

Horticulture Tips

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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 ½ inches for fall and winter cutting.
- Broadleaf weeds like dandelions can be easily controlled during October. ([F-6421](#) & [F-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°F.
- 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.

Why Can't I Grow English Walnuts in Oklahoma?

Eric T. Stafne

Recently, Samantha Wagner from Cleveland County contacted Dr. Mike Smith and asked him why English walnuts were moldy inside irregardless of whether the homeowner picked them, a squirrel absconded with them or they just fell off the tree. Dr. Smith's response is recounted below:

“English walnuts are grown commercially in areas where it does not rain in the fall as the fruit ripens. Fall rains leach tannins into the kernel from the husk that cause it to become dark and bitter tasting. As the kernel begins to degrade from the toxic effect of the tannins it also begins to mold. It is a rare event to get good English walnut kernels in Oklahoma. Also, English walnuts begin growth very early in the spring and are frequently damaged by frost. Although the trees grow in our environment, they are very poorly adapted.”

This is a great description of a plant that will grow and do fairly well in our climate, but is ill-suited for full development. There are numerous examples of other fruits where the plant grows fine, but fruiting is poor or non-existent because of our weather conditions. Quite often I have clientele who call and say, “I want to plant a (insert non-adapted plant).” Apricots are a prime example of a fruit that grows well, but flowers too early and the crop is lost. Cherries are the same way. The importance of appropriate plant and cultivar selection is paramount in the fruit-growing game, otherwise you might end up with moldy walnuts.

Onion Planting Options for Oklahoma Gardeners and Farmers

Jim Shrefler

Onions are a popular crop in Oklahoma with gardeners, market growers and even a few larger farmer operations. The onions grown in the state are generally considered fresh-market types, as opposed to storage types which are somewhat harder and often more pungent. Although not suited to long-term storage, some fresh market types can be stored for periods of several weeks to several months under proper conditions

There are many onion varieties available on the market. However, only a limited number have been evaluated in Oklahoma. One thing we have learned from field trials is that the onions that are best adapted to spring production in Oklahoma are the later-maturing short-day types (short day types vary in earliness) and the intermediate types. Early maturing short-day types begin

bulb formation too early in the year, before much plant growth can occur. Consequently, these do not produce many large bulbs under our growing conditions. Limited experience in Oklahoma with long day types, which are adapted to areas further north in the US, showed that although these will begin to form bulbs, the bulbs do not fill out well. Short-day varieties that have given good results are 1015Y and yellow granex. Intermediate varieties that have shown good potential for yield are Candy, Cimarron, Renegade, Denali, Sequoia, and Rumba (red). Limited experience with Aurora, Redline (red) and Cowboy showed that these are worth looking at further.

Differences between short and intermediate types are that short-day types will begin to bulb earlier and will be ready for harvest earlier than intermediates. This features provide growers some options regarding planting and harvest time. In order to obtain large bulbs, the onion plant must be established and have substantial size when the bulb formation process begins. Because this occurs several weeks earlier for short-day varieties, these varieties must be transplanted earlier in the year than the intermediate types. Late February or early March is generally early enough for the short-day types. Because the intermediate types will begin bulb formation a few weeks later, planting can be delayed a few weeks later than for short-day types. Planting a combination of short and intermediate varieties allows the grower to spread the planting process over a period of several weeks.

Bulb maturity generally occurs several weeks later for intermediate varieties compared to short-day varieties. Because of this difference, planting a combination of short and intermediate varieties will enable an extended harvest period.

