

# Summer Sunset Musings

Wilmot Horticultural Society

*Bringing people and gardening together since 1968*

[WHS](#)

November/December 2020

[WHS Facebook](#)



## **Hello WHS Members and Friends,**

You probably noticed that the Merry Christmas wish above is in the form of a puzzle with a missing piece. It seems like in this pandemic year, there will be at least one missing piece for many more families than usual. It may be relatives, health, a family tradition or whatever has changed for you. However, these times have also brought out the good in people. I am a member of the various Wilmot Facebook pages and I have read about so many individuals, businesses and organizations who have opened their hearts to help others by shopping for food, presents or other needed items, ordering or taking lunches to front line workers, posting funny happenings or jokes, donating money and by visiting or calling people who are alone. Folks are giving away needed items or possible Christmas presents instead of posting them for sale. They are painting rocks, decorating windows based on the season and banging pots. There is a post which started in England and was reposted on Wilmot Community Connections inviting everyone, on Christmas Eve, to go outside at 6 pm and ring a bell for 2 minutes to spread Christmas cheer and help Santa fly his sleigh. My wish for Christmas is to see the good and help others find the light so even more people can help make Christmas and the New Year brighter in any way and for anyone we can...and maybe at the same time, help complete someone's puzzle.

*Tammy*



## A Message from our President

Here we are, near the end of 2020. We started this year off with so many plans. These plans came to a screeching halt in March when we were caught in the middle of a ferocious pandemic, COVID-19. Our normal lifestyle changed to lock downs, constant hand washing, wearing masks and social distancing. A way of life that we never experienced before and hope we never have to again. I am very grateful that we live in a country where most citizens know how to follow all the rules and regulations set by our Government Officials. It was a very demanding time for all of us. I like to think it has made us all stronger in one way or another.

As we approach Christmas Day, this too will be a change that we have never had to endure before. We will be separated from our families as we try to defeat this pandemic. It was a hard decision, but we told our families that we would not be together for Christmas Day this year. We will visit through our technical devices. It is the price we pay to keep everyone safe and know that we will be around for many more Christmas festivities.

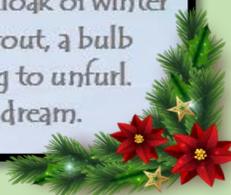
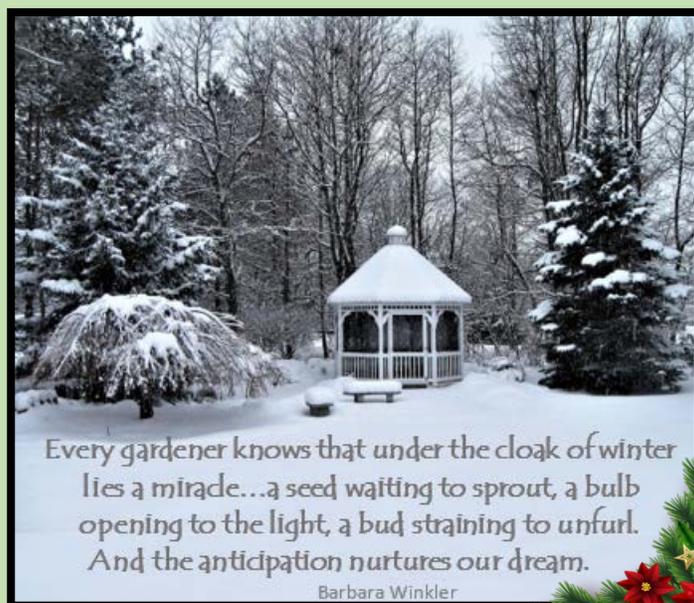
We should also remember all the frontline workers who have been working hard to keep our loved ones safe during this terrible time. My thoughts are always with Nithview Community as they work diligently to keep our loved family members safe.

On behalf of our Executive and WHS Board Members, I would like to wish you all a Blessed and Safe Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year in 2021. We don't know when we will be together again, but know that you are all missed and hope you are all staying healthy.

*Christmas Blessings.*

Your President,

*Judy Hahn-Yutzi*





## Remembering a Friend and Dedicated Member of the Wilmot Horticultural Society

**RUTH'S CHAT WITH ANNIE COBER** ~ a long-time volunteer:  
written by Ruth Zehr (2017)

It was indeed a pleasure to have a visit with Annie Cober at her home in the early spring of 2017. I recalled having been here at numerous committee meetings over the years. After the discussions of the business meetings, we were seated around the dining room table and Annie graciously served some of her delicious baking with tea and coffee. White is the predominant colour in her spotlessly clean house; not a thing is out of place, and definitely no clutter to be seen.

