

# The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

## President's Report

I hope everyone had a good holiday despite the challenges it brought. Whew! We made it through 2020 and I hope you are all doing well. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we can't let our guard down just yet. By the grace of God, it won't be much longer.

2021 will present its own challenges for our Master Gardeners. I don't anticipate being able to meet in person before June, but perhaps by then we will all be vaccinated and meet in the second half of the year.

Now it's time to turn our attention to Spring and gardening. Despite staying at home so much, my yard still has a lot of cleaning up to do. But as Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) said "*If winter comes, can spring be far behind?*" Spring brings the promise of new beginnings. As much as I was ready to get rid of my annuals, I am anxious to plant again for spring. In the meantime, let's enjoy the pansies, violas and other winter plantings.

The hellebores will be budding soon and I will take the advice of Vita Sackville-West. She said "I still cannot imagine why people do not grow these varieties (*Helleborus niger* and *Helleborus orientalis*) more freely. They will fill up many an odd corner; their demands are few and they will give flowers at a time of year when flowers are scarce."

So, we've made it this far, so let's hang in there for a few more months and we will come out if this stronger, ready to socialize and love on our family and friends.

**Happy New Year and Happy Gardening.**

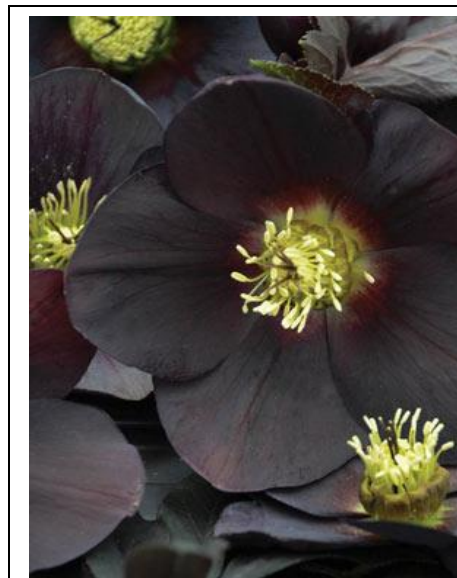
**Sharon Priest, PCMG President**

**January 2021**

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.Black Lenten rose



## **Blast from the Past**

More Pulaski County MG History?

I just finished looking at the updated website information that Katie sent out. I went to the link and looked at some history. Wow, what a journey! On page 57 of Sally Garrison's history, I enjoyed reading the story about Jack Singleton performing a wedding at the Old Mill when the "original" preacher didn't show up. With Jack, being quite the storyteller, it was "laugh till you cry" to hear him tell it in his own words; especially the part about how dirty he was.

Reading this story brought back some other memories of Jack for me. My husband's best friend was living in Phoenix and wanted to be married in Little Rock. I suggested the Old Mill & lined up Jack to officiate. All went as planned till Jack didn't show up. We waited a long time. We were having to shuttle folks to the gas station up on McCain to the restrooms. Finally, the bride had to "go." I had to hold her wedding dress up off the nasty floor. This was neither fun nor easy- we do what we gotta do, right? (I was sure glad to see those nice restrooms the Old Mill has now!) Jack forgot- he simply failed to write it in his log.

We finally got a justice of the peace out of the yellow pages. I have never let him live that down. I got over it and Jack did my mother's funeral in 2001. The Old Mill was my first MG project in 1991. It was around this time that Jack told me a story from the Oakbrooke School project. The kids there worshipped him and called him "Pastor Jack." One little boy in particular didn't understand what they were saying.... He was calling him "Bastard Jack" and Jack could not make him understand. Imagine this boy following him around, tugging on his pants leg, calling him "Bastard Jack." Cute, huh? Jack should NOT have told me that story. I had a lot of fun with it. Paybacks.

Thanks to the historians for putting this together!

Mary Evans

**CHECKLIST FOR JANUARY**  
**By Carol Randle**

**ANNUALS**

Fertilize winter annuals regularly when we have any warm spell. Water regularly, especially before a winter freeze.

