination doesn't take too long and then growth is rapid and vigorous. Children like to be involved in the process, I think the imagination is captured by the concept of the huge loofah at harvest time. It is best to remove the first flower of two and then be prepared for more growth.

Adequate water is required and some of the fruit may be removed when still small, and may be eaten, prepared as any squash. However, when left on the vine to mature, the loofah takes on a real growth spurt, quite easily reaching 2 feet in length. Let it mature in place on the vine, allowing the green skin to dry and turn dark. Make sure to remove it before the first frost, as this will rot it. Remove the dried skin, I prefer to peel it off piece by piece, but you may also soak it in water and remove it. Then of course the loofah must be allowed to dry out. This drying process is best done in the hot Texan sun! When it is thoroughly dry, shake it around to remove the numerous seeds. The colour can vary, from dark beige to oatmeal, the longer it is left in the sun, the lighter it will be. If you would prefer it lighter, a bleach solution (one part bleach to ten parts water) may be used.



I hope to have seeds available at our Christmas Celebration - maybe we should have a loofah growing contest!

Sandy Williams

**PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPH - "THE LAST WORD"**



**Sneak preview of what you will hear about at the December meeting – this photo was of “us” and the Mayan kids from the local village of Aldea el Durazno (“Peach Village”) located below the farm where we stayed. We had conducted a horticultural workshop, with planting in pots, education about the life cycle of butterflies, and much more.**

This is just one example of where A&M Garden Clubs donations go to in Guatemala. At the December slide show you will also see some of the recipients of the NGC “Seeds for Life” program, “Global Gardening”, etc., as well as some of the other fun things we did and beautiful places we visited. Perhaps some of you will be inspired to join us on a future trip!

See you in December,  
*Helen Quinn*

“We can complain because rose bushes have thorns,  
or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.”  
Abraham Lincoln