For many years, Annie has been actively involved with the Wilmot Horticultural Society, the Agricultural Society, the Women's Institute, the Board of Trade and with the Brethren in Christ Church in Rosebank. For a time, she also was a member on the Board for the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. You will never find Annie in the limelight, but quietly and efficiently working behind the scenes. And she has accomplished much!

In 1978, Annie's husband, Willie Cober, was elected as a Councillor which meant he was often gone for council meetings.



Annie liked the camaraderie of people and with her family grown and floundering; she wanted to find something stimulating to do with friends. She joined the Wilmot Horticultural Society! It was during the era of Lou Hill's presidency and she remembered Elaine Hill greeting her at the door. Annie and Elaine became good friends and Annie actually went to help Elaine clean her house for many years to come.

Annie was the type of person who became involved. She served as secretary for the society during the years 1985-1987 and again 1991-1995. For many years, she was in charge of kitchen duties serving refreshments at the monthly meetings, planning and serving meals for the workers at Flower Shows, serving refreshing drinks at Garden Tours, and taking charge of the Christmas potlucks. She served as a director on the Board of Directors for many years. She was also a volunteer for Civic Beautification taking care of several flower beds in New Dundee.

In 1986 when Gwyn Brundrett became President, she also took on the responsibility of Civic Beautification. Lou Hill, Howard Schmidt and Earl Schramm had previously made flower beds in at least 25 locations in Wilmot Township and worked with many volunteers to take care of them. Gwyn and Annie co-chaired this huge responsibility. It was in the dead of winter that we met in Annie's home to plan what to plant in the beds in the coming spring. Gwyn placed an order with Tavistock Nursery, and the last week in May, the two, Gwyn and Annie, delivered the seedling plants, peat moss, and bags of manure to the volunteers. The two worked as a team with the volunteers on Civic Beautification until 1999.



2017: Gwyn Brundrett, Annie Cober, Bev Fried, Sandra Roth

For fifteen years Annie headed up serving refreshments at the New Hamburg Fall Fair. She herself made the Chile con Carne, purchased supplies for hot dogs and hamburgers, and contacted members asking for pies and for help in the food booth. Yes, Annie was a worker, never a shirker or a slacker.

On April 24, 2015 a few members of the Wilmot Horticultural Society were recipients of pins and certificates at the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremony held at the Concordia Club in Kitchener. Annie Cober was recognized for 37 years of volunteer service. WHS also recognized her as well as Verda and Stan Cook at a general meeting. (right photo)



The big white house on the Cober farm on the Huron Road was known to Annie since the age of ten when she was sent to help the Baer family who lived there. Annie Sallans, her parents, James and Lucy, and her four brothers and three sisters also lived on the Huron Road, nearby. Her father was a blacksmith, but also a passionate gardener as was her mother.

The Cober family lived nearby and in 1950 Wilbert Cober and Annie Sallans joined hearts and hands and settled on the Baer farm where Annie had gone to work at a young age. Here Willie and Annie farmed and gardened and it was here that they raised their six children – three girls, Pauline, Betty, and Susan, then three boys Lester, Lyndon, and Roland. Undoubtedly, Willie and Annie would have many stories to tell of bygone days. They now have eleven grandchildren and seventeen great grandchildren.



Sadly, Betty, who was the wife of Harold Albrecht, passed away suddenly from an intracranial hemorrhage in 2011. Only two years later, Lester died a slow death due to hepatitis. Willie and Annie experienced the pain of losing two children in a short time.

When Annie celebrated an important milestone in her life, her 80th birthday, her family surprised her with a birthday celebration. Relatives and friends were invited and since Annie has many horticultural friends, they were also invited. I personally remember sitting outside on a lovely summer day. Later we were invited into the home of a family member to fill a plate with goodies and then return outside to sit in the shade of a big tree. The next day a wind storm passed through the area and that same tree that shaded us the day before was knocked down.

Willie and Annie still live on the farm. Their son Roland farms the land, but Annie still tends the garden and flower beds. Willie and Annie, separately and together have contributed much to their community.

When Ron and I drove in the lane at the Cober farm, I observed and remarked about a humongous maple tree in the middle of the yard. We were told by the Cobers that the tree was a little sapling behind the smokehouse when Willie and Annie moved onto the farm. Now its branches spread out wide, providing a resting and a nesting place for birds and its leaves offer cool shade from sweltering heat. Somehow that tree reminds me of Annie and Willie Cober. It looks a bit gnarled but strong and stalwart – courageous, determined, and willing to offer “shade” to whomever or whenever a need arises.



