

Horticulture Tips

March 2002

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

Garden Tips for March

David Hillock

- Remove excessive thatch from warm season lawns. Dethatching, if necessary, should precede crabgrass control treatment. (F-6604)
- Broadleaf weeds can easily be controlled in cool-season lawns at this time with post-emergent broadleaf herbicides. (F-6421)
- Apply preemergent crabgrass control chemicals to cool and warm season turfgrasses when forsythia flowers in spring (F-6421). Heed label cautions when using any weed killers near or in the root zone of desirable plantings.
- March is the second best time of the year to seed cool-season turfgrass; however, fall is the best time to plant. (F-6419)
- Cool-season lawns such as bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass may be fertilized now with the first application of the season. Usually, four applications of fertilizer are required per year, in March, May, October, and November. (F-6420)
- Begin mowing cool-season grasses at 1 ½ to 3 ½ inches high. (F-6420)
- Cultivate annual flower and vegetable planting beds to destroy winter weeds.
- Apply mulch to control weeds in beds. Landscape fabric barrier can reduce the amount of mulch but can dry out and prevent water penetration. Thus, organic litter makes the best mulch.
- Prune roses just before growth starts and begin a regular disease spray program as the foliage appears. (F6403 & F-7607)
- Prune spring flowering plants, if needed, immediately following their bloom period.
- Plant evergreen shrubs, balled and burlapped, and bare root trees and shrubs.
- Anthracnose control on sycamore, maple, and oak should begin at bud swell. (FS 7634).
- Diplodia Pine Tip blight control on pines begins at bud swell. (F-7618)
- Chemical and physical control of galls (swellings) on stems of trees should begin now. (F-7168 & F-7306)
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. (F-7306)
- The 1st generation of Nantucket Pine Tip Moth appears at this time. Begin pesticide applications in late March. (F-7306)
- Control Eastern tent caterpillars as soon as the critters appear.
- Continue to plant strawberries, asparagus, and other small fruit crops this month.
- Your cool season vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnips etc. should be planted by the middle of March (see table in February Hort Tips).
- Watch for cutworms that girdle newly planted vegetables during the first few weeks of establishment. Cabbage looper and cabbageworm insects should be monitored and controlled in the garden (FS 7313).

- Start your routine fruit tree spray schedule prior to bud break. (FS 6235).
- Remove winter mulch from strawberries in early March (FS 6214).
- Avoid excessive walking and working in the garden when foliage and soils are wet.
- Start warm season vegetable transplants indoors.
- Divide and replant overcrowded, summer and fall blooming perennials. Mow or cut back old liriope and other ornamental grasses before new growth begins.

Garden Planting Guide for Cool Season Vegetables

David Hillock

<u>Vegetable</u>	<u>Time to Plant*</u>	<u>Days to Harvest</u>	<u>Method of Planting</u>
Asparagus	Fall or Spring	-	Crowns
Beet	March	50-70	Seed
Broccoli	March	80-90	Plants
Cabbage	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Plants
Carrot	Feb. 15 to March 10	70-90	Seed
Cauliflower	Feb. 15 to March 10	70-90	Plants
Chard, Swiss	Feb. 15 to March 10	40-60	Seed
Kohlrabi	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-70	Seed
Lettuce, Head	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Seed or Plant
Lettuce, Leaf	Feb. 15 to March 10	40-70	Seed or Plant
Onion	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-120	Sets
Onion	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-120	Plants
Peas, green	Feb. 15 to March 10	60-90	Seed
Potato, Irish	Feb. 15 to March 10	90-120	Tuber pieces 2-3 oz.
Radish	March 1 to April 15	25-40	Seed
Rhubarb	Fall or Spring	-	Crowns
Spinach	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-70	Seed
Turnip	Feb. 15 to March 10	50-60	Seed

*These dates indicate planting times from southeast to northwest Oklahoma. Specific climate and weather may influence planting dates. For Cool Season Vegetables, the soil temperature at the depth where the seeds are planted should be at least 40°F.

Whitman Announces Transition from Consumer Use of Treated Wood Containing Arsenic

David Hillock

EPA Administrator Christie Whitman today announced a voluntary decision by industry to move consumer use of treated lumber products away from a variety of pressure-treated wood that contains arsenic by Dec. 31, 2003, in favor of new alternative wood preservatives. This transition affects virtually all residential uses of wood treated with chromated copper arsenate, also known as CCA, including wood used in play-structures, decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, residential fencing, patios and walkways/boardwalks. By Jan. 2004, EPA will not allow CCA products for any of these residential uses.

