

# Horticulture Tips

## October 2002

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

### Garden Tips for October!

*David Hillock*

#### Turfgrass

- You can continue to replant or establish cool season lawns like fescue.
- The mowing height for fescue should be lowered to approximately 2 1/2 inches for fall and winter cutting.
- Broadleaf weeds like dandelions can be easily controlled during October (FS-6421 & 6601).
- Mow and neatly edge warm season lawns before killing frost.

#### Ornamentals

- Plant cool season annuals like pansies, ornamental cabbage or kale, snapdragons and dusty miller when temperatures begin to cool.
- Begin planting spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, hyacinths, crocus and daffodils.
- Good companion plants for bulbs are evergreen ground covers such as ajuga, vinca, English ivy, alyssum, potentilla, moneywort, thrift, phlox, oxalis and leadwort.
- Peonies, daylilies, and other spring-flowering perennials should be divided or planted now.
- Dig and store tender perennials like cannas, dahlias, and caladiums in a cool, dry location.
- Purchase trees from nurseries and garden centers at this time to select the fall color you prefer.
- Many perennials can be planted at this time and the selection is quite nice.
- Plant fall mums and asters and keep them watered during dry conditions. Don't crowd since they take a couple of years to reach maturity.
- Plant container-grown trees and shrubs this month.
- Check and treat houseplants for insect pests before bringing them indoors and repot rootbound plants.

#### Fruits & Vegetables

- Dig sweet potatoes and harvest pumpkins and winter squash.
- Remove green fruit from tomato plants when frost threatens.
- Harvest oriental persimmons and pawpaws as they begin to change color.
- There is still time to plant radishes and mustard in the fall garden.
- Use a cold frame device to plant spinach, lettuce and various other cool season crops for production most of the winter.
- Plant cool season cover crops like Austrian winter peas, wheat, clover, and rye in otherwise fallow garden plots.
- Remove all debris from the garden to prevent overwintering of various garden pests.
- Start new planting bed preparations now with plenty of organic matter.

### Water Gardens

- Take tropical water garden plants indoors when water temperatures near 50 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Close the water garden for the winter by placing hardy plants in the deeper areas of the pool. Stop feeding the fish.
- Cover water gardens with bird netting to catch dropping leaves during the winter months.

### ***Raking Basics***

Fall is soon upon us and it is time to begin thinking about what you will do with all those leaves. Just bagging them and letting them go to the landfill is a waste of our tax dollars and of a valuable garden resource. Instead of bagging them and hauling them off to the dump this year consider these suggestions.

### Use as a Mulch

An easy way to get rid of leaves is to simply rake them onto the perennial beds as a nice winter mulch. Some say that leaves may suffocate your plants -- but use your good judgment. Small leaves generally will not offer any threat but huge leaves, such as sycamore, might.

### Compost Them

Place them in the compost pile along with other garden plant material. You don't need a special compost bin to accomplish this process. A big hole dug behind the garage or some other inconspicuous place works nicely. Fill the hole with lots of leaves and other garden plant material.

### Mow 'Em

This is the method I like to use. I simply mow over them as often as necessary before they build up to deep. The chopped leaves return valuable organic matter and nutrients to the soil. If you use a mower with a bag attachment you can capture the chopped leaves and then distribute them as needed. They work well as an excellent mulch, compost fodder, or can be worked into your vegetable garden.

### Leaf Power

If you have tons of leaves, you may consider buying or renting a vacuum-shredder. This is more effective than just blowing them around with a blower. Vacuum-shredders suck up the leaves, chop them, and then collect them into a bag. Use as described above. Remember, however, that shredders, blowers, and choppers work well only when the leaves are nice and dry. If they're too wet, they'll just clog.

### Back to Nature

If you own a wooded area or large property where you can dispose of leaves, go for it. However, remember that too many leaves can suffocate existing plants, so spread them out a bit.

## Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

### National Wildlife Federation® and Junior Master Gardener® Bring the Wonders of Gardening for Wildlife to America's Youth

The National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) Schoolyard Habitats® program and the Junior Master Gardener® (JMG) program are joining forces to teach youth the wonders of gardening for wildlife. This partnership will lead to the development of a *Wildlife Gardener*™ curriculum, teaching youth from across the country about the importance of conserving and restoring wildlife habitat in their own communities.

"Connecting children with the natural world is the first step toward conservation stewardship," said Stephanie Stowell, Senior Manager of Educator Programs for the National Wildlife Federation. "The youth we reach through this partnership will become leaders in the community, leaders in conservation and leaders in shaping a healthier world."

Containing dozens of hands-on activities for grades 3-5, the activity guide being planned will provide youth, in formal and non-formal educational settings, with hands-on opportunities to explore the natural world with activities that encourage leadership development, personal pride, responsibility and community involvement. Along with developing critical thinking skills, youth will identify local conservation concerns and take action to address them through individual group projects. The Wildlife Gardener curriculum will provide the needed guidance for kids to create NWF certified Schoolyard Habitats and Backyard Wildlife Habitat sites throughout their communities.

"*Wildlife Gardener* will be a dynamic resource for teachers and elementary-aged kids," said National JMG Curriculum Coordinator Randy Seagraves. "This first product of the partnership between the JMG and NWF organizations will be full of novel, hands-on experiences connecting young people to the natural world."

JMG is an international youth gardening program of the University Cooperative Extension Network. With groups in 39 states and 6 countries, JMG engages children in novel, "hands-on" group and individual learning experiences that promote a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment and cultivate the mind. JMG also inspires youths to be of service through service learning and leadership development projects and rewards them with certification recognition. JMG is a three-year old program, developed at Texas A&M University by Texas Cooperative Extension and the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M. For more information please visit our website at [www.jmgkids.org](http://www.jmgkids.org).

Launched in 1995, NWF's Schoolyard Habitats program provides materials and expertise to encourage the creation of wildlife habitat areas as learning tools to schools and educational facilities nationwide. It follows in the tracks of the successful Backyard Wildlife Habitat® Program now in its 29th year. More information on the Schoolyard Habitats program is available on NWF's web site at [www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats](http://www.nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats) or call 1-800-822-9919.

The nation's largest member-supported conservation education and advocacy group, the National Wildlife Federation unites people from all walks of life to protect nature, wildlife and the world we all share. The Federation has educated and inspired families to uphold America's conservation tradition since 1936.

## **Acrylamide in Foods**

*William McGlynn*

Acrylamides are industrial chemicals used to create high-molecular weight polymers, which are commonly employed for a variety of tasks including water treatment, papermaking, soil conditioning agents, and thickeners in paints, cosmetics and soaps. Polymers made from acrylamides are stable and non-toxic. Acrylamides themselves are known to be potent neurotoxins and as such exposure levels are regulated quite strictly by the EPA. There is also evidence to suggest that acrylamides may pose a cancer risk in humans. For years, the main danger from acrylamides was presumed to be from accidental exposure or environmental contamination. Now, however, there is new concern about the presence of acrylamide in foods.

On April 24, 2002 the Swedish National Food Administration (SNFA) announced that they found acrylamide at higher than expected levels in starch-containing foods cooked at high temperatures. These findings have been confirmed by similar studies by the UK Food Standards Agency and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These studies have found the highest levels of acrylamides in fried and baked starchy foods such as French fried potatoes. But researchers stress that acrylamides have been found in many foods, even foods such as roasted asparagus and banana chips. Because of the potential health risks of these compounds, these reports have generated a great deal of interest and concern.

The origin of acrylamides in foods is not entirely clear; it appears that formation of these chemicals is related to cooking at relatively high temperatures and may relate to ingredients naturally present in the foods such as glucose and the amino acid asparagine. The degree of risk acrylamides present is unknown. It certainly appears that they are nothing new; based on what we now know about how they are formed, it seems likely that acrylamides have been in the food supply as long as people have been baking, roasting, or frying foods. And the estimated intake of acrylamides from food is much lower than the dose known to cause nerve damage. But there is worry that long-term exposure to acrylamides, even at low levels, may pose an increased risk of cancer. As a result, a great deal of research is getting underway to attempt to assess the danger present, if any.