One of the gardens maintained in the past by Annie



2017: Harold Albrecht MP, Annie Cober and Michael Harris MPP



2015 at Concordia Club: Annie Cober (37 years service),  
Verda Cook, Ruth and Ron Zehr





## Announcements

- i **Save the Date!** On Monday, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>, from 7:15 to 8:45, Sean James will be live and talking about native plants, shrubs and trees and pollinators. This event is made possible through the joint effort of [WHS](#) and [Nith Valley Ecoboosters](#). Stay tuned on our Facebook pages for more details.
- i We have a **new volunteer** for the newsletter! You will meet her on the Civic Beautification page. If you would like to **volunteer**, please let us know via [WilmotHS.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:WilmotHS.newsletter@gmail.com).
- i The Wilmot Horticultural Association's **Annual General Meeting** has been **postponed** for now. We will let you know when and how we will be holding our AGM as soon as we know.
- i Clarification: Apparently there are by-laws which state that WHS must charge a fee for membership. Therefore, for last year's members, we have reduced the membership fee to \$6 and made the **membership fee for 2021, \$6**. This means that anyone who was a **member in 2020** is automatically a **member for 2021**. Merry Christmas!
- i If you donated or are thinking of donating to WHS, please make sure to **include** the **donation form** we need **so we can send you a tax receipt** or get in touch with you about your donation. On our [WHS](#) webpage, you will find instructions on how to donate at the top of the page and both a fillable and a printable form at the very bottom of the page. Please, email it to [WHSTreasurer27@gmail.com](mailto:WHSTreasurer27@gmail.com) or mail it to WHS Treasurer 27 Mill St. Box 235 New Dundee ON N0B2E0. Thank you to all who have donated to our Tree Project and other charitable endeavours.

## Interesting Reads and Virtual Events/Videos

**Reads:** [Don't be "Greenwashed"](#)

[Your Christmas Plants Can Thrive All Winter-Learn How](#)

[Ontario Native Plants 2021 Catalog](#)

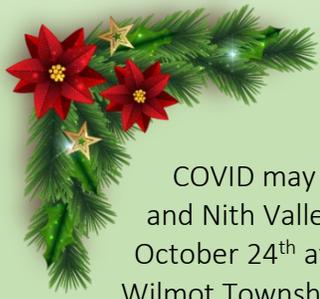
[The Most Common Problems](#) Indoor House Plants in Winter

**Videos:** [Paul Zammit Dog-strangling vine](#): Identifying, Impact and Removal

[Plastic Wars](#) – from CBC: Did the plastics industry use the lure of recycling to sell even more plastic? A look at the mounting crisis of plastic waste in the environment.

**Events:** [Ottawa Hort Society Webinars](#): check out this list of monthly webinars (as long as restrictions last)





## Let's Tree Wilmot by Marlene Knezevich

COVID may have slowed down the collaborating groups of Wilmot Horticultural S., Rotary Wilmot, and Nith Valley EcoBoosters but we are excited that our plans to plant native trees on Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at Scott Park in New Hamburg were completed, all while social-distancing. Working with Wilmot Township, the GRCA and volunteer naturalist Dean Peachey, a list of tree species was determined and purchased. In the area of the boat launch, 100+ native trees were planted in the initial phase of naturalizing this area. All trees are native and suitable for the flood plain: Royal Maple, Sugar Maple, Bur Oak, Swamp (white) Oak, Redmond Lindon (Basswood), Standard Service Berry, River Birch, White Cedar, Tamarack, White Spruce, Balsam Fir, Hackberry, White Pine, Blue Beech (muscle wood), the Cucumber tree (our only native Magnolia) and Pawpaw. We had been informed that beavers were not an issue in this section of the river but I received a call from a nearby homeowner who said there are beavers. So, some of us returned the following Saturday to protect the trees. In the future we will plant understory shrubs and native plants to naturalize the area...no more lawnmower for this area!

### Photos from the LTW Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> Tree Planting

Photos by Larry Kryski



This endeavor was not possible without its many volunteers. Stephanie Goertz (NVE) and I attended some Woolwich tree planting events to learn the ropes. Fifty-three volunteers registered on planting day with the youngest 5 years old and then ranging in age up to 80! Yvonne Zyma, Lynda Buck and Betsey Daub managed the registration table. Township staff were very supportive and were involved on the Friday setup and planting day. Special thanks to Dorothy and Andrew Wilson for helping with setup and for slugging 80 trees around Friday. Wayne Buck, Shirley Koehle, Jenn Pfenning, Martin Hesch, Andrew Wilson and Al Junker were on hand as tree plant leaders. Wilmot Post and the Waterloo Region Record conducted interviews and wrote articles on the event. Cakr Maker provided chocolate chip cookies and WHS supplied granola bars to treat the volunteers.

