



JANUARY 2024
Newsletter

Hector-Miller Garden Update



Linda Yowell, Jeannie and Dave Schuessler, Larrice Sell, Mayor Chuck Harmon, Kris Miller, Rick Wells, Jan Bowland, Irene Kincade, Allen Baird & Amy Tomlinson (not shown) gathered on November 29th to celebrate the installation of the sign in the almost-complete garden in Ruth Mill Park.

2023-2024 CGC MEETING SCHEDULE
Second Thursday of the month at noon at the Elks Lodge in Idaho Springs
Thursday, January 11
Darby O-Rourke Movie
Thursday, February 8
Flower Arranging
Bring cash donations for Senior Center Love Offering
Thursday, March 14
Air Plants
Thursday, April 11
Thursday, May 9
CGC PLANT SALE June 6-8 - Thurs - Sat. - (T)

To stay up to date with club activities, go to www.columbinegardenclub.com

Mountain Pine Beetle Workshop **January 10, 2024 at 6:30 pm** **Gilpin Public Library (online and in-person)** 15131 CO-119, Black Hawk, CO 80422

Participants will learn about mountain pine beetle life cycle, understand the signs and symptoms of attack on trees, and preventative management options. Speakers: Ben Pfohl, Colorado State Forest Service and Jennifer Cook, Gilpin CSU Extension. No need to register for in-person attendance. [Online participants must register here.](#)

Our area is experiencing a mountain pine beetle epidemic. The mountain pine beetle is a native bark beetle which attacks pines (ponderosa, lodgepole, limber and less often bristlecone pines), not spruces. The beetles are preferring to attack ponderosa pines in this epidemic so far. Areas near Missouri Lakes neighborhoods down through the city of Black Hawk and into Idaho Springs and Evergreen are the most heavily impacted at this time. Based on the number of dead trees, the areas of impact are continuing to grow. Please read the [fact sheet on mountain pine beetle](#) to learn more about management options. Contact Gilpin CSU Extension with questions 303-582-9106 or Jennifer.cook@colostate.edu

STRAW BALE GARDENING



Straw bales provide an alternative gardening medium to growing directly in the ground or in a raised garden bed.

One key benefit of straw bale gardening is that it naturally provides growing plants with nutrients. This is because the inside of the bale is encouraged to quickly compost and decompose. In the early stages of decomposition (also called conditioning), they get warm – even hot – inside. They will then cool slightly to a temperature that is ideal for encouraging new seedlings to grow roots quickly. The heat that radiates from the bales also helps protect any tender spring plantings from any unexpected late spring frost. Another benefit of the technique is its affordability. A bale is usually between \$4 and \$10, depending on your location. A typical bale is about 14 cubic feet, so in terms of cost per cubic foot of planting media, it is very cost-effective when compared to buying bagged planting media or even bulk compost.

The height of straw bales also improves accessibility for those who are less mobile, particularly in comparison to gardening in the ground.

Then there's the advantage of fewer weeds and issues with soil-borne insects and diseases.

Because we are not using the same soil year after year, those insects and diseases that tend to overwinter and harbor in soil are less troublesome.

Joel Karsten of Straw Bale Gardens says the easiest way to get started is to acquire bales of straw or hay. When dry, the bales will be fairly lightweight and easy to transport to your garden. Be sure to place your bales in a sunny spot and arrange them in a layout that's suitable for your needs and goals, as they'll become heavy once planted and watered.

For the first two weeks, apply a high nitrogen organic or non-organic fertilizer to condition the bales, Joel instructs. 'This nitrogen feeds the bacteria. Keep the bales moist, which will encourage the bacteria to colonize and decompose the straw. The bales will heat up and then in two to three weeks, they will cool down. At this point, they are ready to plant with seeds or starter transplants.'

For transplants, you can simply make a hole in the bale using your hands or a trowel and push the plants in. Add a little potting mix around the top of the plants, then water them. For seeds, make a seed bed by applying a layer of potting mix to the top of the bales, then sow into this and water them in.