"This action will result in a reduction of virtually all residential uses of CCA-treated wood within less than two years," said EPA Administrator Christie Whitman. "Today's announcement greatly accelerates the transition to new alternatives, responding to market place demands for wood products that do not contain CCA. This transition will substantially reduce the time it could have taken to go through the traditional regulatory process."

"This is a responsible action by the industry," Whitman continued. "Today's action will ensure that future exposures to arsenic are minimized in residential settings. The companies deserve credit for coming forward in a voluntary way to undergo a conversion and retooling of their plants as quickly as possible. The transition to new alternatives will provide consumers with greater choice for their building needs."

The transition period will provide consumers with increasingly more non-CCA treated wood alternatives as the industry undergoes conversion and retooling of their industrial equipment and practices, while also allowing adequate time to convert treatment plants with minimal economic disruption for the industry's employees. Beginning immediately, and over the next 22 months, wood treatment plants will convert to new alternative wood preservatives that do not contain arsenic. In the current year, manufacturers expect a decline in production of CCA products for affected residential uses up to 25 percent, with a corresponding shift to alternatives. During 2003, the companies expect the transition away from CCA to continue and increase, with a decline in production of CCA products for affected residential uses up to 70 percent, with a corresponding shift to alternatives. New labeling will be required on all CCA products, specifying that no use of CCA will be allowed by the wood-treating industry for the affected residential uses after Dec. 31, 2003.

EPA has not concluded that CCA-treated wood poses unreasonable risks to the public for existing CCA-treated wood being used around or near their homes or from wood that remains available in stores. EPA does not believe there is any reason to remove or replace CCA-treated structures, including decks or playground equipment. EPA is not recommending that existing structures or surrounding soils be removed or replaced.

While available data are very limited, some studies suggest that applying certain penetrating coatings (e.g., oil-based semi-transparent stains) on a regular basis (one re-application per year or every other year depending upon wear and weathering) may reduce the migration of wood preservative chemicals from CCA-treated wood.

Arsenic is a known human carcinogen and, thus, the Agency believes that any reduction in the levels of potential exposure to arsenic is desirable. As always, when children play outside, whether around

CCA-treated play structures or not, they should wash their hands prior to eating. Also, food should not be placed directly on any outside surface, including treated wood. CCA-treated wood should never be burned, as toxic chemicals may be released as part of the smoke and ashes. Consumers who work with CCA-treated wood are encouraged to use common sense in order to reduce any potential exposure to chemicals in the wood. Specific actions include sawing, sanding and machining CCA-treated wood outdoors, and wearing a dust mask, goggles and gloves when performing this type of activity. Clean up all sawdust, scraps and other construction debris thoroughly and dispose of it in the trash (i.e., municipal solid waste). Do not compost or mulch sawdust or remnants from CCA-treated wood. Those working with the wood should wash all exposed areas of their bodies thoroughly with soap and water before eating, drinking or using

tobacco products. Work clothes should be washed separately from other household clothing before wearing them again.

Chromated copper arsenate, or CCA, is a chemical compound mixture containing inorganic arsenic, copper, and chromium, that has been used for wood preservative uses since the 1940s. CCA is injected into wood by a process that uses high pressure to saturate wood products with the chemicals. CCA is intended to protect wood from dry rot, fungi, molds, termites, and other pests that can threaten the integrity of wood products.

During the past several months, CCA-treated wood has been the subject of an EPA evaluation under provisions of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, which direct EPA to periodically reevaluate older pesticides to ensure that they meet current safety standards. The Agency is continuing to proceed with a risk assessment. EPA is also continuing to evaluate public comments and input from an external scientific review panel on methodologies to perform a risk assessment for residential settings and potential exposure to children from CCA.

More information on this announcement is available at www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/1file.htm.

EPA Pesticide Program Update from EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs 02/12/02.
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides>

***Phlox* 'David' named PPA Perennial Plant of the Year 2002**

David Hillock

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title of Perennial Plant of the Year 2002 to *Phlox* 'David'. Contemporary nomenclature now lists *Phlox* 'David' as *Phlox* 'David' *Paniculata* Group rather than the long-standing name *Phlox paniculata* 'David'. *Phlox* is a member of the *Polemoniaceae* family and is native from New York to Georgia and west to Arkansas and Illinois. The great naturalist and plant explorer John Bartram sent *Phlox paniculata* to England in the early 1700s. 'David' is an erect perennial 36-40 inches tall with opposite leaves. The glossy leaves are thin with bristly hairs on the margins. The fragrant white flower panicles are 6 to 9 inches long and 6 to 8 inches wide with 1-inch diameter florets. *Phlox* 'David' has a long bloom period during the summer. It performs well in hardiness zones 4 to 9.

