

Horticulture Tips

December 2005

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

GARDEN TIPS FOR DECEMBER!

David Hillock

Lawn & Turf

- ❖ Remove leaves from cool-season grasses or mow with a mulching mower. (F-6420)
- ❖ Continue mowing cool-season lawns on a regular basis. (F-6420)
- ❖ Continue to control broadleaf weeds in well-established warm- or cool-season lawns with a post-emergent broadleaf weed killer. (F-6421)

Tree & Shrubs

- ❖ Select a freshly cut Christmas tree. Make a new cut prior to placing in tree stand. Add water daily.
- ❖ Live Christmas trees are a wise investment, as they become permanent additions to the landscape after the holidays.
- ❖ Light prunings of evergreens can be used for holiday decorations. Be careful with sap that can mar surfaces.

Flowers

- ❖ Apply winter mulch to protect rose bush bud unions and other perennials. Wait until after several early freezes or you will give insects a good place to winter.
- ❖ Poinsettias must have at least six hours of bright, indirect light daily. Keep plants away from drafts.

Fruits & Nuts

- ❖ Cover strawberry plants with a mulch about 3-4 inches thick if plants are prone to winter injury.
- ❖ Wait to prune fruit trees until late February or March.

General

- ❖ Keep all plants watered during dry conditions even though some may be dormant.
- ❖ Irrigate all plantings at least 24 hours before hard-freezing weather if soil is dry. (F-6404)
- ❖ Order gardening supplies for next season.
- ❖ Now is a great time to design and make structural improvements in your garden and landscape.
- ❖ Send for mail-order catalogs if you are not already on their mailing lists.
- ❖ Christmas gift ideas for the gardener might include tools, garden books, magazine subscriptions, *Oklahoma Gardening* educational tapes or membership to Oklahoma Botanical Garden & Arboretum.
- ❖ Clean and fill bird feeders.
- ❖ Make sure indoor plants are receiving enough light or set up an indoor fluorescent plant light.

- ❖ Till garden plots without a cover crop to further expose garden pests to harsh winter conditions.
- ❖ Visit your county office to obtain gardening fact sheets for the new gardening season.
- ❖ Join a horticulture, plant or urban forestry society and support community "greening" or "beautification" projects.
- ❖ Review your garden records so you can correct past mistakes. Purchase a new gardening journal or calendar to keep the New Year's gardening records.

GARDEN TIPS FOR JANUARY!

David Hillock

General

- ❖ If precipitation has been deficient (1" of snow = ~ 1/10" of water), water lawns, trees, and shrubs, especially broadleaf and narrowleaf evergreens. Double check moisture in protected or raised planters.
- ❖ Check on supplies of pesticides. Secure a copy of current recommendations and post them in a convenient place. Dilution and quantity tables are also useful.
- ❖ If you did not treat young pines for tip borers in November, do so before March.
- ❖ Check that gardening tools and equipment are in good repair—sharpen, paint and repair mowers, edgers, sprayers and dusters.
- ❖ Inspect your irrigation system and replace worn or broken parts.
- ❖ Control overwintering insects on deciduous trees or shrubs with dormant oil sprays applied when the temperature is above 40°F in late fall and winter. Do not use "dormant" oils on evergreens. (F-7306)
- ❖ A product containing glyphosate plus a postemergent broadleaf herbicide can be used on dormant bermudagrass in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control. (F-6421)

OSU-Oklahoma City Farmers Market Open Saturdays this Winter

David Hillock

The only local winter market, the OSU-Oklahoma City Farmers Market, is open for business on Saturdays from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Every item sold at the market is grown or made in Oklahoma. Items available include produce, dairy, eggs, meats, nuts, baked items and processed foods. The Farmers Market also offers Oklahoma grown plant materials, orchids, fresh cut flowers and a variety of handmade skin care and craft items. There are also many specialty items for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The indoor market is held on the grounds of the OSU-Oklahoma City John E. Kirkpatrick Horticulture Center, 400 N. Portland Ave., Oklahoma City. For more information, call 945-3358 or visit www.osuokc.edu/farmersmarket.

Grape and Pecan Management Courses to Be Offered in 2006

Eric Stafne

The Grape and Pecan Management Courses are being offered again in 2006. These two classes meet one afternoon a month through the year to give growers or potential growers an opportunity to have classroom and hands on experience with monthly management issues for grapes or pecans. These classes are ideal for someone considering starting a vineyard or orchard and also meet the needs of someone already in the business. Attached are the brochures and registration material for each course.

