



# HORTICULTURE NEWS

## Watertown Garden Club Newsletter

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February 9, 2017:

Business Meeting and Penny Auction

Union Congregational Church

Hospitality: Roberta, Shelley, Amy, Sally, Liz, Marian, Janice, Gen and Linda

Horticulture Report by Gen

EYE ON HORTICULTURE: The February Garden from Connecticut Federation News, February 2017

*A lighthearted look at some gardening “don’ts”*

Since February is such a stark month garden-wise, I thought I’d take a lighthearted look at some gardening “don’ts” that have become glaringly apparent amidst the winter landscape.

The first example is what appears to be what is left of a Norway Maple after a very severe pruning. Now I don’t claim to be an expert on pruning, nor do I have a particular fondness for Norway Maples, but this is an example of pruning gone wrong. (Norway Maples are non-native trees that are invading and taking over the woodlands that are normally home to native Sugar Maples.) You don’t need a degree in horticulture to know that this is not the proper way to prune any tree. I think if a smaller shade tree was the look the homeowner was aiming for why not just plant such a tree?



Cercis canadensis, commonly called Redbud, is just such a tree. An outstanding smaller native shade tree, it is hardy in zones 4-9, prefers full sun to part shade and is not fussy about soil types except that it will not tolerate permanently wet soil. The lovely heart-shaped green leaves turn yellow in the fall. Redbud’s fuchsia-colored flowers put on a stunning show in the spring, smothering the tree in color before the leaves emerge. The rounded crown of this little native requires little to no pruning and has a winter silhouette far prettier than that of an over-pruned Norway Maple.



Carpinus caroliniana, commonly called American Hornbeam, Musclewood or Ironwood, is another example of a native, small-to-medium-sized shade tree. It is hardy in zones 3-9, tolerates any degree of sunlight and prefers moist soils. It will even withstand periodic flooding. The leaves are dark green, oval in shape with serrated edges that turn shades of yellow, orange and red in the fall. Carpinus caroliniana produces catkin-like flowers in the spring. Especially in winter the real beauty of this tree becomes apparent. The smooth blue-gray bark of the trunk and larger branches exhibit a muscular fluting, adding visual interest to the landscape. For those who feel the need to prune, the good news is this tree CAN withstand frequent pruning to promote a denser shape!



(continued..)



This next picture is of a beautiful mature Rhododendron. I'm sure all of you are familiar with the large evergreen, leathery leaves and clusters of spring flowers in shades of pink, red, purple and white, that have made this shrub a staple in the landscape for decades. So, with that being said and all kidding aside the orange- berry-covered vines sprouting forth from this shrub don't belong to the Rhododendron. It is *Celastrus orbiculatus*, an invasive plant commonly called Oriental Bittersweet. Originally brought over from Asia in the 1860's as an ornamental, it has escaped cultivation and is now causing great damage throughout many parts of the U.S. by choking out native flora. If not properly disposed of, this invasive vine will quickly overtake and kill the Rhododendron. It may require several attempts of cutting the vines back to the ground and bagging them, the berries and as much of the orange colored roots as possible, for disposal before it can be completely eradicated. Knowing your-plant/s description and keeping a watchful eye for invaders such as Oriental Bittersweet will help keep their spread at bay.



Winter is always a good time to reassess the landscape for any necessary (or unnecessary) pruning and if you can catch an invader or two, you will be doing yourself and the environment a favor in the long run.

Liz Rinaldi

Horticulture Chair  
Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut  
[www.ctgardenclubs.org](http://www.ctgardenclubs.org)

#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

The 36 Annual Connecticut Flower and Garden Show, February 23-26, 2017  
Information can be accessed at [www.ctflowershow.com](http://www.ctflowershow.com)

Connecticut Master Gardener Association Annual Symposium XXIV  
Saturday, March 18, 2017 "Landscape by Design...or Not"  
Connecticut College/Crozier Williams Building, 270 Mohegan Avenue, New London, CT  
[www.ctmga.org](http://www.ctmga.org)

Landscape Design Study School, Course III, March 21-22, 2017 in New Haven,  
Federated Garden Clubs of CT [www.ctgardenclubs.org](http://www.ctgardenclubs.org)