Cultivation

An excellent cultivar of an old-fashioned favorite, this long-blooming perennial for full sun to partial shade grows best in moist but well-drained soil. If planted in full sun, organic matter and extra water should be added to mitigate the effects of heat and drought. Without these precautions, spider mites may be a problem. Old blossoms should be removed from the plant to maintain vigor, prolong bloom, and prevent self-seeding. Deadheaded plants will flourish into early fall. Plants should be divided every two to three years to maintain vigor.

Although *Phlox* 'David' is fairly resistant to powdery mildew, proper culture will aid in mildew prevention. Plants should be thinned to four to six stems to increase air circulation and to prevent a heavy mass of stems. *Phlox* should be watered at the base of the plant and not the foliage.

Landscape Use

Phlox paniculata is known as garden phlox, summer phlox, perennial phlox, or autumn phlox. It is a delight to all gardeners because it has a long bloom season. Many landscape designers call it "the backbone of the summer border." 'David' can be used in both the formal garden and the

informal garden as in a cottage garden style or in a naturalized design. It provides great garden color and fragrance from July through September. Use 'David' with *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus' (purple coneflower) or *Echinops ritro* (globe thistle) for a study in color and textural contrasts. For a stunning effect plant 'David' with *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' or *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Cabaret' to provide a color echo of the variegation of the grass foliage with the white flowers of 'David'. The blue flowers of *Aster laevis* 'Bluebird' highlight the white panicles of *Phlox* 'David' for an excellent autumn-blooming combination. If gardeners are looking for a great choice for fragrance, color, mildew resistance, and long season bloom, there is no better choice than *Phlox* 'David'.

For additional information (history and propagation techniques) about *Phlox* 'David', go to the following web site www.perennialplant.org. The Perennial Plant Association is an international professional association incorporated in 1984. One of the goals of the Association is to disseminate information to benefit the gardening public regarding the use and care of perennials. Membership in the PPA includes more than 2,300 garden writers, growers, educators, retailers, and members of other landscape-related industries. Visit us at the Perennial Plant Association website www.perennialplant.org.

Spinach

Steve Owens

The National gardening Bureau is celebrating 2002 as the year of the spinach. There are plenty of reasons to grow and eat spinach even if you are not like Popeye the sailor and the taste doesn't appeal to you. The greens are full of nutrients like; vitamins A and C, folic acid, iron and carotenoids. If you grow the plants in your own garden, you'll get even more benefit because the nutrient levels are their highest when grown fresh in the home garden without being processed. Spinach is also very easy to grow, as are many of the cool season vegetable crops. They are sown or planted in the cool of the spring when there is usually ample rainfall, and by the time the hot weather arrives, the harvest is already complete. Spinach is so easy, you might consider letting your children plant some. If they sow the seed and tend the plants, they may be more likely to eat it. Children in urban areas can sow seeds in clay pots for growing on a patio or balcony.

The variety of spinach we are planting at our studio garden is called 'Bloomsdale'. It's considered an heirloom variety because it's been around for over one hundred years and it's still one of the best recommended varieties. A savoy type of spinach, 'Bloomsdale' has thick, dark green, crinkled or bubbly leaves that are tender, fast growing and the plants are slow to bolt, or flower. Once the plants bolt the flavor becomes very bitter.

Mid. Feb. through Mid. March is a good time to plant spinach through-out Oklahoma. If you chose, you could even plant the seeds in Nov. or Dec. because it is very cold tolerant and will survive most Oklahoma winters. This would allow for a very early harvest in the spring. Spinach likes a full sun location and a soil enriched with organic matter so that it is loose, friable and high in nutrients. Plant the seeds about an inch apart in shallow furrows and cover with ½ inch of soil. Planting rows should be 12-18 inches from each other. When the seedlings emerge and get a little size on them, thin the plants to where there is a distance of 2-3 inches in between.

Be sure to rotate the planting location if you plan to grow spinach year after year as you would with any other crop. Growing spinach in the same location year after year can lead to the development of a disease called white rust. Caterpillars can be controlled with a harmless Bt

(*Bacillus thuringiensis*) containing pesticide. Rabbits and deer can be kept at bay with some sort of wire barrier, such as one constructed out of ordinary hardware cloth.