Don't Forget to Water this Winter

David Hillock

Lack of adequate soil moisture is often a major cause of winter damage. Dry soil coupled with strong winter winds can cause havoc on a plant. All plants, but especially narrowleaf and broadleaf evergreens, use water during winter. When little or no soil moisture is present, plants can become desiccated and it is more likely root damage will also occur.

When dry cold fronts are predicted, water the landscape at least 24 hours in advance of the front. Apply about ½ inch of water at the time of watering. A sunny day on moist soil helps warm the soil and root area thus reducing the amount of time the roots will be exposed to cold temperatures.

Moisture must be available below the frost line or frozen soil. When the soil freezes, if moisture is not present in soil pore spaces, moisture is pulled from plant roots to form the ice crystals resulting in desiccated roots, thus what some would refer to as "winter kill."

Of course some common sense needs to be practiced at this time of year; do not allow the sprinklers to come on during a hard freeze. Ice forming on some plants could result in some serious damage and you could create a hazardous situation for you, pedestrians or even passing vehicles.

Too much water can also result on problems during the winter. Cold wet soils can lead to rotting roots. Soils with more than ample moisture may also encourage winter weeds to germinate and flourish. Water only every two to three weeks and apply only enough water to moisten the top six or so inches of soil.

Do not forget plants growing in above ground planters protected from rain. They need watering even in a wet season. Also, remember to water plants that are located under the eaves of a building or home since they often receive little natural precipitation.

Preparing Small Engines for Storage

David Hillock

Have you ever had difficulty starting small engine equipment after a long winter? Proper maintenance and storage of your equipment before you put it away for the winter will ensure easier starting the next time you need it. By following the steps below you should have fewer headaches the next time you need to use your equipment.

Step 1: Change the Oil and Filter. Drain the old oil. Do this when the engine is warm to get better flow and remove dirt suspended in the oil. If the machine has an oil filter, replace it while changing the oil. Be sure to use the recommended amount, quality and viscosity of oil.

Step 2: Inspect Spark Plug(s). Inspect spark plug(s) and service or replace them. Replace worn or burned plugs. Gap plugs based on manufacturers recommendations using a gap tool. Be careful not to over-tighten when replacing the plug. Using a torque wrench and correct torque to reinstall the plug will help avoid the possibility of stripping the threads in the engine block.

Step 3: Clean the Engine. Most small engines are air-cooled and have cooling fins on the engine block. Keep the fins clean to avoid overheating the engine.

Step 4: Inspect Air Filter and Fuel Filter. Inspect air and fuel filters and replace them if needed.

Step 5: Drain Gasoline. Old, stale gasoline can evaporate over time leaving “varnish” buildup in the carburetor and making your engine more difficult or impossible to start in the spring. Run the engine dry before storage. Fill up the tank with fresh gasoline in the spring.

An alternate approach is to fill the fuel tank at the end of the season with *fresh* gasoline that has a gasoline stabilizer added to it. A gasoline stabilizer must be added to fresh gasoline as it only stops deterioration; it can not reverse it. It is easier to obtain the correct rate of stabilizer by adding it to a gallon (or more) of fuel rather than trying to figure out how much to add to a small tank. Storing an engine with stabilized gasoline in the tank will prevent the problem of seals drying out.

Use leftover gasoline in some other machine (or a vehicle) rather than keeping it over the winter. Gasoline mixed for a 2-stroke engine should not be used in most 4-cycle engines (especially not in a vehicle with a catalytic converter). Remember to add a stabilizer to fresh gasoline if you must store it.

Taking that little extra time to properly maintain and prepare a small engine in the fall will make life much easier the following spring. At the least, avoid having stale gasoline in the tank. (Original document by Richard L. Parish, Hammond Research Station, LSU AgCenter)

After an Ice Storm

David Hillock

It is not uncommon to receive an ice storm or two in Oklahoma during the winter months. When this happens many homeowners turn their attention to the trees surrounding their home. Extreme caution should be used when dealing with ice-laden trees.

First step back and survey the situation. If the branches are hanging over or even bending under power lines, leave them alone and call the utility company. If the branches are bending down under power lines, knocking the ice off of the branches may result in the branches springing back up and coming in contact with the lines.

Limbs broken from ice that are blocking areas that are not in danger of utilities can be removed. Don't worry about making exact cuts at this time, you can always come back later and make touchup cuts. Of course any time you are working in a situation such as this, always wear protective equipment and clothing such as long sleeve shirt and pants, gloves, face shield or goggles and a hard hat.