Once planted, water your plants every few days or when the plants show signs of wilt, Joel says.

Top tip: Joel suggests adding a trellis over the top of your straw bales to support vining crops and to make the garden more vertical.

For more info, go to <https://strawbalegardens.com>

POST-BLOOM AMARYLLIS CARE

Your amaryllis does not have to be a one-and-done flower. With proper care after the bloom, you can keep amaryllis blooming for years. Because the bloom of this tropical plant is controlled by moisture, you can set the time for when you want your amaryllis to bloom next.

Amaryllis does not undergo true dormancy. Instead, the bulbs go through a rest period after flowering which allows them to recover and bloom again. The schedule depends on whether you are timing the bloom for a holiday, or if you will let it rebloom naturally.

After the Bloom Until Late Summer

Note: If your amaryllis is coated with wax, carefully remove the wax and pot the bulb in a snugly-fitting pot with a small amount of potting soil, only coming about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the bulb. Make sure water can drain out of the pot.

After your amaryllis is done blooming, keep it in a sunny indoor location. Remove the faded flowers promptly to prevent them from forming seeds, which will deplete the plant of energy. But only remove the flower stalk when it has turned yellow because as long as it's green, it will promote photosynthesis. Cut the flower stalk between a half inch and one inch above the bulb with a sharp knife or pruners. Keep the soil moist but not wet. Water the plant whenever the top two inches of soil feel dry. Fertilize it every two to three weeks with half the recommended strength of an all-purpose balanced houseplant fertilizer.

In the Spring, when there is no longer any danger of frost and the nighttime temperatures stay consistently above 50 degrees, your amaryllis will be the happiest outdoors. Make sure to gradually adapt the plant to its outdoor location. Amaryllis should get at least six hours of sunlight daily, ideally a location with dappled sun or diffuse light.

Around August, stop fertilizing to prepare for the rest period.

When the temperatures drop again below 50 degrees at night the plant back inside.

The Rest Period

Once your amaryllis is back indoors there are two ways of getting it to rebloom: you can time its rebloom, or you can let its natural bloom cycle take its course.

To set the bloom time yourself, stop watering and fertilizing the plant 8 to 12 weeks before the desired bloom time, such as Thanksgiving or Christmas. Count back from that date and move it to a cool, dark, dry place with temperatures around 55 to 60 degrees such as a cool basement or a garage.

Cut off the leaves after they have turned yellow and brown and trim the plant back one to two inches above the bulb.

Alternatively, you can also let the plant go through its natural life cycle. Place it in a cool indoor location around 50 to 60 degrees but keep it in indirect, bright light. Water it sparingly to keep it barely moist and do not fertilize it. The leaves will begin to yellow and drop around December.

The Regrowth Period

If you have stopped watering and fertilizing your amaryllis for a timed bloom, after 8 to 12 weeks move it to a sunny, bright location where the temperature remains consistently around 70 to 75 degrees. Resume watering and fertilizing. It is very possible that new growth already appears during the rest time, which is also a good indicator that the plant is getting ready to be moved again.

For amaryllis that has not undergone the forced rest period, it will take another month or two for new leaves and flower stalks to emerge. At that point, move the amaryllis to a warmer, sunnier spot and start fertilizing it again, as described above. Regardless of the growth method, put the amaryllis in the sunniest spot possible because the more sun, the better the bloom.

To encourage reblooming, use a fertilizer with a high phosphorus content.

After your amaryllis has rebloomed, restart the after-bloom care as described above. Re-potting is only necessary after a few years, as the plant does best if there is very little extra soil around the bulb.

*CGC HOLIDAY PARTY AT DEBBI
NOVOTNY'S
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16,
2023
Debbi- Thank you for hosting!*



Wendy Binninger, Kris Miller, Brandi Murphy and Jeannie Schuessler



Kris Miller and Nancy Spletzer arrange desserts