

Horticulture Tips

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

GARDEN TIPS FOR JULY!

David Hillock

Vegetable Garden

- Make fall vegetable garden plantings in late July. Fact Sheet 6009 gives planting recommendations.

Lawn

- Brown patch disease of cool-season grasses can be a problem. (F-6420)
- Meet water requirements of turfgrasses. (F-6420)
- Fertilization of warm-season grasses can continue if water is present for growth. (F-6420)
- Vegetative establishment of warm-season grasses should be completed by the end of July to ensure the least risk of winter kill. (F-6419)
- Mowing heights for cool-season turf grasses should be at 3" during hot, dry summer months. Gradually raise mowing height of bermudagrass lawns from 1 ½ to 2".
- Sharpen or replace mower blades as needed. Shredded leaf blades are an invitation to disease and allow more stress on the grass.

Tree and Shrub

- Control bermudagrass around trees and shrubs with Poast, Fusilade or Glyphosate herbicides. Follow directions closely to avoid harming plants.

Fruits

- Continue insect combat and control in the orchard, garden and landscape. (F-7306, F-7313)
- Check pesticide labels for "stop" spraying recommendations prior to harvest.
- Harvest fruit from the orchard early in the morning and refrigerate as soon as possible.

Flowers

- Divide and replant crowded Hybrid Iris (Bearded Iris) after flowering until August.

General Landscape

- Water plants deeply and early in the morning. Most plants need approximately 1 to 2 ½ inches of water per week.
- Providing birdbaths, shelter and food will help turn your landscape into a backyard wildlife habitat.
- Insect identification is important so you don't get rid of the "Good Guys." (F-7307)
- The hotter and drier it gets, the larger the spider mite populations!
- Expect some leaf fall, a normal reaction to drought. Water young plantings well.
- Have you visited the *Oklahoma Gardening Studio Gardens* in Stillwater for a group tour?

Plant Profile – Beardtongue

David Hillock

Beardtongue or Penstemon is a group of plants in the genus *Penstemon* which is made up of over 250 species of perennial herbs and shrubs. Most of these are native to North America.

Oklahoma has at least one native species – the large flowered penstemon (*Penstemon cobaea*), which is native to the tall grass prairies. One of the more common cultivated species of penstemon is *Penstemon barbatus* which includes several cultivars and is a native of Mexico; many other species and hybrids are also available. Another common variety is *Penstemon digitalis* ‘Husker Red’ an introduction from the University of Nebraska. It has maroon-red foliage with white flowers with a tinge of pink. The plant grows to about 3’ tall. Another species I am particularly fond of is *Penstemon pinifolius*. This species has fine green needle-like foliage with small, scarlet, trumpet-shaped flowers. Growth habit is 8” tall spreading to about 18”.

Flowers of penstemon are two-lipped, tubular flowers borne on terminal panicles or less often racemes. Flower colors range from white to pink, rose, red, blue, violet, orange, scarlet and many shades in between.

Plants prefer full sun and many are very drought tolerant once established. Well-drained soil is important as most will rot in wet soils. A light mulch in winter is beneficial. Penstemon do well in average soil fertility so resist the temptation to fertilize.

The name *Penstemon* is derived from *pente*, five, and *stemon*, stamen, meaning five stamens. One of the five stamens is modified into a usually bearded staminode, from which the plant gets its common name Beardtongue.

Brown Patch Disease of Cool-Season Grasses

David Hillock

Brown patch is a disease that commonly shows up on cool-season turfgrasses, especially tall fescue, but can occasionally appear on hybrid bermudagrass and zoysiagrass. Brown patch disease appears as brown patches up to three feet in diameter. Leaves first take on a dark color, then wilt and turn brown.

Brown patch usually occurs in hot, humid weather when night temperatures are above 60°F and foliage remains wet for prolonged periods. Poor soil drainage, lack of air movement, cloudy weather, heavy dew, overwatering and watering in late afternoon favor prolonged leaf wetness and increased disease severity. The application of high rates of nitrogen and/or deficiencies of phosphorus and potassium, especially when weather conditions are favorable for brown patch, can increase disease severity. Excessive thatch, mowing when wet and leaf fraying by dull mower blades can also enhance the severity of brown patch.

Control. Control starts with good management practices. Though there are varieties of turf-type tall fescue that are considered resistant to brown patch, even resistant varieties succumb

when growing conditions are less than ideal for growth of strong plants (as described above) and environmental conditions are highly favorable for disease development.

When environmental conditions favor disease, avoid application of excessive rates of nitrogen. Fertilizer should be applied judiciously, and adequate amounts of phosphorus and potassium are essential to ensure the highest possible levels of plant resistance. In general, cool-season turfgrasses should not receive more than one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet at any one time. Use very low rates or avoid applying nitrogen in late spring or summer to cool-season turfgrasses. In a typical home lawn situation, the last application of fertilizer in the spring should be applied no later than early May. Ensure adequate amounts of phosphorus and potassium by applying these nutrients based on soil test results.

Reduce prolonged leaf wetness by watering infrequently to a depth of 6 to 8 inches and at a time when the foliage is likely to dry quickly. Avoid watering in late afternoon and evening, and allow for better air movement by removing unwanted vegetation and selectively pruning trees and shrubs. Removal of morning dew reduces prolonged leaf wetness and exudates that favor disease development. This can be accomplished by dragging a hose across the turfgrass or by running the irrigation system for a short time period. Good surface and soil drainage must be present to reduce disease incidence.

