



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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*Volume 2, December 2012*

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### Plants to consider for climate change



Chaste tree covered with blue blooms in summer



Fragrant Himalayan Sweet Box

### Greetings,

The holidays are fast approaching, and we know that you are very busy. We have included some really interesting articles for you this month, particularly the one on climate change and associated plantings. If you don't have time to read all of the articles, you can visit our website anytime to browse the [archive](#) of all our past articles. You may want to at least read about the winter moth if you have seen them swarming in your area.

### How Will Climate Change Affect My Garden?

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, July 2012 was the hottest month on record for the continental United States. Statistics like this remind me that climate change is not some distant possibility but a very present reality. The signs are everywhere. Snow cover is decreasing, spring comes earlier, and the number of oppressively hot summer days has been on the rise. Precipitation has increased by up to twenty percent in some parts of the state, and extreme weather events like tornadoes and damaging tropical storms have wreaked havoc on many of our towns in recent years. As a gardener, it begs many questions.



[USDA Zone Map of Massachusetts](#)  
(click on Massachusetts for more detail)

### How will plants fare amidst this tidal wave of change?

As average temperature increases, there will be a gradual shift northward of less heat tolerant species. Climate models predict that in the longer term global warming will change the conifer forest of northern New England into the type of forest found farther south - either the deciduous forest of the Mid-Atlantic States, or the mixed forests found in southern New England. Over time, plants may adapt to new conditions (for example by adapting earlier leaf break and flowering cycles), migrate to regions where climatic conditions are more favorable, or go extinct locally or globally. During past, slower changes in climate, plant species responded by shifting latitude or elevation. However, today's climate change is happening at a rapid pace and limited by land use changes that restrict gene flow and

migratory routes. Therefore species with quick generation times and long dispersal distances will be favored. Weedy species (both native and non-native) are expected to fare much better than rarer species. As a result, there will be an overall reduction in plant diversity.

### More Plants to Consider for Climate Change



Red Hot Poker



Helleborus 'Blackthorn Strain'

### What kinds of measures can be taken to prepare for climate change and protect gardens and property?

Here are a few measures you can take

- work to reduce your own greenhouse gas emissions
- apply a good quality mulch to help retain moisture and buffer extreme temperature changes
- capture, store, and use rain water through the use of rain gardens and rain barrels
- reduce the amount of your lawn as it is a major energy "sink"
- use more drought tolerant plants and more native plants
- plant sturdier hardwood trees and have them preventatively pruned before the fall and winter when storm damage is most likely to occur

### Can I plant warmer climate plants now that the average temperature is going up?

The short answer is yes, but it may still be a gamble as to whether those plants will survive, and it is best to consider it an experiment. In January 2012, the USDA updated its Plant Hardiness Zone Map to reflect climate changes in recent years. The map is based on average minimum winter temperatures and can be used to determine whether or not a plant will be hardy enough to make it through the winter in your particular zone. The updated map shows that temperature boundaries have moved northward since the last release of the map in 1990. The problem with assuming that this means we can plant less cold hardy plants is that even in a warming climate, we can still have extreme winter events that could kill off less hardy plants. It's the extremes that really matter, not the averages. If you want to experiment, consider planting native plants from two hundred miles south of here, rather than using more exotics. By no means should you consider the warming climate as an excuse to go out and plant tropical palms, for example!

### Plant Notes for Climate Change

So what plants from a zone or two warmer might we consider? The flora of the southern Appalachians or of England comes to mind, along with a few Asian plants. A visit to Manhattan area gardens also yields some ideas. Here they are:

***Oxydendrum arboreum* (Sourwood tree)** - grows slowly and well in our area now, could be more widely used. Outstanding fall color and summer bloom. Native to the southern Appalachian mountains.

***Rhododendron arborescens* (Sweet Azalea)** - Grows in colonies at all elevations in the Appalachians, provides good shelter for

**Another plant to consider for  
climate change -  
the native Sourwood Tree**



*Oxydendrum arboreum*

wildlife with fragrant late spring into summer flowers.

***Helleborus 'Blackthorn Strain'*** - considered the choicest cultivar of the many hellebores for early spring color and its interesting cut leaf margins.

***Vitex agnus-castus* (Chaste Tree)** - a spring cutback shrub with blue flowers in summer, can grow to 10' x 10'.

***Kniphofia hybrids* (Red Hot Poker)** - a stunning addition to a perennial border in hot oranges, reds and yellows.

***Phyllostachys nigra* (Black stemmed Bamboo)** - Strikingly ornamental with black culms on green stems. Appreciates shade, but prefers light for best color. Drought tolerant once established.

***Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis* (Himalayan sweet box)** - a dwarf evergreen for shade gardens with warm microclimates, integrates well with our native plant palette.

## Winter Moth Update

This pest has been sighted in flight on warm evenings in the Lincoln-Concord area and is most surely active east of Rt. 495. You may notice moths gathering at your porch light or fluttering in the road in your headlights. This is the one! Other species have been killed by frost, but the winter moth emerges in November/December to mate.



Winter moths attracted to porch light

We have been doing some banding of maple and cherry trees for three clients and are trapping the wingless females. The product we utilize was developed in Canada where pesticide applications are banned and does not make a permanent mark on your tree's bark.

Alternatively, we suggest you contract with your arborist now for their dormant oil spray program which begins in late winter/early spring. Remember, on May 1st when the damage to new tree foliage becomes evident, it will be too late to do anything except attempt to spray Bt for caterpillar control.

For more information on winter moth, visit our newsletter [archives](#) for the months of October 2012 and May 2012.

## Planning Winter Protection of Vulnerable Plants

The rule of thumb for all vulnerable plants: wait until the ground has frozen (and remains frozen) to do anything! As of this writing, we've had a few cold nights when the ground began to freeze and even some light snows. However, temperatures warmed up the next day and everything thawed out. So the time has not yet arrived, but we're getting ready.

## Pumpkin Brook Winter Containers

Here is a collection of Winter Containers that Priscilla and Lisa arranged this year.

You may not know that Pumpkin Brook sprays the greens with anti-desiccant before arranging to insure a long lasting container planting. If you would like one, please let [Priscilla](#) know.



**Roses** - We mound high fungal compost around the bases of David Austin and hybrid tea roses after thoroughly cleaning up dropped leaves and pruning back canes to the 1'-2' height. In late spring the compost can be spread out around the plants as a fertilizer.

**Heaths and Heathers** - To prevent stems from drying out in harsh winds of winter, we cover these plants with a thick layer of pine needles. Evergreen boughs prevent the needles from blowing off.

**Lavender** - This plant appreciates a layer of evergreen boughs and will "green up" more quickly in the spring if protected.

**Strawberries** - Mulch with a 4" layer of straw or salt marsh hay to prevent heaving or drying, loosen as ground thaws in spring and gradually remove. Can be reused later as a summer mulch between plants.

**Asparagus** - Cut back browned and golden foliage, remove from site.

**Perennials** - If sited in an open location or bed was recently planted/transplanted, mulch with 1" layer of straw or salt marsh hay for winter.

**Trees** - To prevent buck rub by deer during late fall and winter, we protect the trunks with biodegradable tree bioshelters. Newly planted trees should receive a layer of woodchips or bark mulch before winter. Young fruit trees need hardware cloth collars filled with peastone to ward off potential rodent damage.

## Tick Update

We had a successful spray program this past season for organic control of ticks and mosquitoes and expect to offer it again in 2013. Due to high demand for the cedar oil product and its occasional "out of stock" situation, we may be introducing a new alternative containing all-natural rosemary, geraniol and peppermint oils that we may alternate with the cedar oil. Look for more details on this in late winter. There will be an opportunity to sign up for our application program at that time. We highly recommend that you do so, despite the encouraging information below.



UMass Extension notes: "We believe that the onslaught has subsided. Tick nymph and adult numbers are regulated by mouse abundance of the previous year (ticks have a two year life), and mouse abundance is influenced by acorn production. This past year's tick spike followed (as predicted) the acorn mast from two years before. (Editor's Note: a mast is an abundant year, such as 2010). Following that year, there was a "mast failure" (no acorns, as in fall 2011) which should result in many fewer ticks. Deer ticks overwinter as adults and can attach to hosts at anytime

DEER TICKS OVERWINTER AS ADULTS AND CAN ATTACH TO HOSTS AT ANYTIME THAT THEY ARE NOT COVERED WITH SNOW. FROSTS OR COLD WEATHER DO NOT KILL TICKS."

## December Is the Time for.....

- Making arrangements of winter greens to decorate our homes
- Starting amaryllis and paperwhite bulbs for indoor displays
- Planning winter protection of vulnerable plants (see article)
- Draining and bringing in all garden hoses
- Cleaning, repairing and sharpening garden tools
- Storing all garden tools for winter
- Hanging and stocking bird feeders
- Making notes for 2013 garden projects
- Enjoying views of the winter garden



Amaryllis Minerva brightens a dreary winter day!

From all of us at Pumpkin Brook, may you have the happiest of holidays and a bright New Year. We are so grateful for your continued support of our small and growing business.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla

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