

Conservation Corner

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December 6, 2017

“Allow nature’s peace to flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.” John Muir

Last week we opened the Season of Advent with the theme of Hope – the thing with feathers. This week Muir’s image of peace as sunshine flowing into the trees will introduce the second theme of Advent – Peace. Many people seek peace in nature. Do you have a favorite quiet spot in a woodland, prairie, or park where you go to be filled with peace?

In our fast-paced lifestyle, it seems peace and quiet is all too often in short supply. And the Christmas Season, which is all about peace, turns out to be the most hectic of all. This week let’s pause in our holiday preparations and take a closer look at the peace lily – a plant for all seasons of the year.

Peace lilies belong to the genera *Spathiphyllum* of the family *Aracea*. The Arum family has flowers which are borne on a spadix, usually alongside a spathe or leaf-like bract. The largest collection of aroids in the world may be found at the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Perhaps you’ve visited these magnificent gardens in St. Louis. If not, don’t worry, we have aroids growing right here in Pocahontas County. My favorite are the jack-in-the-pulpits, woodland wildflowers that grow along the trails at Whitetail Ridge and Sunken Grove.

Peace lilies are known for their dark green leaves and white “flowers,” which are actually special leaf bracts that form a hood over the spadix, a spike of small flowers borne on a fleshy stem. The white leaf bract, reminiscent of a white flag of surrender, gives the plant its name.

Peace lilies are native to tropical regions of Americas and SE Asia. Like many tropical plants found in the under-story of the rain forest, they do well as houseplants growing in medium to low light conditions and warm temperatures. Did you know peace lilies are good air filters? In fact, peace lilies are on NASA’s Top Ten List of Household Air Cleaning Plants, and can play a major role in removing organic chemicals such as benzene, trichloroethylene, and formaldehyde from indoor air.

Peace lilies are easy to grow. The downside of that, of course, is that they just keep on growing and will need repotting or dividing as they outgrow their container. Their wide leaves also act as dust magnets. Simply wash or wipe clean or set in the shower. As with all plants, clean leaves will help them process sunlight better. Peace lilies contain calcium oxalate, though, so they should be kept out of the reach of pets and small children.

In closing, I’d like to remind everyone of our Come & Go Wreath Workshop this coming Thursday, December 7, at the Nature Center. Creating wreaths – just one small way we can allow nature’s peace, drifting upon the fragrance of evergreen boughs, to enter our lives this Christmas Season.