Make sure mower blades are sharp to reduce the amount of wounded turfgrass in which the fungus can enter the plant. Collect and promptly dispose of clippings on infected areas or when conditions favor disease development. Avoid mowing turfgrass when wet, and do not mow too low so that the turfgrass will be better able to resist the disease.

Applications of effective fungicides, when the first disease symptoms appear, will give good control of brown patch on highly maintained turfgrass. A preventative fungicide program should be considered in areas where the above conditions are difficult to control or change and when conditions are favorable for disease development.

Dividing and Replanting Iris

David Hillock

Iris are relatively carefree, easy to grow and long lived perennials; however, they should be divided every three to four years when they become crowded. Crowded iris will begin to decline in growth and will have fewer and smaller flowers.

Divide the rhizomes (underground stems) after the plants have flowered; July through August is the best time to do this in Oklahoma. Throw away any segments that are diseased, riddled with insects, or small and weak. Separate healthy rhizomes into segments with one fan of leaves and several roots. Cut the leaves back to six inches. When planting the new plant, spread the roots out in the soil and position the top of the rhizome at the soil surface. If planted too deep they will not flower as well and are more susceptible to disease and insect attack.

The Forgotten Cloning Coffee Can

David Hillock

Have you ever cloned another living thing? It takes a little time but if you use the *forgotten cloning coffee can*, you can grow a genetically identical copy of a rose plant, a fig tree, a Ficus or many other plants. In this activity you can cause a part of a stem to grow roots. When the roots have grown for a few weeks, the stem can be cut away as a new and independent plant. This is also a way to create many brand new and *free* plants from a single parent plant.

1. Find an empty coffee can and two plastic coffee can lids. Cut 2 slits into each of the lids to form an "X" shaped opening in each lid.



2. Select a stem of a plant (a rose bush is shown here) that is long enough to have a coffee can slipped over it. A stem that is longer and that points upright will do best.



3. Gently pull one of the lids over the end of the stem so that the bottom of the lids faces towards the end of the stem. Carefully slide it down at least 16 inches on the stem.

4. Use a butter knife to gently scratch an area around the stem just a few inches above the plastic lid. This is where the new roots will grow from.



5. Use a can opener to cut the top and bottom away from the coffee can. Slide the coffee can over the stem and seal it onto the plastic lid.



6. Fill the can with moist soil. Try to keep the stem positioned in the middle of the can as you drop in the soil.



7. Gently slip the second plastic lid over the end of the stem. Carefully slide it down and seal it over that end of the coffee can. This helps seal in the moisture and will help the roots to grow. To ensure that the soil remains moist, use some type of duct tape or packing tape to seal the slits in the top and bottom lids.

8. *Forget about it.* Just forget about the coffee can for a few weeks

9. After a few weeks have passed, open a lid and gently poke around the area you scratched with the butter knife. If you see or feel at least several roots, the plant is ready to survive on its own! If the roots are not ready, try again in another week.

10. Cut the stem below the roots at the bottom of the can. The can now serves as the pot for your newly cloned plant. Be sure to keep the soil moist and keep the new plant in an area that gets the same amount of light that the parent plant was used to getting.



11. After a few more weeks, you can replant the new plant into another pot or into the ground.
(From the JMG Newsletter: June issue, Submitted by: Lloyd Lambert)

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Grape Field Day

July 23, 2005, Oklahoma Fruit Research Station, Perkins and Woodland Park Vineyard, Stillwater

OSU Fruit Research Station and the Woodland Park Vineyard, owned by Ivol and Jeanette Hane, will host a field day on wine grape production and wine making. The event is free. For more information, please visit the Kerr Center web site at www.kerrcenter.com or call 918-647-9123.

Greenhouse Growers' Bus Tour

September 7, 2005

The Oklahoma Greenhouse Growers' Association will offer a one-day greenhouse production tour originating in Oklahoma City and finishing in the Park Hill/Tahlequah area. Interested growers or those contemplating the profession should contact Wendy Gerdes at 405-942-5276 for registration information.

Ornamental Plant Materials Conference

September 21-22, 2005, Holiday, Inn, Stillwater

Nursery, Landscape and Greenhouse Trade Show and Convention

September 30-October 1, 2005, Tulsa Convention Center

Contact Wendy Gerdes – Oklahoma ONLAOGGA@aol.com

Greenhouse Growers' Fall Update

October 26, 2005, Holiday Inn, Stillwater

Contact Mike Schnelle at mike.schnelle@okstate.edu or 405-744-7361

Tree Care Issues Conference

November 9, 2005, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

60th Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show

November 16-18, 2005, Wes Watkins Center for International Trade Development, Stillwater

"Stillwater, Where Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference began." The conference and show will provide a broad array of educational presentations. Education is being planned for the sports turf, landscape, lawncare, sod production and golf course management industries. Pesticide Applicator CEUs will also be available. Unlike previous years, participants will choose from one of several designated hotels. Early booking of rooms will be required of attendees since the various sporting events in Stillwater results in competition for lodging. More information on the conference will be available shortly.

6th Annual Oklahoma/Arkansas Turf Short Course

January 11-12, 2006, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

The event is an introductory short course that targets those practitioners in the landscape and lawncare industries who have not had the opportunity to take an introductory turf course. However some attendees are those who are new to the AR/OK region or those simply wanting to brush up on regional turf recommendations. The course covers turf identification, selection, establishment and the maintenance practices common to the region. The focus of the short course is on the "why" behind the "how" turf is managed in the region. More information on the conference will be available in October.

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