



UC Marin Master Gardeners
Telephone: 415/473-4204
Website: <http://www.marinmg.org>

Advice to Grow By ... Ask Us!

PLANT HELLEBORES FOR JANUARY COLOR IN YOUR GARDEN

By Lynne Jennings, Marin Master Gardener

January is often a month of hard work in the garden preparing it for the rest of the year. Pruning and maintenance can be back breaking and though we know the rewards are worth the effort, it is also lovely to have a winter flowering plant to brighten the garden and lift one's spirit.



Hellebores fit the bill beautifully. Their flowers come in a variety of colors – white, pink, plum and lime green and are long lasting. They are shy flowers and bow their heads so take time to lift each flower head and look at the variety and beauty you will find inside the flowers. Once the plants become established they will self - seed and as with many hybrids the new seedlings do not come true to their hybrid. However this will give you an even greater array of flower colors and markings. They make a beautiful display with the flower heads floating in a dish of water.

Hellebores are perennials belonging to the *Ranunculaceae* family. Common varieties include *H. niger* (Christmas rose), *H. orientalis* (Lenten rose), *H. argutifolius* and *H. foetidus*. They prefer shady or semi shady positions but with moist well drained soil. They clump up slowly but are long lived and as they are poisonous deer will leave them alone. When preparing for planting add plenty of humus to the soil and allow for them to reach up to 12 inches in height and 12-18 inches across. They can be propagated from fresh seed or by division.



So next January when you are hard at work in your garden take a moment to relax with this lovely winter flowering plant.