Another aspect of onion production in Oklahoma for which the grower has options is plant source. Growers traditionally use bare-rooted transplants that originate outside the state. These plants can be found in many garden centers, farm supply stores and even grocery stores beginning in February. Often, there are only limited number of varieties available at these establishments. Some of the varieties that have performed well in local trials cannot be found for sale as transplants. Another problem that arises every few years is that plant quality is poor. That is sometimes the cause of onions “not doing any good” that year. Although the onion plants may appear healthy, improper handling and storage during shipping can result in poor performance after the plants are set in the field or garden. When selecting plants, look for the following features: 1) Plant size should be of uniform size since plants that are too small or too large will have a lesser chance of producing a large and marketable bulb. The diameter of a pencil is the ideal transplant size. 2) Plant bundles should be neither too wet or too dry. Overly wet plants may be partially decayed or diseased. Plants that have “grown” while in the bundle may be difficult to plant due to curvature and may have been depleted of food reserves. 3) Be sure that adequate labeling of variety is available. 4) Plants should have some green color to the leaves but not be excessively tender.

An alternative to purchasing plants is to produce your own. Three years of trials with growing onion transplants in southeast Oklahoma using unheated plastic houses has shown that this approach works well. With this method, onions are seeded in mid-October in the plastic house, plants are removed from the house in late February, and plants are taken immediately to the field. These plants are already growing actively when taken to the field. Consequently, they

seem to become established more rapidly following transplanting than do the bare-rooted plants. This method is particularly beneficial with short-day varieties because it enables early establishment in the field.

Attracting Birds to the Landscape

David Hillock

Attracting birds to the landscape and outdoor areas is an activity that can bring much enjoyment to the entire family.

Birds need three things to survive – food, water, and shelter. These elements can easily be supplied in your backyard. One of the key elements for attracting many species of birds is a wide variety of plants arranged into sheltered areas of shrubs and trees, open areas of lawns and garden, and/or wet areas around ponds and streams.

Additional wildlife enhancements include:

1. Leave as many thick, dead branches and tree trunks (snags) in your landscape as possible. Woodpeckers, chickadees, warblers, nuthatches and brown creepers will look for insects on them. Other birds can use the cavities in dead wood for homes. Safety of the trees must be considered too.
2. Place short pieces of yarn (4 to 6 inches), hair or the feathers from an old feather pillow in the yard. Birds will use the material for their nests.
3. Keep a small area of your garden muddy for robins and swallows to use for making their mud nests.
4. Minimize the use of chemicals in your yard. The more insects around the yard, the more birds you will have. Try to remove problems insects by hand. Some insects can be ignored without damaging plants too much. Most plants can tolerate some insect or disease damage without harmful effects.
5. If you have a cat, keep it indoors as much as possible. Keeping the cat inside all the time would be best. Cats are very efficient predators and can kill numerous birds each day, generally more than the owner realizes. Encourage your neighbors to keep their cats inside or to use collars with bells.
6. Open, dry, dusty areas are great for birds to use as dust baths. Leave a small area of the garden unplanted and dry to make a dust bath. Stir up the soil occasionally to get it started. A pile of sand or crushed egg shells nearby can serve as grit for birds that need it for digestion of food.

For more information about attracting birds to the landscape see our fact sheet F-6435, Landscaping and Gardening for Birds at:

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-1129/F-6435web.pdf>

Jade Plant

David Hillock

The Jade plant is a succulent plant with a thick, heavy trunk and a freely-branching growth habit. The leaves are rounded, thick and fleshy with soft but glossy green colors. The Jade grows best in bright sun, but will tolerate less light if watering is sparse. Too little light causes the new growth to grow long and spindly – this growth normally droops due to the weight of the leaves on a weak stem. Due to the plant's succulent nature, it can go for weeks without water. Over-watering is the plants worst enemy. In winter, or anytime it is used in a low light situation, it should be allowed to become dry between waterings. Never place the Jade plant in a window where it will receive direct sunlight through the glass as the leaves will burn. Fertilize the plant monthly with a good balanced plant food during the months of April through September. Do not feed in other months unless you can provide bright light and then use at only half-strength. Prune by pinching. Proper pruning and care will develop the plant into a nice bonsai shape in a few years. The Jade plant is also pretty when left to grow on its own with little or no pruning. Repot when root become slightly rootbound, always repot into a slightly larger pot.

