

Dish Gardens Inject 'Green' Into Drab Winter Season

LOU ANN GOOD
Food And Family
Features Editor

LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — "Bring green into your lives in this gray and white winter," said Master Gardener Sandy Gipe.

Gipe taught a recent hands-on class at the Lebanon Valley Ag Center on dish gardening.

Instead of putting plants in separate pots, several plants with varying colors, textures, and with similar light and watering requirements were placed in one container to create an interesting plant design. Dish gardens can be placed on tables, mantles, and other spots throughout your home to add color and beauty.

Workshop participants created dish gardens filled with palm, peperomia, asparagus fern, marble-queen pothos, polka dot, and primrose plants.

Other plants can be substituted, but for best results, Gipe recommends plants that require

medium light, average moisture, and are slow growing. Select plants grown in 2¼-2½-inch pots from a reputable garden center.

"Read labels carefully," Gipe recommends. Choose those requiring similar growing conditions.

Keep plants in scale with one another. No plant should be so tall that it dwarfs other plants. Use plants with heights ranging from 2-12 inches. The tallest plant can be three or four times larger but can be kept to scale if occasionally pinched or pruned.

Dish gardens are not permanent arrangements, but most plants can remain in the container for one year. If they become overwhelmingly large, the plants should be transplanted.

Containers

Almost any type of container will work, but shallow containers from 2-4 inches are recommended. Do not use containers that are more than 8-10 inches tall.

Gipe said dish containers do not need drainage holes. Watering can be controlled by checking soil moisture content by inserting a finger. Soil should be slightly dry to the touch before watering. Too frequent watering may stimulate excessive growth and cause the plant to outgrow container.

Gipe prefers using plastic inserts in baskets.

Soil

Use any good grade soil recommended for indoor plants. Soil should be slightly moist for planting. If soil is very dry, moisten with water. Put a layer of soil in container.

Create Design

Keep arrangement in balance. Try not to make it top-heavy or have more weight in plants on one side of the container. Before permanently setting any plants in the container, remove plants from the pots without disturbing the root ball and set on top of soil. Shift the plant from one spot to another until you have the design you like.

Plant, Water

Scoop hole into soil using your finger until large enough to insert plant and pack soil around roots. The soil line should be about ¼-inch down from the rim of the container to allow for watering. Keep crowns of plants slightly above soil line. Cover the soil with green moss or Spanish moss if desired.

"If plant is turning yellow, it has been watered too much. If it is brown, it hasn't been watered enough," Gipe said of determining watering needs.

Light

Gipe recommends selecting plants that prefer medium light, but other types can be planted. The nice thing about container gardening is that the container can be moved from place to place if more or less sun is needed.

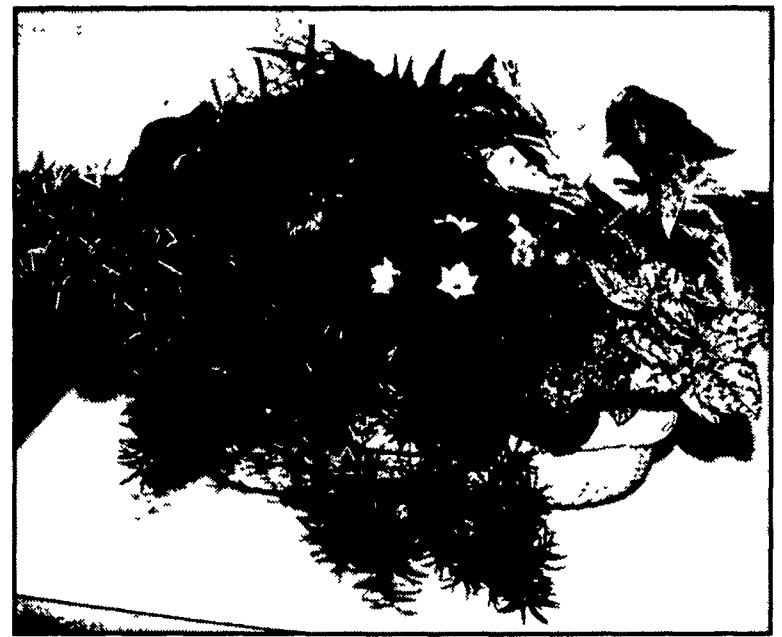
Gipe suggests adding a blooming plant for color. She especially recommends primroses. After the primrose is planted in the dish and is no longer blooming, plant outside. Primroses can handle fairly cold weather and can be planted outside before most plants. Primroses will grow and multiply in outside soil.

Several different types of dish gardens can be planted. These include the following:

- **Woodland:** Use plants collected from the wild such as mountain laurel, wintergreen, ferns, club moss, seedling yews, firs, pine, and hemlock.

- **Field and meadow:** Use hawkweed, pussytoes, wild strawberry, lichens, mosses, juniper seedlings, grasses, fungi, and fern. These often require more care and high light.