We would also like to thank the people and organizations who helped make this day possible. Wilmot Township contributed 50 trees, Wilmot Rotary and Wilmot Horticultural Society contributed \$1000 each and more than \$1,800 in private donations funded the project. In June, Dean Peachey of Morningside Retirement Community of New Hamburg suggested that seniors receiving the extra \$300 from the Federal Government CPP, donate to the LTW. This was the impetus of the success of receiving the private donations. And finally, special thanks go to Tammy Junker (WHS treasurer) and Yvonne Zyma (WHS secretary) for the numerous hours spent to ensure all the legal matters were in order. This was invaluable.

Currently, we are working to formalize our Mission Statement, goals, job descriptions and more. We are considering locations to plant trees next year. We have a list started and looking to add more. Do you have a public playground in your area which could use shade trees or a windbreak? Let us know. New Dundee is exploring a tree planting event for April 2021.

For info on tree planting, contact [letstreewilmot@gmail.com](mailto:letstreewilmot@gmail.com) or go to our [WHS website](#) on how to donate. Remember to send in your completed donation form.



*A message to Marlene:*

*After 47 years and 3 months of friendship, my heart breaks to tell you Barb passed peacefully surrounded by family love today. (Dec. 16, 2020) Although I think you can tell by the pictures, I wanted to tell you personally that she absolutely loved planting those trees. I will always go to that yellow birch - you helped her pick out the location close to the river- to have picnics with kids and grandchildren and all family and friends and quietly reflect under its waving branches and think of that day and how happy she was. Her love for her family can nourish them in so many ways just hugging and touching that tree knowing her hands were once there. She has contributed to the community in many ways over the years and this was her last outing. Thank you for making this happen and for the lovely memories it has provided*

Photo by Marlen Krajewski





## Civic Beautification – The Railway Garden

### Meet Janet - New volunteer for the Wilmot Horticultural Society

Do you ever talk to the plants and the trees? I do. Hello! My name is Janet Bradley Worthington, and I've lived in New Hamburg since spring 2008. Just before I sat down to write this, I was having a little chat with a spindly spruce tree that my husband Don transplanted this past summer. It isn't thriving and we hope it makes it through until spring! He too had a chat with our tree trying to give it some encouragement! But after reading an article about the secret life of trees, we've decided perhaps that little tree is missing its family.

If you're reading this newsletter, you most likely enjoy gardening. I've always loved gardening, ever since I was little and growing up in Toronto. My knowledge, however, comes from experience and questions, nothing very scientific.

When we moved to New Hamburg, we added two gardens in the backyard in front of the woods, built a vegetable garden, and maintained the two existing flower gardens. I discovered the May Thrift Shop garden sale and loaded up on hostas and perennials! How many of us have filled our gardens with hostas only to find out that they get bigger each year and have to be thinned out! I guess my neighbour thought I was a fairly good gardener as this summer, she suggested I help out her friend Marlene by taking care of the railway garden at the top of Hincks Street, so I said I would. I think I started sometime in June, after Marlene had so nicely put the mulch on. There wasn't too much to do all summer except to keep on top of dead heading, weeding, edging, and lugging bottles of water every other day.

At the end of September, I received an email advising that CB Members could be reimbursed for fall bulbs. That's the first time I learned I was a CBer and that I was caring for a CB garden! What a nice surprise to have an official name.

In October, I asked whether I should be planting some perennials besides bulbs and it was suggested that perhaps false indigo would be fitting. I placed an ISO message on the Wilmot Strong Together Facebook site and found someone who was willing to part with a piece of their plant. My husband and I took our shovels over and started to dig up her entire plant at her request! Well...did you know that false indigo (a plant I've



never heard of), is tall, and has very tough, woody roots that not only run deep but also spread out! Needless to say, we were digging and digging to no end, when my friend started to help with her shovel. I thought I could help by putting my shovel in to lift it, sort of like a lever, and then "crack" – my shovel broke!

