

January / February 2010

Shop Meadowbrook at the Flower Show, February 28 – March 7

With the holidays behind us, the staff at Meadowbrook Farm focuses its attention on preparations for the Philadelphia International Flower Show. This year's theme, *Passport to the World*, will provide endless inspiration to every gardener who attends. You can purchase tickets for the Show at Meadowbrook Farm on your next visit. Tickets are available individually or as a special gift pack that also includes a flowering plant, a Shopper's Delight card (good for 10% off at the Flower Show Shoppe), and a lovely card—all beautifully wrapped and ready to go. (*Pssst*, guys, this makes a great Valentine's Day gift!)



In other Flower Show news, we are happy to be bringing our Meadowbrook Farm Store to the Flower Show again this year. Located in the PHS Village (across from the PHS Flower Show Shoppe), we will once again offer a selection of herbs, topiaries, flowering indoor plants, succulents, and gifts. All of our offerings have been carefully selected to thrive in your home and garden.

Meadowbrook staff and volunteers will be on hand every day to answer any questions you may have about your our plants.

For more horticultural enlightenment, take advantage of the mini-lectures that we'll present in the demo garden of the PHS Village. These programs will cover the basics of gardening, with plenty of opportunities to ask questions. Meadowbrook staff will lead several of these presentations, so come by and say hi!

To learn more about the 2010 Philadelphia International Flower Show, [click here](#).





Plant of the Month



Bring a bit of the tropics into your living room!

Indoor Palms

Not all palms are created equal. Some thrive only in a brightly lit sunny location, while others tolerate the lower light levels that are typical of most homes, especially in winter. Even the so-called "shade-tolerant" palms need fairly bright, indirect light most of the day. It is important to keep in mind the light levels of its ultimate destination as you shop for a palm. Without adequate light your plant will lose all its lower fronds and look like a stick with a few leaves on top. Also choose for size carefully; you can't prune back palms!

Though their light requirements may differ, all palms have similar needs when it comes to water and fertilizer. In fact, dried brown leaf tips or leaf margins, two of the most common problems facing indoor palms, are related to how they are watered and fertilized.

Keep palms relatively moist. In spring and summer, or when temperatures are warm and days are longer, water them as soon as their soil feels dry a little below the surface. Allow the soil to get slightly drier in winter. It's important that potting soil drains well and the containers you use have functioning drain holes. Water palms thoroughly, then siphon excess water that collects in the tray or saucer below the pot.

Fertilize lightly from late winter through early autumn, the time when houseplants are most likely to actively grow. A build-up of fertilizer salts in the soil results in those dreaded brown tips and edges, especially if you allow the soil to get too dry between waterings. If you're unsure about fertilizing, err on the side of too little rather than too much. You can always fertilize again, if necessary.

Finally, **keep palm fronds clean.** Spider mites are attracted to dusty foliage and can balloon into a serious problem, particularly in winter when relative humidity is low indoors.

As far as pot size is concerned, **palms are one group of plants that prefer being a little pot-bound.** As long as you are having no difficulty keeping your palm watered, roots emerging from the bottom of the pot is not necessarily a sign that immediate repotting is needed. Repot when proper watering is difficult or if the old pot splits from too much root pressure. When repotting, go up only slightly in pot size—choosing too large a pot can result in waterlogging.

Meadowbrook stocks a variety of interesting palms year-round. Many others can be special-ordered just for you. If you are looking for something specific, please call to check availability. Some of our favorites include:

Parlor Palm or Neanthe Bella, *Chamaedorea elegans*: This slow-growing, dwarf palm has more shade tolerance than any other, so it's one of the best choices for relatively low light. **Reed Palm**, *Chamaedorea seifrizii*, and **Bamboo Palm**, *Chamaedorea erumpens*, share the ability to survive in relatively low light, but may grow several feet taller, especially in a brighter location. All three of these palms do best in reasonably warm temperatures.

Kentia or Sentry Palm, *Howea forsterana*, is a tall, stately, slender plant with gracefully arching large fronds. Possibly the best choice as an indoor palm, Kentia palms can withstand lower light

levels better than most and are less sensitive to cool temperatures than the *Chamaedorea* species. Though slow-growing, a Kentia palm is capable of eventually reaching your ceiling.

Lady Palm, *Rapis excelsa*, lends a distinctively "oriental" look to interior landscapes. Like the Kentia palm, it's slow-growing and suitable for medium light locations. And like the Kentia, you'll find it priced on the high end of the scale, due, no doubt, to the long time it takes to grow to marketable size. Lady palms are shaped like shrubs rather than trees, with many thin stems growing from the soil.



Areca Palm, *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*, is a tree or shrub-like plant with graceful, long feather-shaped fronds. Its medium-green foliage has a tendency to yellow when heavily fertilized; it's also fussier about over-watering, and more prone to root rot than some. Like parlor, reed, and bamboo palm, Areca palm does best when growing conditions are relatively warm. It is also a palm better suited for higher light conditions.

