

December, 2018

The VINE

“The Real Dirt from the Keyport Garden Club”

Events to catch:

(Please note: some events require fees and/or preregistration)

Keyport:

Historical Society Candlelight House Tour

Saturday, December 8

2:00 - 7:00 p.m.

34 Main Street

Holiday Party

Monday, December 10

6:30 p.m.

Keyport Yacht Club

Holiday Movie Night: *The Polar Express*

Thursday, December 13

6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Library

Elsewhere:

Roving Naturalist

Saturday, December 1

9:00 a.m.

Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park

Long Branch

Dune Grass Planting

Saturday, December 1

9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Island Beach State Park
Berkeley Township

Wreath Decorating
Saturday, December 1
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Rutgers Gardens
New Brunswick

Holiday House Tour and Boutique
Saturday, December 1
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Rake and Hoe Garden Club
Westfield

Winter Containers and Nature Ornaments
Saturday, December 1
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Rutgers Gardens
New Brunswick

The Casual Birder
Thursday, December 6
9:00 a.m.
Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area
Manasquan

Wondrous Winter Walk
Thursday, December 6
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Huber Woods Park
Locust

Walk with a Botanist
Saturday, December
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Tatum Park

Middletown

Handmade Holiday Gifts

Saturday, December 8

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Deep Cut Gardens

Middletown

Bonsai Care: Pruning and Styling

Sunday, December 9

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Deep Cut Gardens

Middletown

Longwood Gardens Trip

Monday, December 10

9:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Design Series: Boxwood Tree

Wednesday, December 12

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Rutgers Gardens

New Brunswick

Wandering Winter Bird Walk

Thursday, December 13

9:00 a.m.

Freneau Woods Park

Aberdeen

Carnivorous Plant Terrarium Build

Thursday, December 13

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Freneau Woods Park

Aberdeen

Wandering Winter Bird Walk
Friday, December 14
9:00 a.m.
Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area
Manasquan

Roving Naturalist
Saturday, December 15
9:00 a.m.
Manasquan Reservoir
Howell

Sandy Hook Winter Birding Outing
Saturday, December 15
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Thompson Park
Lincroft

Holiday Teapot and Poinsettia Centerpiece
Saturday, December 15
10:00 a.m - 12:30 p.m.
Deep Cut Gardens
Middletown

Assunpink Winter Birding Outing
Sunday, December 16
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Thompson Park
Lincroft

Winter Birding Expedition
Wednesday, December 19
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Thompson Park
Lincroft

Wondrous Winter Walk
Thursday, December 20

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Big Brook Park

Marlborough

"Clear the House" Stroll

Monday, December 24

10:00 a.m.

Deep Cut Gardens

Middletown

Lots to do in the garden this month (courtesy of the New York Botanical Garden):

Leave snow or other coverings on cold frame while weather is cold, but ventilate during mild weather by propping cover open a few inches for an hour or so; water during warm spells in the morning if soil is becoming too dry.

Easter lily bulbs and precooled hyacinths, tulips and narcissi may be planted in the greenhouse.

Wash leaves of houseplants with large, smooth foliage, such as philodendrons, dracaenas, palms, rubber plants, fatsheders and ivy.

When amaryllis begins to show signs of new growth, soak the soil, repot or topdress as necessary, and place in sunny, warm location.

Keep Christmas cactus well watered in moderately warm room in full sun.

Keep Hoya carnosa cool with soil nearly dry.

Finish putting garden to bed (see November *Vine* for details, if necessary)

Place winter covering in place when ground is frozen to a depth of 3".

Corrective pruning of overgrown shrubs may be performed when the ambient temperature has been over 40 degrees for 24 hours.

Keep gift plants out of drafts, away from cold windows, evenly moist but not saturated.

Send for garden catalogues.

Relax and enjoy your garden library, visit Keyport library, subscribe to a garden magazine or two.