We did eventually get the plant out but then I wrote to Marlene suggesting perhaps it isn't the best plant to put in the railway garden, nor is it the best time to plant it. However, rules are meant to be broken, and it was suggested we plant it at the northeast quadrant! You know – I've never been able to figure out the directions in New Hamburg – they aren't exactly in a grid like Toronto or London, where I've previously lived, so I didn't know where NE was. I mean – doesn't King Street run east and west, even though it feels like you're driving north and south! It's really tough when you're new to the area. Thankfully, we had just bought a new car that came with a compass, so my husband and I drove towards the garden, watching the compass the whole time! Hopefully we've planted that sucker in the right place as I don't think it'll ever come out! In the short time I've been a CBer, I've discovered a lot. A couple of tips I learned, for example are:

- Plant bulbs deeper than the packaging instructions – sometimes as much as double the depth unless the soil is hard-packed clay (which my home garden consists of)
- Plant various bulbs using the layered or lasagna method, covering each layer with soil, i.e. allium, tulips on bottom, soil, smaller bulbs on top – I probably didn't plant my bulbs in the correct order as I never thought about when the bulbs bloom – they've just always been a nice surprise! This site [<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/bulbs/bgen/lasagna-style-bulb-planting.htm>] lists which bulbs bloom early [crocus, scilla, muscari, freesia, anemones], medium mid-season [tulips, hyacinths, Galanthus, narcissus], large late-season bulbs [daffodils, tulips, lilies, alliums]
- There is bluestar amsonia already planted in the railway garden – I didn't know that and am unfamiliar with it, so sure hope I didn't dig it up!

Hopefully I haven't taken too much of your time. I offered to help with the newsletter and Tammy suggested I write something for the Civic Beautification page. That's it for this month, but I will continue with my musings in the coming months. Are you already thinking about the plants you're looking forward to seeing in the spring??!! The railway garden was built and maintained by Mary Ellen Zehr. I hope I can honour her in looking after this garden. I'd like to thank Marlene for all her patience and guidance in answering my questions, and to my husband, who voluntolds when I volunteer! Until the next time, be well and stay safe! Merry Christmas!!



Just in case you like to search for seeds online...  
<https://seeds.ca/sw8/web/diversity/seed-catalogue-index>





## Garden Gems

### Are Poinsettia Poisonous?

The year is 1919 and a 2-year-old girl died next to a poinsettia tree. The cause, poinsettia poisoning. Ever since then people have been aware that this lovely Christmas plant can be dangerous in the home.

Now for the real truth about the poisonous poinsettia ...

#### *The Truth About 1919*

Many sources suggest that the myth of the poisonous poinsettia started as described above, but nobody is certain that this is the way the myth start. One source said this took place in Mexico where poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) grow naturally. Another said it was Hawaii. Or it might have been a young boy? Everyone seems to agree that it took place in 1919.

I think we can conclude that nobody is really sure about how the myth started. Someone might have died from poisoning, but we can be fairly sure it was not from eating a poinsettia.

#### *Are Poinsettia Poisonous?*

No! A [study looking at 22,793 incidents of eating poinsettia](#) found no fatalities and 96% received no medical treatment at all. The POISONDEX information database, the main poison resource in the US, says that a 50-pound child would need to eat 500 poinsettia leaves to become poisoned. Another source I looked at said that when [they tried to find the safe level for poinsettia](#) they gave up trying because the number of leaves you had to eat was to large. If you eat a lot you might get a tummy ache.

The poinsettia sap can irritate the mouth and can cause vomiting.

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is a euphorbia and these plants do produce a latex-type material in the stem and leaves. Some people have an allergic reaction when it comes into contact with skin (dermal irritation including redness, swelling, and itchiness).

#### *Is the Poinsettia Poisonous to Cats and Dogs?*

The [poinsettia is not poisonous to cats or dogs](#).



#### *Is the Poinsettia Poisonous to Birds?*

I was a [guest in a local newspaper gardening article](#) and mentioned that poinsettia was not poisonous to cats and dogs. A lady wrote in to tell me that her parrot died from eating poinsettia leaves.

I've checked to see if this is a problem and the plant does appear on several lists of poisonous plants for birds, but none of these are from reputable sources. Until you know better, be cautious.

Written by Robert Pavlis, author of three books:

[Garden Myths](#) , [Soil Science for Gardeners](#) and [Building Natural Ponds](#)

<https://www.gardenmyths.com/poinsettia-poisonous/>





## **21 Common Indoor Plant Myths – That Save You Time and Money**

The popularity of indoor plants has skyrocketed in the last year and so have the myths surrounding them. I have gathered a long list of common houseplant myths to save you the trouble of making mistakes and getting into bad habits. Each myth has a brief description, and where appropriate, a link to a more detailed discussion.

Growing indoor plants is fairly easy if you take some time to research the plant you are growing and follow some basic rules. Don't get sucked into internet hype about new ways to deal with problems. Experienced gardeners keep things simple.

### ***Myth #1: Plants Grow Bigger in Big Pots***

Plants are genetically programmed to grow at a certain rate. Better light, adequate water and temperature, and more fertilizer can speed up this process a bit, but it's mostly driven by genetics. The plant does not even know they are in a pot so why would it affect the growing process?