Chinese Fan Palm, *Livistona chinensis*, and **European Fan Palm**, *Chamaerops humilis*, are prized for their unusual fan-shaped foliage. Fewer people are able to grow them indoors successfully though because these two palms demand higher light levels. But if you do have a bright, sunny south- or west-facing set of windows, either one of these palms could be an exotic addition to your decor.



Shop Talk

Bring in your "past its prime" poinsettia in January to receive 10% off a fresh, new foliage plant for your home. PHS members receive this discount in addition to the regular 10% plant discount. One plant discounted per poinsettia returned, applies to foliage (non-flowering) plants only.



The Flower Show Gift Pack makes a great gift for the winter weary plant lover (doesn't that include just about everyone?). The gift pack includes an exquisite blooming plant, two tickets to the Philadelphia International Flower Show, a Shopper's Delight card (good for 10% off at the Flower Show Shoppe), and a beautiful gift card.

PHS members receive free tickets to the Philadelphia International Flower Show as a member benefit (number of tickets varies with membership level). In addition to free tickets and an everyday discount on plants at Meadowbrook Farm, check out these [other great benefits](#). If you're not a member now, stop by Meadowbrook Farm and join today—your discount will be applied immediately!



Workshops & Lectures

The expert staff at Meadowbrook Farm presents tours and workshops throughout the year. Members of The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society receive a discounted price for these events. Sign up at any retail register and start receiving discounts on classes and plants right away!

All events are open to both PHS members and the public, but advance registration is required unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact Carol Dutilt at programreg@pennhort.org or 215-988-8869.

Meadowbrook Farm Workshop: Glass Bowl Terrarium

Wednesday, January 14, 10 am - Noon

Snow date: January 15

PHS members \$60, Non-Members \$70

In the depths of winter, what could be better than to brighten your home with a lush, green, miniature world under glass? Only certain plants can grow in a glass terrarium, and the planting procedure requires special attention. But once assembled, your mini plant world is easy to care for, requiring minimal pruning and limited watering. Presented by Sharon Kaszan.



Flower Show Behind-the-Scenes Tour at Meadowbrook Farm

Wednesday, February 18, 10 am – Noon

PHS Members \$18, Non-Members \$23

How do all those out-of-season plants bloom just in time for the Philadelphia International Flower Show? It's a combination of art and science, and it has its joys and challenges. The magic happens at Meadowbrook Farm. Join Meadowbrook director John Story on a tour through the greenhouses highlighting the unusual plants growing for displays at the 2010 Show, Passport to the World (February 28 – March 7). You will see them first at Meadowbrook and learn the fascinating, intricate details of this amazing horticultural balancing act.



Meadowbrook Farm is an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. PHS members enjoy year-round benefits including **10% off on plant purchases at Meadowbrook**. Join PHS during your next visit to Meadowbrook and start saving right away!

Other membership benefits include year-round workshops and lectures, garden tours, and tickets to the renowned [Philadelphia International Flower Show](#).

Click [here](#) to learn more about PHS Membership.



Ask the Expert

In northern latitudes like Philadelphia, cacti and other succulents can be a challenge to maintain over the winter months. Meadowbrook Farm director John Story offers this advice:



Most cacti do best with cool temperatures during winter. When kept at temperatures below 60 degrees, a cactus should be kept very dry. (If completely dry, most can tolerate temperatures as low as 40 degrees.) The larger the pot, the less frequently they should be watered. Plants in 8-inch pots or larger can easily go three to four weeks between winter watering and some can go four to six weeks. Plants in pots under 6 inches need more frequent watering because they have less of a reservoir to hold water. If your plants are in a very loose, porous medium—as they should be—they should be watered so water runs through the pot.

Generally, most succulents can be grown with the same winter regime as cactus. However, there are some succulents that are native to winters where it is cool and wet. These plants should be in the same loose, porous medium as cactus, but they need to be kept moister than other winter-dormant succulents. The soil of this group should be allowed to dry, but when dry, they need to be watered again soon. Some of the succulents that fall into the winter growing group are Aeonium, Crassula, Gasteria, Aloe, Boweia, Cotyledon, Tylecodon, Echeveria and Pelargonium

There are certain succulents that originate in climates where there is no rain all winter. These plants should be kept even drier and many need to be warm as well as dry. This group includes Dorstenia, Adenium, Pachypodium, Alluaudia and certain Euphorbia among others.

There is another group of succulents that are totally dormant in winter and have summer growth that is deciduous in winter. When dormant, this group should be left without water all winter until new shoots show in spring. Plants in this group include Dioscorea, Matelea, Gerrardanthus, Rauhia, Kedrostis and Ibervillea.

The plants mentioned above in each cultural scheme are by no means a complete list. Generally, all succulents should be assumed to be dry, dormant in winter. The list of winter growing succulents is quite limited and unless a plant is known to be winter growing, one should assume it is not and keep it cool and dry that time of year. Most succulents and cacti are lost due to too much water, rarely from too little. Good luck!



Meadowbrook Farm, an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, is a garden center and gift shop located in Abington Township.

Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm
215.887.5900 • www.gotomeadowbrook.com