Limbs that are not broken, but just bending over should also be left alone. Allow the ice to melt and fall off naturally rather than try to knock it off. Knocking it off may further damage the limbs by breaking off buds. Young branches and shoots are very pliable and will spring back to place as the season progresses.

Most trees are quite durable and even if they receive some damage due to ice they will recover by producing new growth in the spring. For more information on correct pruning techniques see fact sheet F-6409, "Pruning Ornamental Trees and Shrubs."

St. Augustinegrass Winter Management

Jim Shrefler, OSU Southeast Area Horticulturist

The southeast is the primary area where St. Augustine turfgrass is found in Oklahoma. Winter conditions are a major factor that limits the distribution of this grass with the primary limiting factor being low temperatures. In a recent discussion with a turf specialist from Texas I learned that winter weather is also an important factor to the survival of St. Augustine in the Dallas area. However, temperature is not the only factor to winter survival. Another critical factor is moisture. This is good news because it is something over which one has some control. Winter watering is a key to survival of this turf species.

Another factor that we suspect can be beneficial for winter survival of St. Augustine is to allow the grass to over-winter with a high mowing height. This should help provide some insulation and protection from cold winds. We have already had temperatures in the low 20s in much of the southeast part of the state. Because of this, St. Augustine's active growth has about come to an end and will not resume until springtime. If the lawn appears rough or weeds begin to look unsightly, and one gets the urge to mow to "spruce things up", it would best to not mow the lawn very low. On the other hand, it is advisable to plan to mow off dead St. Augustine residues

toward the end of winter, say in late February. In late winter one should mow low and catch the clippings. Mow low enough to take off the dead plant material yet not remove the green, red and purple living plant material below. Removal of this dead material is speculated to be beneficial in the prevention of Take-all, a fungal disease of St. Augustine that has been found in Oklahoma.

Weed control is another management concern of St. Augustinegrass during the winter months. During this time winter annual weeds may appear and can become very unsightly. These are easy to control during the winter in some warm-season grasses, such as bermudagrass, using hormone type herbicides or non-selective glyphosate products such as Roundup Pro, Kleenup and similar generics products. However, the situation is more complicated with St. Augustine. To start with, do not use glyphosate on St. Augustine unless you intend to kill it. It cannot be used on this turf species the way it is used on dormant bermudagrass. Hormone type herbicides, such as Dicamba and 2,4-D and products containing mixtures of these types of herbicides, can be used on St. Augustine but should be used with caution to avoid injury to the turf. The best advice is to read and follow product labels carefully. There are products that are specifically formulated for use in St. Augustine.

Winter is also the time to initiate weed control in St. Augustine for the coming year. The first application of pre-emergence herbicides for control of crabgrass and other summer annuals should be applied during February or early March followed by ½ inch of water to assure best results. Your County Extension office can provide information on herbicides that are approved for pre-emergent weed control in St. Augustine. Things to consider when selecting these products include possible effects on other plants in the landscape, effects on St. Augustine lawns that are being established or that are recovering from problems, and availability of products for residential use.

2005 State Pecan Show Entries

Becky Carroll

It is that time of year when the harvesters are busy picking up this year's pecan crop. Be sure to select your best pecans to be exhibited at the state pecan show this year. The more exhibits entered, the better the state show. After judging, this year's pecan show will be displayed at the OPGA annual meeting in June held at Shawnee.

There will not be any qualifying regional or district pecan shows this year. However, some county/area shows will be held at the discretion of the County Extension Educator. Growers are encouraged to participate in county shows if available. Winning entries from county shows will be sent to the state show. If no county/area show is available, growers may enter pecans directly by sending samples to Becky Carroll, 360 Ag Hall, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078. Samples should arrive by January 13, 2006.

Samples should be entered in a sealed plastic or paper bag. Label the bag on the outside and place a label inside the bag. Information should include exhibitors name and address, county, and type of pecan entered. Be sure to follow the guidelines that are listed below before sending entries.

A few helpful hints: Take the time to select pecans that are all the same cultivar, or same size and shape natives – don't send mixed pecans. Select uniform, clean, uncracked pecans. Presentation can make the difference between two very similar samples. Make sure to send 2 pounds of pecans in a labeled and sealed bag.