A bigger pot does have more soil and therefore more room for root growth, but plants only grow the roots they need to support the above ground part of the plant.

Other related myths:

"A small plant in a pot that's too big is going to feel intimidated by that huge amount of soil" – that's silly. All of our indoor plants come from the wild where they grow in huge amounts of soil.

"The plant will try to grow roots to fill out the whole space but a small plant won't be able to sustain that much root growth." Simply not true. No plant has ever died because it grew too many roots.

If you want a plant to grow faster focus on its environmental requirements, not on the pot size.

### ***Myth # 2: Water with Distilled Water, Not Tap Water***

Distilled water and RO water (reverse osmosis) is pure water containing no minerals. This type of water is harmful to many houseplants, although a few do prefer almost pure water.

Most tap water will not harm plants. If the tap water has a [high alkalinity \(i.e. hard water\)](#) it can harm some plants. In this case you can treat it, or mix it with rainwater, distilled water or RO water to reduce the alkalinity.

Tap water can contain high levels of sodium which is anything over 50 ppm. This can be natural sodium in your water or it can be sodium added by a water softener using sodium chloride. You can find out what your natural sodium level is from your municipal water service. If your water is naturally high in sodium, dilute it as described above for high alkalinity.

If you have a water softener, the cold water taps in the kitchen, and all outdoor taps should bypass the water softener. Use them for watering plants. Don't use the other taps in your house.

### ***Myth # 3: Tap Water Contains Harmful Chlorine***

This is a very common myth without any basis. Municipalities treat their drinking water with either chlorine or chloramine.

Chlorine is an essential nutrient for plants so a small amount is good for them. [Science has determined that chlorine or chloramine levels above 150 ppm](#) can be toxic to plants. The World Health Organization suggests using no more than 5 ppm in drinking water and most tap water is under this level. So clearly neither chlorine nor chloramine are an issue.

***Myth # 4: Let Water Sit Overnight Before Using It***

Some people do this to allow it to de-gas oxygen, others to allow the chlorine to dissipate. Neither of these are required.

It is a good idea to use water that is at room temperature. If you draw cold tap water, let it sit for a few minutes to warm up, but there is no benefit for it to sit longer than that.

***Myth # 5: A Strict Watering Schedule is Best***

A lot of houseplant advice recommends watering weekly. This is just bad advice.

For a new gardener who is not familiar with plant growth, watering on a schedule is appealing since you can simply follow a rule. The problem is the rule almost never works. You should water when the soil needs to be watered and that is related to how quickly it dries. This drying process depends on many factors including, pot size, plant size, temperature, humidity, amount of light etc. Every plant in every home is different, so a schedule never works.

Stick your finger in the pot. If it is dry, water. If it is wet, don't. Once you get comfortable with this, you can make small adjustments depending on specific plant needs.

***Myth # 6: Wilting Leaves Indicate They Need to Be Watered***

Leaves wilt when they are not getting enough water and there are two common causes for this; not enough watering and too much watering.

Too much [water leads to root rot and then the plant has no way to absorb water](#), so leaves go limp. Wilting leaves only show that there is a problem; it doesn't identify the problem. It could be something completely different or it might be related to watering, in which case it could be too much water or too little water.

***Myth # 7: Succulents Only Need a Tiny Sip of Water***

Common advice says to water succulents less than other houseplants. Many interpret this to mean that you should only add a small amount of water each time you water and that is not correct. What it really means is that you should water less often so they dry out between waterings. It also means the plant likes a well draining soil so include more grit or sand in their soil.

When you water, water thoroughly, then leave it alone until the soil is completely dry. In summer the dry period can be shorter, especially if you put the plants outside where they get lots of sun. If they come inside in winter and get less light, make the dry period longer.

***Myth # 8: Yellow Leaves Indicate a Dying Plant***

Yellow leaves can mean your plant is dying, but it can also mean that the plant is doing well.

Plant leaves don't last forever. They are disposable. In nature, a plant leaf can endure all kinds of damage from infections and insects. Once it has served its purpose, the plant removes most of the nutrients and sugars from the leaf so they can be used in other parts of the plant. This process causes green leaves to turn yellow. It's a normal process for all plants.

Where and how the leaves turn yellow tells you something about the plant. If it is the lowest leaf, it is probably nothing to worry about since these are also the oldest leaves. If it is an upper leaf, the plant has a problem. It could be a

watering issue, a fertilizing issue or a pest problem. In phal [orchids the top leaf turns yellow when the plant has crown rot](#).

Many people blame yellow leaves on over watering, but that is just an uninformed guess.