A Warning from the Forest Fire Service: It Could Happen Here

The devastation of California's wild fires seems far away, and, certainly, that extraordinary drought is far different from the excess rainfall we have been

experiencing here. Nonetheless, conditions can change rapidly. A return to normal or even drier conditions would make this season particularly conducive to wild fire.

When deciduous trees and shrubs lose their leaves, previously shaded ground, either planted or left wild, will now be exposed to a drying sun. Winds, which are exacerbated by the temperature fluctuations of a changing season, will dry the ground further. At least some leaf litter, cut off from the moisture supplied by the living plant, even if meticulously raked, will inevitably be blown back onto the ground. The naturally lower humidity of winter temperatures will put the finishing touches on a layer of flammable fuels, just waiting for a spark to ignite a damaging conflagration; and, in late fall, those sparks are easy to come by.

This season is a wonderful time for outdoor activities -- no more worries about Zika, Lyme, bee stings or heat stroke, and not yet too cold to force us indoors. It's a great time for leaf-raking parties, off-road foliage viewing and cutting your own firewood or Christmas tree, all of which are likely to increase the danger of fire.

Outdoor get-togethers can be lots of fun, but it is now cold enough to require some hot food. If you do not want to limit the party fare to indoor hot chocolate (not that there's anything wrong with that), but would rather fire up the grill one last time, your charcoal should be "dunked," not "sprinkled," when finished. Soak the coals in plenty of water, stir them, soak again and check carefully by hand to be sure they are cold before dumping them -- hardwood ashes burned without lighter fluid can be composted. If you are not cooking but still want to enjoy the outdoors, you may want to use a portable heater, stove or lantern. Never add liquid fuel to these appliances while they are hot. If refueling out of doors, make sure they are cool and the refueling area -- non-flammable hardscape or mineral soil -- is cleared and free of spills.

Cutting trees and off-roading are not the sort of stationary activities that would involve lighting an outdoor stove or heater. Yet, motor driver tools or vehicles can also cause fires. Your chain saw or ATV is required to have a spark arrester. Have it checked to make sure it is operating properly. And, do not park a car over leaves, grass or other dry material. Many entertaining Youtube videos can show you what happens if you do.

If you are intending to hike and wish to build a camp fire, you must have a permit, available from the Forest Fire Service in Trenton or New Lisbon and which may be restricted depending on the fire danger at the time. Select a day that is not dry and windy and a site away from trees, overhanging branches, stumps or dry plants. Clear an

area 20 feet in diameter, keep water and a shovel handy and keep fire wood a safe distance away. Start with dry twigs and small sticks within a circle of rocks. Add larger sticks as the fire builds, point largest sticks on top toward the center and gradually push them in. Do not leave the fire unattended. When finished, douse the fire with water until completely wet, check under rocks for embers, stir, and douse again. Use dirt if the water runs out: stir it in to mix it in well, but do not bury the ashes. Feel by hand to make sure the fire is out and the ashes are cold.

Finally, the vast majority of wild fires are caused by humans, and most of those by arson. If you see something, say something.

Season's Eatings:

Deep Dish Green Tomato and Apple Pie

4 cups diced green tomatoes, preferably Roma
4 cups peeled, cored, diced tart apples, preferably Granny Smith
1 cup raisins
1/3 cup honey
1/3 cup molasses
1/4 cup cider vinegar
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 cup butter, cut in small pieces and chilled
ice water

Bring tomatoes, apples, raisins, honey, molasses, vinegar, cinnamon, 1/2 tsp. salt and nutmeg to simmer in medium saucepan, continue to simmer about 25 minutes until cooked and flavors are blended, and turn into an 8" square baking dish sprayed generously with cooking spray. Mix flour, baking powder and remaining salt in a bowl, toss in butter, continue to cut in to the texture of small peas, toss in about 4 tbsp. of ice water, just enough to enable dough to hold together, gather into a ball and roll out on a floured surface. Fit pastry on top of filling, seal to sides of baking dish, trimming as necessary, make several slashes in top and bake at 400 degrees about 15 minutes to begin to brown.