General Rules and Guidelines

- All entries must be grown in Oklahoma during the current season.
- Each entry shall consist of two pounds of nuts.
- Entries deemed unworthy by the judges will not compete for awards.
- Label each entry as to exhibitor's name, address and cultivar of nuts. If more than one native (seedling) pecan exhibit is made, identify the nuts from separate trees by numbers. Only one exhibit of each cultivar or native tree may be entered by one individual.
- Each entry will compete in one of the following 28 classes:

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Apache | 12. Maramec | 23. Success |
| 2. Barton | 13. Mohawk | 24. Western |
| 3. Burkett | 14. Pawnee | 25. Wichita |
| 4. Cheyenne | 15. Perouque | 26. Other Cultivars |
| 5. Choctaw | 16. SanSaba Improved | 27. Large-Native (seedling) |
| 6. Comanche | 17. Schley (eastern) | 28. Small-Native (seedling) |
| 7. Graking | 18. Shawnee | |
| 8. Gratex | 19. Shoshoni | |
| 9. Kanza | 20. Sioux | |
| 10. Kiowa | 21. Squirrels Delight | |
| 11. Mahan | 22. Stuart | |
- Each grower is allowed to participate at one county show of his or her choice.
- Each grower is allowed to enter one entry in each show class with the exception of Class 26 (Other Cultivars), Class 27 (Large-seedling) and Class 28 (Small- seedling)
- Each grower may enter one entry from each native (seedling) tree.
- Entries should be shipped or mailed to arrive at the show at least one day prior to the deadline.
- County pecan shows will not be affected by these rules and procedures.
- Only first and second place winners in each class of each county/area show will be eligible to compete in the State Pecan Show. Following each county show, eligible entries will be placed in cold storage, and judged before the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Annual Meeting. At that time, the winning entries will be displayed with awards and recognitions. All entries will become the property of the OPGA.
- First, second and third place winners in each class at the State Pecan Show will receive ribbons.
- State Pecan Show Special Awards – Trophies will be awarded for the largest pecan entry, the entry having the highest kernel percentage, the champion seedling and the best entry of the show.

- If a qualifying show is not available, growers may submit entries in accordance with these guidelines directly to the State Show. Entries in the state show must be received by January 13, 2006 at the following address:

Oklahoma State University
Department of Horticulture & LA
Attn: Becky Carroll
360 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Final Reminder on the December 15, 2005 Oklahoma Cucurbit Educational Meeting

Jim Shrefler

The day is getting close and this is the final reminder to plan to attend 2005 Oklahoma Cucurbit Production and Marketing Educational Meeting which will be held at the Grady County Fairgrounds in Chickasha on Thursday, December 15, 2005. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Frank Dainello of the Horticulture Department at Texas A&M University. Dr. Dainello will talk on "Plastic Use for Cucurbit Production." Other program topics to be covered include an Overview of Value-added Foods Made with Watermelon, Cucurbit Disease Update, Weed Control for Conventional and Organic Cucurbit Production, Insect Control in Cucurbit Crops, Health Benefits of Cucurbits and the Food Pyramid, Oklahoma Research on the Benefits of Grafting for Cucurbit Production, and more. Remember, this program is approved for in-service training credit for OSU Extension employees. For more details call Jim Shrefler at 580-889-7343 or by email jshrefler-okstate@lane-ag.org.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

25th Annual Arkansas/Oklahoma Horticulture Industries Show (HIS)

January 6-7, 2006, Tulsa Community College, Northeast Campus, Tulsa

"Improve Your Growing Climate at H.I.S." is the theme for the Silver Anniversary of the Oklahoma/Arkansas Horticulture Industries Show. The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday, January 6 and 7, 2006 at Tulsa Community College Northeast Campus, 3727 East Apache St., Tulsa, OK. For further details log onto the following website: <http://home.okstate.edu/Okstate/dasnr/hort/hortlahome.nsf/toc/HIS>. Contact Person: Donna Dollins, HIS Secretary/Treasurer, Oklahoma State University, Department of Horticulture, Stillwater, OK, 405-744-6460, donna.dollins@okstate.edu.

6th Annual Oklahoma/Arkansas Turfgrass 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.

Turf & Nursery Field Day

May 17, 2006, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

State Master Gardener Continued Training Conference

May 19, 2006, McAlester, Oklahoma

Plans are underway for next year's State Master Gardener Conference to be held in McAlester at the Southeast Expo Center on May 19, 2006 with a preconference Evening Social on May 18. Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend. The Pittsburg County Master Gardeners are hosting the conference and are working hard to make this conference another fantastic one!

Oklahoma Gardening Summer Gardenfest

June 10, 2006, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

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

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