#### ***Myth # 9: Sick Plants Need Plant Food***

I know we like to treat a cold with chicken soup, but when a plant is not doing well, the last thing you should do is fertilize it. Feeding a plant will not make it better, but it might make the problem worse because excess fertilizer can burn new tender roots.

Sick plants and naturally dormant plants use much less fertilizer. If a plant stops growing, stop fertilizing. Plants can live a very long time without being fed.

#### ***Myth # 10: Increase Drainage by adding Stones to the Bottom of Pots***

This myth has been around for a very long time, in part because it seems to make so much common sense. Stones or pot chards on their own drain very well, so putting them at the bottom of a pot should increase drainage. But it's myth – it doesn't work.

This all has to do with something called a [perched water table](#). Water does not move easily from small soil particles to the larger sized of stones. It will saturate the lower level of soil, before moving lower to the drainage material. If you need better drainage, mix the material right into the soil. Sand or rocks mixed into soil does increase drainage.

#### ***Myth # 11: Make Your Plant Leaves Shiny with Mayonnaise***

There are a host of home products people spread on leaves to make them shiny including egg whites, milk, yogurt and vinegar, and there are many commercial products as well. These products may not do any significant harm to plants, but they are also not good for them. Anything that leaves an oily layer will attract dust and maybe even pests. It will clog the stomata openings in leaves, making it more difficult for leaves to exchanges gases with the air, and it reduces the amount of light getting to the leaf.

Leaves do not need to be shiny. Learn to enjoy the natural leaf color. If you [want to clean the dust off, use a soft cotton rag and a bit of water](#).

#### ***Myth # 12: Houseplants Purify the Air in Your Home***

This is a common myth and many sites even list the best plants for purifying your air. It is all a myth.

Claims that NASA studied this and proved they work are bogus. The writers of those claims never read the NASA research study (I did), because it does not even mention using plants to clean the air in a home.

For the details on this see: [A Garden Myth Is Born – Plants Don't Purify Air](#).

#### ***Myth # 13: Plants Add Oxygen to the Air in Your Home***

If you understand photosynthesis you know that plants give off oxygen. The problem is that [houseplants produce so little oxygen, that it does not effectively increase the level in](#) your home. You would need hundreds of large plants in every room to make even a small change.

#### ***Myth # 14: Don't Keep Plants in the Bedroom at Night***

The concern here is that, without light, plants produce carbon dioxide and stop producing oxygen. High levels of CO2 can be harmful.

A lot of people know plants use up CO<sub>2</sub> in light and give off oxygen, but few know that [plants are using oxygen and producing CO<sub>2</sub> all of the time](#); day and night. But these amounts are so tiny compared to the amount humans use, that they have no net effect. You do not need to remove plants from your bedroom at night.

#### ***Myth # 15: Most Indoor Plants Go Dormant in Winter***

That is not true. Most indoor plants are native to the tropics where it is warm all year long, so they tend to grow all year long. These areas do have dry and wet seasons, so watering can affect their growth. In temperate climates the amount of light is much reduced in winter and that can slow down growth, but it does not stop.

The home tends to be warm all year long, just like the tropics, so houseplants grow all season long.

#### ***Myth # 16: Plants Only Need Water, Light, and Air to Grow***

I found this comment, “I’m in the anti-chemical camp. From my experience plants only need water, light and fresh air to thrive”. This is complete nonsense!

Plants need basic nutrients or they can’t grow. Those nutrients don’t have to come from synthetic fertilizer, although that is the best source for houseplants. It can come from organic fertilizer, manure, water, or from the soil – but it has to come from somewhere. This is biology 101!

Plants grow much better, have less diseases and pests, if they get the right amount of nutrients.

#### ***Myth # 17: Low Light Plants Do Well in a Dark Corner***

Some houseplants are labeled as “low light plants” and they are promoted as not needing much light. These plants will survive with very little light but they will do much better with more light. Plants are very adaptable, and they can survive a long time in poor conditions. It can take many months or even years before a plant dies, but if it does not get enough light it will eventually die.

If you place these low light plants in a bit more light they thrive.

#### ***Myth # 18: Some Plants are Just Indoor Plants***

There is no such thing as indoor plants. All houseplants want to be outside, in the right growing conditions. What we call indoor plants are plants that can survive in low light, low humidity, and can take the abuse of having their roots confined to a small pot.

Try to put your indoor plants outside for part of the year. They will grow much better and usually flower a lot more.

