

Horticulture Tips

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

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 17 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.

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 1/2 to 3 1/2 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. (F-6403 & 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, carrots, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnips etc. should be planted by the middle of March.
- 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 (F-7313).
- Start your routine fruit tree spray schedule prior to bud break. (F-6235).
- Remove winter mulch from strawberries in early March (F-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 liriop 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.

Sick Red Cedars?

Mike Schnelle

Eastern red cedars turn a golden brown from February through April. This often is a result of the male cones swelling with pollen at the tips of the branches. At a distance the tree looks peculiar and up close the cones can appear to be a disease or disorder to the untrained eye. Also, upon opening, large clouds of pollen can be seen which also may alarm the tree's owner. This is normal for the species as the tree is wind pollinated. Another question asked is about the fleshy growths on the "male" trees. Although technically dioecious, red cedar can have both sexes on the same plant. Therefore, a predominantly male tree may bear a few fruit versus a prolific fruit crop on the female tree. This oddity (sporadic fruit) is often misdiagnosed as a disease.

Pruning Shrubs

Mike Schnelle

Should homeowners desire to prune back their early spring-flowering shrubs, they should do so as soon as possible after flowering ceases. These plants form flower buds this summer and carry them over the winter for spring flowering. Growers that wait too long and prune this summer or fall will destroy next year's blossoms. Several months of the growing season are needed for bud formation.

Turf Management Suggestions for March

Dennis Martin

Winter annual grassy and broadleaf weeds are behind in their development as compared to March 1999-2002 due to cold temperatures in late fall and winter. However, be assured that these plants are present in turfgrass stands. Their small size at present makes them less conspicuous.

For those desiring control of winter annual weeds, an application of glyphosate containing product such as Roundup Pro at 1.5 to 2 pts per acre in 20 - 30 gallons of spray volume per acre is a cost effective measure. Inclusion of sprayable grade ammonium sulfate at 15 lbs. of product per 100 gallons of spray volume not only can increase control but also speed up activity of the herbicide.

Make glyphosate applications when daytime highs are expected in the upper 50s or low 60s for 3-4 days, but while bermudagrass remains completely dormant. A tan turfgrass canopy with no green, red, white or purple stems visible directly from above is a reasonable indicator of bermudagrass dormancy. Make applications no later than mid-March. Remember that the dormant canopy protects the live tissue. Anything that allows the glyphosate spray droplets to hit or roll down the stems to come in contact with living tissue will increase turfgrass injury or delay greenup. Glyphosate products are not labeled for use on dormant zoysiagrass. Also, do not make this application to any cool-season turfgrasses.

Some winter annual broadleaf weeds such as henbit are occasionally not well controlled by Roundup Pro alone at low end labeled rates. Therefore, a broadleaf herbicide containing 2,4-D; MCPP, dicamba, chloryalid or trichlopyr is often tank mixed with the glyphosate product to improve control of broadleaf weeds.

As glyphosate containing products are not labeled for use in controlling winter annual grasses and broadleaves in dormant zoysiagrass, products such as Reward (active ingredient diquat) can be used at 1 to 2 pts per acre in 20 to 100 gallons of total spray volume. Addition of a 75% active ingredient nonionic surfactant at 0.25% v/v should be used to increase activity of the Reward. This treatment should be applied on bright, sunny days in order to obtain adequate weed control. This herbicide, while offering only contact, nontranslocated activity on the weed, is usually adequate on small winter annual weeds.

On warm-season turfgrass areas, aerify compacted sites with solid tine, spiker or hollow tine aerators after the worst of winter is over and prior to application of pre-emergent herbicides. Drag in aerifier cores left on the surface as appropriate.

Areas of perennial or annual ryegrass that were overseeded into dormant bermudagrass during the fall may require 1/2 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. to improve greenup and adequate growth for winter sports use or improved visual appeal on commercial grounds or home lawns.

For pre-emergent control of summer annual grasses such as crabgrass, foxtail and goosegrass in well-established turfgrass, apply pre-emergent herbicides as per labeled directions. Make sure the correct rate, use site and turf species is present on the product label. Most pre-emergent herbicides are compatible in a tank mix with the winter annual weed control program - read labels for specific information. Water pre-emergent herbicides into the soil immediately with 1/2 inch of water if no post-emergent herbicide components are present and if adequate rainfall does not occur within 7 days. Do not apply herbicides to frozen soils.

Tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass established the previous fall that is not mature enough for normal pre-emergent herbicides may be treated with Tupersan 50WP by the commercial, professional or Certified pesticide applicator (not the home consumer). Poorly established bermudagrass or warm-season grass stands damage from heavy play on sites other than home lawns may be treated with Ronstar 2G (active ingredient oxidiazon) or a low end labeled rate of Barricade (active ingredient prodiamine) to reduce risk of injury to stolons (above ground runners). Remember to read and follow all pesticide use directions; the best time to read the label is in the store, prior to buying the product.

Pink Patch on Dormant Bermudagrass is No Cause For Alarm

Dennis Martin

Are pink or cream colored circular spots present on your dormant bermudagrass? If so, you are likely looking at Pink Patch. Do not be alarmed, this fungus is simply living off the dead leaves killed by frost and is not actually injuring your turf! There is no reason to treat for this condition. Pink Patch is caused by the fungus *Limonomyces roseipellis*. The fungus has pink mycelia and grows slowly on the dead leaves of dormant bermudagrass during moist, overcast periods during the winter months. The spots are usually 3-8 inches in diameter, but areas can coalesce to be more than 15 feet in diameter. Sit back and enjoy one of nature's more colorful fungi!

Cool-Season Grass Establishment Time

Dennis Martin

Despite fall being the most optimum time for establishment of cool-season turfgrasses such as tall fescue, an early spring seeding (mid-March through mid-April) can be a reasonable second choice if seeding is performed early enough. While soil temperatures remain favorable for germination and growth in late April, May and even into early June, a mid to late spring seeding

may not have adequate time to mature before going into the heat of summer. Ideally, spring seedings should have 8-10 weeks of good growing conditions, 68-86°F, before going into the heat of summer. The more mature the cool-season turfgrass plant, the better its chance of surviving harsh hot and dry or hot and humid summer conditions. Warm-season fungal diseases such as Large Brown patch and Pythium blight are also more of a problem on tall fescue seeded late in the spring. Actual timing of seeding should be adjusted in any one spring based on the prevailing weather conditions. A detailed description on lawn establishment can be found in OSU Fact Sheet 6419: Establishing a Lawn in Oklahoma.

BUYER BEWARE! – Telephone Chemical Sales

Jim Criswell

Daffodils, magnolia, robins and telephone pesticide sales: Can spring be far behind?!

Telephone pesticide sales are a continual problem. While all of these points I list below are not a problem with each and every pesticide or telephone solicitation, you should be aware of these problems and ask questions if you get a call.

Characteristically these sales are for herbicides, often glyphosate, diuron, or another broad-spectrum herbicide. They are often offered for sale for controlling all the weeds year long and will not damage the crop. Often, however, the use site is not mentioned until you ask. The salesperson usually emphasize that the product kills virtually all weeds. Also, not that the virtues of nationally known products are touted, and then you are told that the product being offered for sale is just like it, but that this is a better deal. Be aware that any of these salespeople, from the cases I am familiar with over the years, really do not have any knowledge of pesticides or their use.

The following items generally apply to these telephone sales products:

- Pesticide product being offered for sale is so diluted that it takes many, many containers to treat even small areas. Sometimes a product may be diluted to the point that it is at a "ready to use" dilution.
- Price per container is relatively high.
- There is often a minimum number of containers or gallons that must be purchased.
- Purchaser pays all shipping and handling charges.
- Product may not be registered for use in Oklahoma, but generally is registered with EPA.
- Product may not be registered for use on the site(s) the salesperson mentions.
- Salespeople want a decision (your order) at the time of their call. If you do not order then you are not likely to be told to "have a nice day."

The salespeople are usually "uncomfortable" with questions about the product. In past instances, people asking for copies of the labels have been hung up on or promised labels were never received.

Even when such sales meet legal requirements, for instance the product is in fact labeled for sale in Oklahoma, and even if the product is labeled for the site(s) it is being sold for, such sales are almost never a bargain. Once the per container cost of these products is known, and the number of containers needed to treat the area desired calculated, the cost is higher than that for local purchase of more familiar products with the same active ingredient. Considering also the minimum purchase often required and the shipping costs, the final bill can often be astronomical, or you THINK you have purchased a lot of material, but find, because of the product dilution you were not aware of, you do not have nearly enough material to treat the desired area(s).

The best thing to do is to ASK QUESTIONS. The principal questions to ask would be regarding the concentration of THIS product (how diluted it might be), if THIS product is labeled for sale in Oklahoma, what the labeled uses of THIS product are, if there is a minimum purchase, and how much is shipping cost and who pays the shipping cost. At this point, if the caller is still on the line you may have the information you need to make a decision.