Our neighbors to the south, the state of Texas, grows an incredibly amount of spinach each year. About half of the world's supply is grown there. Crystal City, located about 100 miles southwest of San Antonio, is considered the spinach capitol of the world. They even have a statue of Popeye on display.

Why eat corned beef and cabbage on St. Patrick's Day?

William McGlynn

Thanks to our immigrant heritage, many folks feel a little bit Irish when March 17th rolls around each year. Sales of corned beef and cabbage skyrocket as cook pots bubble with the savory stew that is linked in our minds with the Emerald Isle as surely as shamrocks and leprechauns. How authentic is this tradition? And what the heck is "corned beef" anyway?

Both corned beef and cabbage have long and honorable histories as foodstuffs. "Corned" beef is a cut of meat, usually brisket, that has been preserved by curing. Traditionally, beef was corned by rubbing the surface with spices and coarse-ground salt. The English word corn originally described any small hard particle, hence the term "peppercorn." The "corns" of salt and spices once used to cure the beef give the food its now odd-sounding name. Ironically, most modern corned beef is made by pumping a liquid brine solution into the meat.

People have been eating cabbage almost as long as they have cured meat. Casual consumers may not realize that kale, cabbage, kohlrabi, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts are all the same species of plant, *Brassica oleracea*. Selective breeding over the centuries has produced the differences we see today. The original cabbage was probably native to the Mediterranean region of Europe and most closely resembled kale. By the 1st century A.D., ancient chroniclers described vegetable gardens containing our familiar "headed" cabbage plants. The Romans attributed many therapeutic properties to cabbage, including the ability to ward off drunkenness. Recently, we have begun to rediscover the health benefits of a diet high in *Brassica* vegetables. However, perhaps unfortunately, no studies have supported the notion that cabbage will preserve sobriety.

Perhaps cabbage will make a comeback in our diets thanks to its health benefits. It was commonly eaten once because cabbage was one of the few green vegetables that could be stored through the winter. Before the advent of refrigeration, curing meat was also a traditional way of preserving it through the winter. So it turns out that corned beef and cabbage was a popular holiday feast in years past and not just in Ireland. The holiday being celebrated was not St. Patrick's Day -- it was Easter. Corned beef and cabbage was a poor farmer's way to break the long, meatless Lenten fast with the foods available in early spring. Interestingly, corned beef and cabbage may be more popular today in the United States than it is in Ireland. Here it has largely lost its connotation of rough peasant fare and has become a nostalgic reminder of our Irish heritage.

Blackberry Varieties

Jim Shrefler

Blackberries are a crop with potential value for home and commercial use in Oklahoma. There have been recent variety releases and information has been gained from plantings in southeast

Oklahoma. Growers looking for alternative crops may want to consider blackberries as one possibility. The following table summarizes information for varieties that would be suited to southeastern Oklahoma. OCES Fact Sheets F-6239 and F-6215 discuss commercial and home blackberry planting and production

Blackberry Varieties for Oklahoma

Variety	Type	Fruit Size	Flavor / Average % Sugar	Yield	Fruiting season	Disease Susceptibility (Arkansas results)	Comments
Choctaw	Thorny, erect	Medium	Good / 8.7	High most years,	May 25 to June 12	Double blossom/rosette ; no anthracnose observed	Soft berries do not store or ship well; less hardy and seeds smaller than other Arkansas varieties
Kiowa	Thorny, erect	Large	Good / 10	High	June 2 to June 26	Small amounts of double blossom / rosette and anthracnose observed	Good storage and handling potential
Shawnee	Thorny, erect	Medium large	Good / 9.3	High, consistent	June 8 to June 30	Double blossom / rosette; no anthracnose observed	Soft berries do not store or ship well; hardy
Cherokee	Thorny, erect	Medium	Very good / 9.7	Medium	June 8 to June 25	Information not found	Short distance shipping only
Cheyenne	Thorny, erect	Medium	Good / 9.7	Medium	June 12 to June 25	Information not found	Short distance shipping only
Chickasaw	Thorny, erect	Large	Good / 9.6	High	June 12 to June 30	Not expected to be resistant to double blossom / rosette; slight anthracnose observed	Better storage and handling potential than Shawnee; hardy
Arapaho	Thornless, erect	Medium	Good / 9.6	Moderate	May 29 to June 20	None observed	Good storage and handling potential

Navaho	Thornless, erect	Medium	Excellent / 11.4	Moderate	June 12 to July 10	Orange rust	Very firm fruit; exceptional storage and handling potential
Apache	Thornless, erect	Largest Arkansas thornless	Very good / 10.7	Highest of thornless	June 15 to July 12	None observed	Good storage and handling potential