#### ***Myth # 19: Misting Increases Humidity***

[Misting does increase the humidity around a plant](#) but it only lasts for a few minutes. You can see this for yourself. Mist your plants and see how long it takes for the water droplets to dry. Once they are gone, the higher humidity is also gone. Unless you are prepared to mist every 15 minutes, this does nothing to raise humidity, but it might increase fungal diseases.

#### ***Myth # 20: Pebble Trays Increase Humidity***

Pebble trays do not increase the humidity around plants

As water evaporates from the tray it does increase the humidity right above the tray, and a small amount might even reach the top of the pot, but your plant is left high and dry – quite literally. Humidity trays do not work. You can see from the above diagram that at 7 inches above the tray, the humidity level is raised 1%, which is of no benefit to plants.

Placing plants in an [enclosure like an aquarium does increase the humidity](#), but this environment is only suitable for special plants that grow well in high humidity. It will cause diseases for most plants.

**Myth # 21: Used Potting Soil Should be Discarded**

What should you do with used potting soil? Many people suggest that you should throw it away, or add it to the outdoor garden because it is “all used up” and it “contains disease organisms”.

The first thing to understand is that potting soil is not really soil. It is usually peat, coir or wood based with a few added amendments like perlite. These materials do decompose over time, but they don't get old.

Diseases are normally not a problem. Let's face it, fungal and bacteria spores are everywhere in the air and after a few days your new potting soil is covered with them. If you had a very serious disease it might make sense getting rid of old potting soil, but then you probably need to replace the soil in all your plants. To be honest, I have never seen such a disease.

If you have very hard water, the salts in it do precipitate out and form a white crust on the surface of the soil. This becomes hard to wash out and it can be detrimental to plant roots. In this case scrape off the top couple of inches of soil and discard it. The rest can be reused.

With a few exceptions, there is no good reason for replacing used potting soil and it can be used for many years. One exception would be orchids since they won't grow well in potting material that is decomposing. But the old orchid media could be used for other types of houseplants.

Written by Robert Pavlis, author of three books: [Garden Myths](#), [Soil Science for Gardeners](#) and [Building Natural Ponds](#)  
<https://www.gardenmyths.com/indoor-plant-myths/>



**Wishing you a Happy,  
Healthy and Safe  
New Year filled with  
Hope and Joy!**



## Last Words

T'was the week before Christmas, and all  
through the yard, not a gift was given,  
not even a card.

The tools were all hung, in the carport  
with care, with hopes that St. Nicholas  
soon would repair,

The shovel with blade all rusty and  
cracked, the pitchfork still shiny, but  
handle it lacked.

When out on my lawn, (it's brown and  
abused) I could see poor old Santa,  
looking confused.

No list had been left for Santa to see, no  
gardening gifts were under the tree.  
But wait there's still time, it's not  
Christmas yet, and gardening gifts are the  
quickest to get.

You can forget the silk tie, the fluffy new  
sweater, give something to make the  
garden grow better.

If she wants a gift shiny, then don't be a  
fool, it's not a dumb diamond, but a  
sparkling new tool.

If fragrance is listed you can forget French  
perfume, it's a pile of manure that'll make  
gardeners swoon.

Give night crawlers, not nightgowns, the

type of hose that gives water. (Anything  
for the kitchen is not worth the bother.)

Give a great gift that digs in the dirt, it's  
better than any designer-brand shirt.  
Now look quick at Santa, this guy's not  
so dumb, Under his glove, he hides a  
green thumb.

His knees are so dirty, his back how it  
aches, his boots stomp on slugs, (he gives  
them no breaks).

Santa only works winter, you can surely  
see why, The rest of the year it's a  
gardening high.

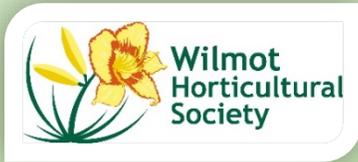
Elves plant in the spring, pull weeds  
merrily all summer, in fall they all  
harvest, but winter's a bummer.

And so Christmas gives Santa a part-time  
employment, 'Till spring when the  
blooms are his real-life enjoyment.

So ask the big guy for garden gifts this  
year,  
Seeds, plants and tools, Santa holds them  
all dear.

Now Santa's flown off, to the nursery he  
goes, and his voice fills the night with  
loud Hoe! Hoe! Hoes!





## Summer Sunset Musings Info



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**Managing Editor:** Tammy Junker    **Edited by:** Judy Rivers

**Graphics:** Pixabay free images [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com), <https://www.freepik.com>  
<https://icon-library.com>

### CONTACT US

**General Email:** [WilmotHortSociety@gmail.com](mailto:WilmotHortSociety@gmail.com)

**Newsletter Email:** [WilmotHS.Newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:WilmotHS.Newsletter@gmail.com)

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