Black Gold; Sort of

David Hillock

As you begin to clean up the garden this fall don't forget that much of the landscape debris, especially the leaves of deciduous trees, are excellent for the compost pile or as a mulch. Before raking and bagging all those leaves for the landfill, consider chopping them up and throwing them into a compost pile. They can even be thrown directly into a fallow garden as they will break down over the winter and provide some valuable organic matter to the soil by next spring. What is the procedure to make compost? Organic materials are placed in alternating green and brown layers in a container, bin or pile. Alternating green and brown layers of material help assure the correct carbon and nitrogen amounts. With water and air, bacteria and insects use the materials as a food and energy source. The bacteria need water to live and grow. This process generates heat from 140 to 160°F. Aeration is done by turning the container or pile of material. The more turning, the more air the bacteria have available, and the faster the process works. When the temperature decreases, the process is complete.

House Plant Fact Sheet Revised

David Hillock

OSU Extension Fact Sheet F-6411 "Houseplant Care" has received a face lift. Outdated in both figures as well as information, this fact sheet was long overdue for a revision. The new fact sheet includes better color images, updated facts in the care and maintenance of plants as well as a list of recommended houseplants. To see the new fact sheet go to:

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-3231/F-6411web.pdf>

2006 Oklahoma Cucurbit Vegetable Production and Marketing Educational Meeting

Jim Shrefler

Attention Vegetable Growers and Gardeners! Please mark your calendar for Friday, December 15 and plan to attend the 2006 Oklahoma Cucurbit Vegetable Production and Marketing Meeting. The event will be held at the Grady County Fairgrounds in Chickasha.

Dr. Francis Mangan from the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences of the University of Massachusetts will be this year's guest speaker. Dr. Mangan has extensive experience with the production and marketing of the many exotic cucurbit crops used by various ethnic groups in the northeast region of the country. He has interacted extensively with growers, marketers and consumers to learn about the unique characteristics of the many vegetables that are valued by different ethnic groups. Learn more about his work at: www.worldcrops.org

Additional topics of the program are being developed and will include:

- Specialty melon trials 2006 Oklahoma
- Updates on cucurbit vegetable pest management
- Research experience in Oklahoma with organic cucurbit vegetable production
- Oklahoma Mesonet weather products that help with irrigation scheduling

This event should be of interest and value to anyone who grows or markets pumpkins, melons, cucumbers, etc. It is intended for all growers ranging from farmer's markets to produce stands to shippers. To be added to the mailing list so you will receive a meeting flyer, call (580) 889-7343 or send email request to jim.shrefler@okstate.edu.

Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

2007 State Master Gardener Continued Training Conference - Plans are already taking place for the 2007 State Master Gardener Continued Training Conference to be held in Claremore on Friday, June 8, 2007. The Rogers County Master Gardeners will host the conference and are already enthusiastically making plans. Stay tuned for more details! Be sure to mark your calendars now and we hope to see you all in June 2007!

Celebrate Gardening in the Natural State!
2007 International Master Gardener Conference
May 2-5, 2007, Little Rock, Arkansas

The University of Arkansas and Arkansas Master Gardeners invite you to visit our Natural State in May, which is a delightful, gentle month when our gardens are approaching their peak. Let us treat you to warm hospitality, fun and educational activities, and the chance to relax and enjoy the company of fellow gardeners.

The International Master Gardener Conference will be hosted at the [Peabody Hotel/Statehouse Convention Center](#) in downtown Little Rock, May 2-5, 2007. Please save those dates and think about coming early and staying late to enjoy some real Southern hospitality! There is so much to see and do in Arkansas, from the Delta - with its cotton, rice, and blues - to the Ozarks and Ouachitas, with their unique mountain music, gardens, and culture.

Hold on! Before you mark the dates on your calendar, you might want to eyeball some of the pre- and post-conference tours that are previewed below. They're simply delicious!