Information Sources: Dr. Penny Perkins-Veazie, USDA-ARS, Lane OK. and University of Arkansas web site: <http://www.aragriculture.org/commhort/fruits/Blackberries/default.asp>

CD's Available

Dean McCraw

Assessing and Recovery From Ice Storm Damage to Pecan Trees

A power point program including pictures of examples showing damage from ice induced breakage to pecan trees is available. It describes the extent of the damage and offers guidance on short as well as long term potential effects on yield from the damaged trees. It also offers ideas on how to correct the damage as well as management practices to accommodate tree growth during recovery.

A CD is available free of charge to county extension educators in counties affected by the recent ice storm.

Grafting Pecans

Also available is a power point program that outlines the reasons for asexual propagation, describes the various methods and presents illustrated, step by step procedures for bark grafting and four flap grafting of pecan trees. Each procedure contains reference to appropriate OK Cooperative Extension Service fact sheets containing additional information.

The CD is available free of charge to county extension educators and at a cost of \$5.00 to others. Individuals interested in either of these CD's should contact Tammy at 405-744-5404.

Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

April 20 Declared Oklahoma Master Gardener Day!

Thanks to the efforts of *Paul Johnson*, Oklahoma County Extension Educator, Horticulture/4-H Youth Development, and the *Oklahoma County Master Gardeners*, the Governor of Oklahoma has issued a proclamation declaring *April 20* as *Oklahoma Master Gardener Day* in recognition of the valuable service that Master Gardeners provide to Oklahoma statewide.

Kelley Duncan of Tonkawa named Citizen of the Year!

Kelley Duncan, Kay County Master Gardener and horticulturist at Northern Oklahoma College in Tonkawa was recently awarded the “Citizen of the Year” award by the Tonkawa Chamber of Commerce. The presenter of the award even quoted the Master Gardener mission statement and thanked her for her outstanding contributions to the community. CONGRATULATIONS KELLY!

Southeast Regional Master Gardener Conference.

May 20 - 22, 2002. Raleigh, North Carolina.

NC State University will host the Southeast Regional Master Gardener conference in Raleigh, NC May 20-22, 2002. The focus of the conference is on new and exciting cultivars, new gardening techniques, native plants, and increased environmental responsibility.

General session speakers include: Nicholas Staddon director of new plant introductions with Monrovia Nursery, Margaret Pooler with the US National Arboretum, Bob Lyons Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum, Tony Avent owner of Plants Delight Nursery, Andy Wasowski author of nine books including *The Landscape Revolution*, as well as, authors and free-lance writers Peter Loewer, Dick Bir, and Larry Melichamp.

You will be able to choose from five concurrent sessions for each time slot on Tuesday. Topics include: magnolias, hollies, hosta, cold hardy camellias, invasive plants, plant genomics, water gardening, heirloom fruit, plant names, organic gardening, new plants from China, etc.

You will tour the JC Raulston Arboretum an eight-acre research garden for testing new plants and Juniper Level Botanical Gardens featuring over 6,000 plant species and cultivars. While there you will be able to purchase plants and enjoy a NC pig pickin.

There will be book sales, signing and trade show.

For additional information and registration forms go to the conference web site: www.southeast-mastergardener.net or contact Erv_Evans@ncsu.edu, 919-515-5378.

2002 Oklahoma/Texas MG Continued Training Summer Conference!

May 30 - June 1, 2002.

Wichita Falls, TX. Speakers and topics lined up for the conference include: Felder Rushing, Mississippi Hort Specialist/author, Composting/Garden Recycling; Lisa Whittlesey, TX A&M, Junior Master Gardener & Flower Arranging; Chris Corby, Editor Texas Gardener Magazine, Container Gardening; Steve Dobbs, Morning Star Farms, OK; David Hillock, Oklahoma Assist. Ext. Spec., Xeriscape Gardening; Steve Owens, Host Oklahoma Gardening; Dennis Martin, OK Turf Spec., Turfgrass for OK and TX; Dean McCraw, OK Fruit & Nut Spec., Backyard Fruit Production; and Jan Shannon, National Rose Judge, Roses. Registration materials should be arriving in your mailboxes in the near future. **Hope to see you all there!** Contact David Hillock, Master Gardener Coordinator, Oklahoma State University, Dept. of Horticulture &

Landscape Architecture, 360 Ag Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078. E-mail: hillock@okstate.edu;
phone: 405-744-5158.