The U.S. FDA has announced a public meeting entitled "Assessing Acrylamide in the U.S. Food Supply" for September 30, 2002. The stated purpose of this meeting is to update the public on FDA's activities related to acrylamide in food, to present FDA's draft action plan on acrylamide and to obtain and solicit comments on that action plan. Following the meeting, the FDA's draft action plan will be available on the Internet at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/list.html>.

## **Oklahoma Garden Festival, January 31-February 3, 2003**

*David Hillock*

There were 15,000 people in attendance at the first Oklahoma Garden Festival held at the Myriad in Oklahoma City, which by all accounts was a tremendous success. This four-day extravaganza that focused on the art and science of gardening featured lush landscapes, a horticultural competition, garden retailers, educational exhibits and seminars in an atmosphere comparable to the major flower shows in Philadelphia and Atlanta.

This coming year's festival promises to be every bit as good as the last one. Enter an exhibit or just come and enjoy the beauty of plants a little earlier than normal and get great ideas for your own garden and landscape. You won't want to miss this one as the Festival Board is anticipating 20,000 visitors to this year's event.

## **2002 Oklahoma Watermelon and Cucurbit Educational Meeting**

*Jim Shrefler*

Mark your Calendar for the 2002 Statewide Oklahoma Watermelon and Cucurbit Educational Meeting that will be held Thursday, December 5 at the Grady County Fairgrounds at Chickasha, Oklahoma. This year's program will expand on the past emphasis on watermelon and will include other cucurbit crops such as squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and cantaloupes. Presentations will address the production of cucurbits as alternative crops and will include discussions on Economics and Marketing, Production Practices, and Information Resources for Growers and Marketers. Pest management topics will include discussion of important insect, disease and weed pests to watch out for and new developments in pest control measures.

The meeting is for anyone interested in the production and marketing of cucurbit crops. For detailed program information call the Lane Ag Center at 580-889-7343 or email your request to: [meeting@lane-ag.org](mailto:meeting@lane-ag.org).

## **Grape and Pecan Courses Available for 2003**

*Dean McCraw*

The Oklahoma Grape Management Course for 2003 will begin February 20, 2003. The Oklahoma Pecan Management Course will begin February 18, 2003. Both courses will meet from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Oklahoma Fruit and Pecan Research Station, Perkins, OK. Preregistration is required.

A copy of the schedule with registration information and meeting dates for each course is attached. The schedules and registration information can also be found by following pecan or grape links at the following: [www.okstate.edu/OSU\\_Ag/asnr/hortla/ftpcns/homepage.htm](http://www.okstate.edu/OSU_Ag/asnr/hortla/ftpcns/homepage.htm).

## **Upcoming Events**

### Oklahoma Greenhouse Growers Fall Seminar

October 22, 2002

Holiday Inn, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Contact Mr. Carroll Emberton at 405-942-5276 or [ohic@ionet.net](mailto:ohic@ionet.net) for more information.

### Tulsa Nursery Field Day

October 31, 2002

Bixby Arboretum, Bixby, Oklahoma

Contact Sue Gray at 918-746-3707 or [sgray@okstate.edu](mailto:sgray@okstate.edu) for more information.

### Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show

November 13-15, 2002

Shangri-La Resort, Afton, Oklahoma

### Tree Care Issues Workshop

November 15, 2002

OBGA Educational Building, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Contact Mike Schnelle for more information at [mas@okstate.edu](mailto:mas@okstate.edu).

### Arkansas & Oklahoma Horticulture Industries Show

January 10-11, 2003

Holiday Inn, Springdale, Arkansas

### Specialty Cut Flowers

February 27, 2003

Holiday Inn, Stillwater, Oklahoma

### 2003 Oklahoma Grape Management Class

Oklahoma Fruit Research Station, Perkins, Oklahoma

### 2003 Pecan Management Class

Oklahoma Pecan Research Station, Perkins, Oklahoma

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or [steph@okstate.edu](mailto:steph@okstate.edu).