**PERENNIALS AND BULBS**

If you are planning any major changes to your garden, it is best to do it now while the soil is damp, but not if the soil is still frozen or water logged. Make changes from now until early spring. Remove dead stalks and other debris, destroying infested material and adding the rest to compost. Cut back frost-nipped perennials now, leaving 2-3 inch stalks to help locate dormant crowns when planting in early spring. This is your last chance to plant those spring blooming bulbs. When planting, be sure to pick a site with well drained soil. Plant two to three times the size of the bulb, deep in the ground. Make sure no skins from bulbs are left on the ground to encourage the squirrels to dig up the bulbs.

**ROSES**

Wait until late February or early spring to prune your roses.

**VEGETABLES**

Start cool weather vegetable seeds indoors in January for transplanting in six to eight weeks. In late January, poppies and sweet peas can be planted directly in the ground. Turn cover crops into the soil with a fork or tiller during January to give the green material time to break down before planting time. Prepare soil for new beds by adding compost, manure, or other organic matter. Although growth of leafy greens will stop in cold weather, if plants are mulched it will resume in spring and produce greens into May. Add a six to eight inch layer of mulch to root crops so the vegetables can be harvested as needed.

**TREES AND SHRUBS**

Plant camellias for winter colors. They come in colors ranging from whites to pinks to reds and mixtures. Plant in a well drained area out of the afternoon sun. Evergreen trees and shrubs will drop some of their older leaves. If the flower buds and newest foliage at the end of the branch are okay, don't worry. It is normal. Be sure to water regularly if it doesn't rain.

**LAWNS**

Remove fallen leaves that may smother grass and plants. Apply lime to lawn.

## GENERAL YARD

Winter has always been considered the slowest time in the garden, but it can be very busy if you start planning for next year's garden. Now is the time to order seed catalogs. Remove plants that aren't thriving in the current locations. Try to ascertain the reason for the lack of success. Often, it's a matter of planting depth or an over-accumulation of mulch or a diseased root system.

## INDOORS

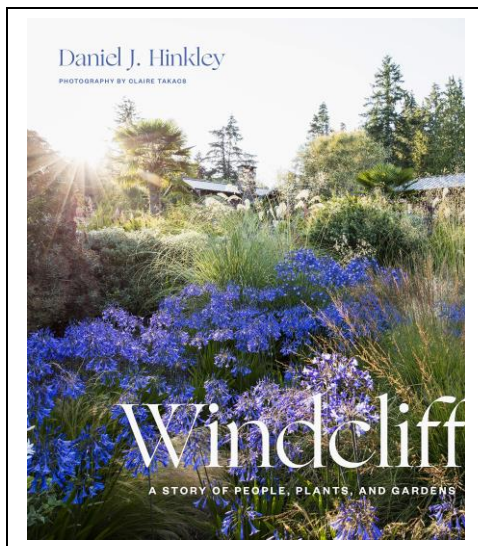
Enjoy the blooms of forced bulbs such as hyacinth and paperwhites. Amaryllis bulbs will add more color. Pot them and give them a little water after you get them home. After growth starts, water well and keep in the sunlight. They will bloom in six to eight weeks. Stake because they will get tall and top heavy (especially the amaryllis). If you are going to overwinter poinsettias, place them in a sunny window in a cooler area of the house now.



**Amaryllis 'Royal Velvet'**



**Paperwhites**



## Windcliff: A Story of People, Plants and Gardens

Author: Daniel Hinkley

Book Review By Debra Redding

Daniel Hinkley is widely recognized as one of the foremost modern plant explorers and one of the world's leading plant collectors. He has created two outstanding private gardens—Heronswood and Windcliff. Both gardens, and the story of how one begat the other, are beautifully celebrated in Hinkley's new book, *Windcliff*.

In these pages you will delight in Hinkley's recounting of the creation of his garden, the stories of the plants that fill its space, and in his sage gardening advice.