It is generally best to purchase your pesticides from known sources. As the saying goes, if it sounds too good to be true it probably is not true.

Rue, The Herb of Grace

Steve Owens

An interesting shrubby herb that can be used to bring a welcomed foliar effect to the shrub border or perennial garden is the Rue plant (*Ruta graveolens*). Its delicate blue-green compound leaves provide a graceful contrast to plants with white, pale yellow or magenta blooms. Clusters of greenish-yellow flowers are produced in summer on this thirty by thirty inch mounding plant, but it's the lacey texture of the foliage that warrants its planting.

One can argue as to whether rue is a true shrub or a perennial. The plant is actually an example of nature, not fitting into man's well-ordered categories of classification. Straddling the line between shrub and perennial, its botanical classification is known as sufrutescent, meaning it has tops that are herbaceous, but lower above-ground portions that overwinter and develop a near woody type of tissue. Plants of this type are often referred to as sub-shrubs. The young branches of rue seem comparable to the cold hardiness of young branches on Crape Myrtle and Butterfly Bush.

Rue is native to eastern and southern Europe, including Yugoslavia to Greece and Bulgaria. The plants are winter hardy in all parts of Oklahoma as their rating extends all the way up to USDA hardiness zone 4. In the southern portion of the state, rue will remain truly evergreen through most winters. In northern Oklahoma it performs as a semi-evergreen, meaning it will drop its leaves in the coldest of years, keeping them in the warmer years.

Rue is known as the herb of grace because holy water used to be sprinkled from brushes made of its branches and it was believed to ward off contagious diseases and spiritual influence. The plant's name is derived from the Greek *reuo*, 'to set free'. Other symbolisms and associations with rue include repentance, virginity and purity. The fact that it is the National Flower of

Lithuania speaks highly of the esteem in which it is held. Today, some gardeners use rue to repel Japanese beetles, fleas and other insects. Pet owners occasionally plant it near their dog pens to help drive away fleas.

There are other reasons to plant rue in the landscape in addition to its beautiful ornamental appeal and pest repelling qualities. Rue is a rugged, durable, easy-to-grow plant, tolerating a variety of soil conditions. Once established, it can withstand lengthy dry periods. I've seen rue used in landscapes throughout Oklahoma, including the panhandle with its challenging growing conditions. Another beneficial use of rue is to plant it in a butterfly garden. It is a larval food source for certain butterflies such as the giant swallowtail and the black swallowtail, our state butterfly.

As with most of our garden plants, it will benefit from amended soil, mulching and supplemental moisture during dry spells. A site with full sun will produce the best looking plants. Severe pruning of healthy rue plants in early spring will ensure a bushy stature. I cut them back, leaving thickened lower stems of 8-10 inches in height.

Container grown rue plants can be planted almost any time of the year, but the best establishment will occur if they're planted in fall or spring. In the garden, place them 3 1/2 to 4 feet from each other. Place other colorful plants close enough to allow for the nice foliage contrast.

The family to which rue belongs is the rutaceae, commonly referred to as the citrus family as it also contains our lemons, oranges, grapefruits and limes. The sap from the leaves and stems of rue can cause dermatitis in susceptible individuals, with bright sunlight making the condition more aggravated.

Whether you choose to call it a shrub or a perennial, or choose to plant it in an herb garden, butterfly garden, shrub border or perennial garden, this graceful plant is sure to give your garden greater dimension.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Specialty Cut Flowers

March 27, 2003

Holiday Inn, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Agricultural producers looking to diversify their operations should consider attending the upcoming cut flowers workshop in Stillwater. Also, others with as little as two acres of land could launch into this exciting horticultural endeavor. Specialty cuts is the field and greenhouse production of novelty cut flowers, greens, stems, fruits and other plant materials for the floriculture industry. Registration deadline is March 19, 2003. A brochure is attached with program information and registration form.

Commercial Landscape IPM

May 14, 2003

Will Rogers Park, Oklahoma City

Mark your calendars now for a daylong outdoor IPM workshop geared for the commercial landscaper. Details and registration information will be provided in April.

Oklahoma Pecan Growers' Association Annual Meeting

Embassy Suites Hotel (1815 S. Meridian)

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

May 30 – June 1, 2003

Educational Meeting – Saturday, May 31, 2003

Field Day – Sunday, June 1, 2003 – Couch Orchard in Luther, Oklahoma

Registration information will be provided to all county offices by April 1, 2003.

Multi-State Ornamental Plant Materials Conference

September 24-25, 2003

Holiday Inn, Stillwater, Oklahoma

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or steph@okstate.edu.