We're excited to share Arkansas' best sites, sounds, and hospitality with you. The pre- and post-tours are just exceptional for this conference; here are a few to get you thinking!

Overnight Trip to the Ozark Folk Center and Blanchard Caverns

Explore the Ozark Folk Center, a recreated 19th century pioneer village, complete with period buildings, gardens, music, and the dedicated craftspeople who are keeping this heritage alive. Its nationally acclaimed herb gardens are worth the trip alone! Spend the night onsite at Dry Creek Lodge (the OFC State Park facility) and enjoy an evening concert of folk music. After a hearty country breakfast in the morning, visit Blanchard Springs Caverns before returning to Little Rock for the conference opening.

<http://www.ozarkfolkcenter.com>

<http://www.ozarkgetaways.com/index.html>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/ozark/recreation/caverns.html>

Overnight Trip West to Arkansas Wine Country and Mount Magazine State Park

Travel west through the Arkansas River Valley and visit scenic vineyards. Enjoy a guided tasting of award winning local wines at noted local wineries. Spend the night at the brand new (06) luxury lodge atop Mt. Magazine, the highest point between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains. An interpretive program of wildlife and plants of the area is planned. The next day we visit a UAEX Fruit Station at Clarksville on the return trip to Little Rock.

<http://www.mountmagazinestatepark.com/lodge-cabin-rest/lodge>

<http://www.arkansas.com/things-to-do/wineries-micro-breweries>

<http://www.uark.edu/admin/aes/fruit.html>

Day Trip South to Old Washington and Hope, Arkansas

From its establishment in 1824, Washington was the last stop on the trail from "Civilization" to Texas, which was still part of Mexico in those days! There are 45 period structures preserved and maintained along the same dusty streets that played host to the likes of Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and James Bowie. James Bowies famous knife was first crafted here and a blacksmith's shop has been recreated as part of the village restoration! Enjoy lunch at the local tavern before returning to Little Rock via Hope, Arkansas, the home of world famous watermelons and former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

<http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/park.asp?id=36>

<http://www.hopearkansas.net/>

Overnight Trip Southwest to Hot Springs National Park and Garvan Gardens

Bubbling thermal springs have made this area a special destination for travelers since pre-

Columbian times. Today, the city of Hot Springs is designated as a National Park. It was the first federally protected area in the nations history. Stroll along Bathhouse Row downtown, browse shops and art galleries in Victorian buildings that are literally carved into the lush mountainsides. You spend the night in the grand old Arlington Hotel. This tour includes lunch at Arkansas' Botanical Garden, Garvan Woodland Gardens. This destination provides breathtaking landscape on a peninsula in Lake Hamilton and is the showplace and working lab for the Landscape division of the U of A's School of Architecture.

<http://www.nps.gov/hosp/>

<http://www.arlingtonhotel.com/>

<http://www.garvangardens.org/>

As a reminder, the Peabody Hotel/Statehouse Convention Center is headquarters for the 2007 IMGC (International Master Gardener Conference.) Be sure to mention the conference for special room rates! www.peabodylittlerock.com

Registration packages with schedules, itineraries, and prices are due out in October and you can bookmark <http://mg2007.uaex.edu> as the Official IMGC '07 website.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask! We hope to see you in Little Rock, May 2007!

Janet B. Carson
Extension Horticulture Specialist
University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Poinsettia Open House

December 6, 2006

OSU – Stillwater Research Greenhouse

Tree Care Workshop

November 14, 2006

OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater, OK

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Christina Wells, Clemson University

Keynote Lectures:

Influence of Planting Depth on Landscape Tree Survival and Girdling Root Formation

Viability and Infectivity of Mycorrhizal Products Marketed for Landscape Trees

AR-OK Turfgrass Management Short Course

January 25-26, 2007, Fayetteville, AR

Master Gardener Continued Training Conference

June 8, 2006, Claremore, OK

Summer Gardenfest

June 9, 2007, OSU Botanical Gardens

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