Hinkley's spirited ruminations on the audacity and importance of garden-making—contemplations on the beauty of a sunflower turning its neck from dawn to dusk, the way a plant's scent can spur a memory, and much more—will appeal to the heart of every gardener.

Filled with Claire Takacs's otherworldly photography, *Windcliff* is spectacular for both its physical beauty and the quality of information it contains.

# HELLEBORE FLOWERS OFFER BEAUTIFUL LATE-WINTER BLOOMS

A winter champion, luscious hybrid hellebores are some of the first to bloom

*By Janet Loughrey (excerpt from Garden Design magazine)*

Hybrid hellebores get their common name, **Lenten rose**, from the rose-like flowers that appear in early spring around the Christian observance of Lent. The “blooms” (which are actually sepals that protect the true flowers) last for several months, from February until May, and the foliage is evergreen in all but the coldest regions.

## PLANTING & CARING FOR HELLEBORES

Tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions, hybrid hellebores perform best when sited in partial shade in rich, moist, but well-draining soil. Hellebores are quite easy to grow, and since they are perennials, will continue to bloom for a number of years.

### **Hellebore planting tips:**

- Many gardeners like to plant hellebores on a hillside or in raised flower beds to better enjoy their downward-facing blooms. See an excellent example of this planting strategy: [A Winter Jewel Box](#).
- When transplanting hellebores directly from their nursery containers, be sure to shake off the potting mix and free up any bound roots.
- Be careful not to plant your hellebores too deeply as this can hinder flower production. Make sure the crown of the plant is just slightly buried beneath the soil.
- Plant with companions such as snowdrops, crocus, muscari, daffodils, phlox, trillium and bleeding heart.
- Hellebores contain toxins that are harmful to pets and humans, so keep them out of reach.

### **Hellebore care tips:**

- The leathery foliage of hellebore flowers looks best when sheared in late winter just before new growth emerges.
- An annual application of manure or compost will help to boost the growth of your hellebores.
- Provide plenty of water during spring and fall when they are actively growing. You can ease up during the summer because heat causes hellebores to go dormant.

For landscape craftsman Jerry Fritz, *Helleborus x hybridus* (hybrid Lenten rose) are staples in the landscapes he designs for his clients. “Hellebores are among the earliest and certainly the most exquisite flowers in the spring garden.” Until recently however, named varieties were all but impossible to find. Advances in propagation through division, tissue culture, and hand-pollination have resulted in more diverse flower colors, forms, patterns, increased plant vigor, and larger blooms. According to Fritz, “The newer hybrids are not only accessible and collectible, they are seriously addicting as well.” With improved breeding techniques producing a seemingly endless array of new varieties in recent years, these perennial favorites are worthy of a second look.

Fritz—a well-known speaker, author, and industry expert who has been featured in many national publications and appeared on the *Martha Stewart Show*—trials the newest hellebore cultivars at Linden Hill Gardens, his destination plant nursery in Ottsville, Pennsylvania. “The most exciting trends right now include truer and more **unusual colors** (from amber to almost black), increased plant heights, **outward-facing blooms**, and more **exotic patterns** of speckling, veining, and picotee edges,” he says. “The fact that Lenten roses can be successfully grown in most zones, are low-maintenance and deer-resistant, only enhances their already sky-high appeal. For me, hellebores are an indispensable plant for any serious gardener.”

- **Common name:** Hybrid Lenten rose
- **Zones:** 4 to 9; evergreen in 6 to 9
- **Bloom time:** February-May
- **Bloom size:** 2 to 3 1/2”
- **Height/Spread:** 18 to 24” tall and 24” wide
- **Site:** Partial shade, well-draining soil
- **Characteristics:** Low-maintenance, deer-resistant



Honeymoon series  
“Sandy Shores”



Honeymoon series  
“Romantic  
Getaway”





Wedding party series  
“True love”



Wedding party series  
“Maid of Honor”

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