- **Tropical:** This is the dish garden Gipe recommends. In addition to the plant varieties used at the workshop, other plants recommended are philodendron, English ivy, grape ivy, snake plant, pothos, wandering Jew, cordon, dracaena, bromelia, ti, Chinese evergreen, pittosporum, and neanthe bella palm.



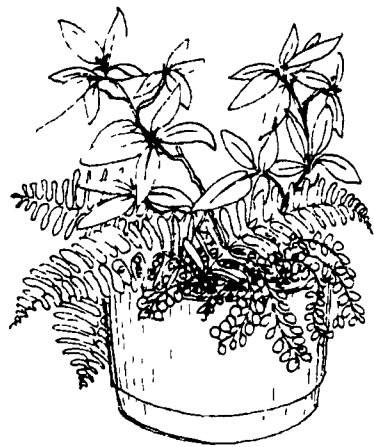
Dish gardens require shallow containers and plants with the same light and watering requirements.



"Dish gardens are easy to make and care for," said Sandy Gipe, who taught a class recently at the Lebanon Valley Ag Center.

- **Desert garden:** Use cactus specimens that have shallow roots and rarely need watering. Some varieties require bright light and others low light, so be

sure to combine compatible cacti. For more information about indoor gardening, contact your county extension office.



Woodland Garden



Field and Meadow Garden



Tropical Garden



Desert Garden

Philadelphia Flower Show Is March 2-9

PHILADELPHIA—The Philadelphia Flower Show March 2-9 in Philadelphia will bloom with flambojan trees, passion flowers and a host of exotic flora, setting the stage for the year's newest and most imaginative landscape and floral designs.

Three "Central Feature" exhibits, covering more than 11,000 square feet, depict the show's Latin theme.

This festival of flowers flows throughout the main exhibition halls as more than 50 national and international florists, landscapers, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions compete for "Best In Show" by presenting their fantastic, larger-than-life visions to hundreds of thousands of visitors in the world's largest indoor flower show. Hundreds of Artistic and Horticultural "classes" showcase thousands of prized entries by individuals and gardening groups as they flaunt their flowers, plants, and topiaries all primed to perfection. Any and all are encouraged to enter this amateur division of the show by contacting the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for an Exhibitor Guide or by visiting www.theflowershow.com.

Outstanding events and learning opportunities are offered

daily for show visitors. Lectures and demonstrations are held hourly and feature celebrity gardeners and authors who present the newest trends in garden design and flower arranging. New in 2003, Fine Gardening Day will take place Saturday, March 8. Presented by Fine Gardening Magazine, the day will feature extraordinary experts from across the nation who will lecture on a series of gardening topics for beginners to experts. In addition, world-renowned Maesterflorist, Gregor Lersch will offer exclusive reservation-only design presentations on Wednesday, March 5. For Gregor Lersch reservation information, visit www.theflowershow.com or call (215) 988-8879.

For the gardener cook, the culinary artistry of celebrity chefs is presented twice daily at the show. The free events are hosted by Chef Joseph E. Shilling, Dean of the Art Institute of New York City. A complete schedule can be accessed online at www.theflowershow.com.

The very popular Garden Tea is offered daily at the Show as an elegant respite from the day's activities. This reservation only event returns for its fifth year and has proven to be a relaxing and sophisticated setting amid the excitement of the show. An

all new menu of crumpets, cakes, petit sandwiches, and a selection of fine teas are just a few of the items in 2003's tasty spread. For information and reservations call (215) 988-8879 or reserve online at www.theflowershow.com.

The show is an inspiration for gardeners and shoppers alike. The Flower Show Marketplace features over 140 national and international vendors, offering top-of-the-line garden tools, accessories, furniture, supplies and gifts. A favorite stop is the "Flower Show Shoppe" where exquisite floral items and show keepsakes can be found.

Tickets at the box office are \$24 for adults on opening Sunday (March 2), \$22 on other weekend days and \$20 on weekdays. Children ages 2-12 are \$10 (good any day). Advance purchase tickets are \$18 and are available at SEPTA outlets, PNC Bank branches, AAA Mid-Atlantic, Acme Markets, Clemens Markets, Eckerds, Smith & Hawken, Philadelphia-area Borders Books, participating florists and nurseries and online at www.theflowershow.com. Group tickets (20 or more) are \$17.50 and are good any day. Group order forms are available online at www.theflowershow.com or by calling (215) 988-8839.

Everyday Science Workshops Offered

GREENSBURG (Westmoreland Co.)—"Everyday Science" is the title of the second Out & About workshop being presented by Penn State Cooperative Extension's Better Kid Care Program. The workshops are scheduled at different sites during the month of February.

Focusing primarily on early childhood educators the workshop is open to all who have or work with children. The workshop dates and sites are as follows: Tuesday, February 11, Church of the Nazarene, Smithton; Wednesday, February 19, YMCA Child Care, New Kensington; Wednesday, February 26, Ligonier Valley YMCA, Ligonier.

All workshops are from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and pre-registration fee is \$3 per person, which includes materials and light refreshments.

For registration information, call (724) 837-1402 and ask for Libby. For directions, call and ask for Patty.