

Horticulture Tips

December 2006

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

- 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 Winter Market Gets New Indoor Location

David Hillock

The OSU-Oklahoma City Winter Market will be in business from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Saturdays this winter in a new indoor location, the Horticulture Pavilion at 400 N. Portland in Oklahoma City. The only registered farmers' market in the area that is open all year long, every item sold at the market is grown or made in Oklahoma. Vendor offerings include tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, greens, broccoli, carrots, cheese, nuts, eggs, chicken, beef, honey, fresh baked breads and pastries. The winter market also offers holiday decorations, orchids, gifts, soaps and handmade cards. Check out the many specialty items for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. In addition, many of the food items are certified organic. For more information, directions or a list of items for the current week, visit www.osuokc.edu/farmersmarket or call (405) 945-3358.

Soil Testing and Fertilizer Recommendations for Fruits and Nuts

Eric T. Stafne

One of the most frequent questions I receive is concerning soil test interpretations for grapes and pecans. And, as much as I enjoy entertaining those queries, another option is available for those of you who can't reach me readily. A Java-based computer program for soil interpretation and fertilizer recommendations has been developed by Dr. Zhang and Dr. Nofziger in the Plant and Soil Sciences Department. Many of the crops within the program are row crops, but it also includes recommendations for grapes, peaches, pecans and home gardens. It is easy to use and simple to download. There are four different heading to choose from within the program: Soil test interpretation, Nutrient sources, Nutrient blending and Value of manure. Within the Soil test interpretation interface, one can enter in the soil test results (including N, P, K, pH, buffer index, Ca, Mg, S, B, Fe, and Zn), choose the crop of interest, and voila, an instant recommendation is given. The website to download this program is:

<http://soilphysics.okstate.edu/software/SoilTest/index.html>

Once the program is downloaded to your computer there is no need to download it again. I would encourage anyone who deals with grapes, peaches and pecans to use this valuable resource to get initial recommendations. If you wish to verify (or contest) some of the results I am always here to help. I don't wish to "pawn you off" onto a computer program instead of talking directly to me – that is not my intent at all. I just wish to provide you with another option for getting information to your clientele faster. If you have any questions, comments or criticisms of this program, please let me know, as we are always striving to make your job just a little easier.

Wrapping Trees

David Hillock

While it is not always necessary to wrap the trunk of a newly planted tree, some trees with thin bark may benefit from wrapping during the winter months for the first couple years. Trees with thin bark may be susceptible to southwest injury, an injury that can occur as the bark of a tree heats up in the sun during a winter day and then refreezes as soon as the sun goes down resulting in cell damage. If a tree needs wrapped, it should be put on in October and removed in March. Though we are already past the recommended time of October, the tree can still be wrapped if necessary.

The wrap and the material used to secure the wrap should also not be too constricting to the tree and should have ventilation to provide air circulation. If the tree is wrapped with paper wrap, it should be applied from the bottom working your way up to the first branch forming a shingle-like effect, overlapping the edges of the wrap. This will help the wrap to shed water instead of trapping water underneath. It is important to remove the wrap in March before tree growth starts as the wrap may start to constrict the trunk. The wraps can also harbor insects and trap moisture that can lead to disease, which are also important reasons to remove the wrap on a timely basis. Plastic wraps that have perforated holes work well, allow proper air circulation, and resist damage from the weather so you can reuse them for several years.

Oklahoma State Pecan Show 2006

Becky Carroll

Be sure to get the word out to everyone to enter their best pecans in the state show this year. 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 12, 2007.

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 2 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. Perique | 26. Other Cultivars |
| 5. Choctaw | 16. SanSaba Improved | 27. Large-Native |
| 6. Comanche | 17. Schley (eastern) | (seedling) |
| 7. Graking | 18. Shawnee | 28. Small-Native |
| 8. Gratex | 19. Shoshoni | (seedling) |
| 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 and second 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 native 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 12, 2007 at the following address:

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

Tool Cleanup

David Hillock

This is a good time to clean and sharpen tools before storing them for the winter. A little time now will ensure that they are ready to go as soon as it warms up in the spring. Shovels and hoes can be cleaned, sharpened at a 45-70 degree angle and coated with oil to prevent rust. If the tool has a wooden handle, it can be coated with a layer of boiled linseed oil to keep it weatherproof. Tools such as pruners, loppers and saws should be sharpened professionally unless you have the proper equipment to sharpen them.

Feeding Birds

David Hillock

It's time to remember our fine, feathered friends for the winter months. If you already have birdfeeders, it's a good time to clean them. Wash them in soapy water, then rinse in a 10% bleach solution and dry completely.

It's important to match your birdfeeders to the type of bird you want to attract. Smaller birds such as chickadee, tufted titmouse and finches prefer the tube feeders. Larger birds such as cardinals and blue jays prefer hopper or platform feeders, and birds such as the morning dove eat seed on the ground. Just as people prefer different types of food, birds prefer different types of food.

Thistle and black oil sunflowers are good for smaller birds, cardinals like sunflowers of all types and millet is good for ground feeding birds. A good general bird feeding mix is white proso millet and black oil sunflower. Suet is good for woodpeckers and nuthatches.

Water is also an important feature, not only for the birds to drink, but also to keep them clean as clean feathers insulate better from the cold weather. If you have a birdbath heater, be sure that it will shut off automatically when the water reaches about 40 degrees F so it doesn't get too warm. It is also important to keep the water and the birdbath clean. For more information on attracting birds to the landscape, see OSU Extension Fact Sheet [F-6435](#), Landscaping and Gardening for Birds.

Narcissus

David Hillock

Paper white narcissus can add some bloom to the dreary winter days. The bulbs are some of the easiest for forcing as they do not require any chilling before they will bloom. Supplies needed include a low, flat container without drain holes that is anywhere from 3 to 5 inches deep, some gravel – 1/2 inch or less in diameter, bulbs, activated charcoal and water. Place the gravel in the bottom of the container filling to 1/2 to 3/4 full. A little bit of charcoal can be added to keep the water from stagnating. Place the bulbs on top of the gravel so they are close to each other but not touching. Fill in around the bulbs with gravel so that the bottom 1/2 to 1/3 of the bulb is covered and then fill the container with water so that the water level is just below the bottom of the bulb. If the bulbs actually sit in the water they will start to rot. Do not let the container run dry after root growth has begun as the roots will die if they are allowed to dry out. Place the container in a cool, dark place for about 3 weeks in order to get good root growth and then move it into an area with brighter light so the tops can grow. Turn the container daily so that the leaves do not have to stretch towards the light. When the paper whites start to bloom, move them to an area with filtered light so the blooms will last longer. This whole process takes about 6 weeks. Potting up a succession of bulbs every 2 weeks will insure bloom throughout the winter months.

Mistletoe

David Hillock

Mistletoe is a familiar plant this time of year. The mistletoe that we use for decorations (*Phoradendron* spp.) is native to North America and Oklahoma. The mistletoe of European folklore is actually in the same family but a different genus (*Viscum album*) than the North American mistletoe. The customs associated with European mistletoe were transferred to the North American mistletoe with the settlers.

Mistletoe is a partial parasite. It can make its own food through photosynthesis, but it also sends roots down into the vascular tissue of the host tree to obtain water and nutrients. Mistletoe is spread by birds. They eat the seeds, which are then deposited on branches in the bird droppings. The seeds then sprout and send rootlets down during the winter; large populations of mistletoe can severely stunt the growth of the tree and even kill it over time. If mistletoe is a problem,

there is a product that can help get rid of it. Florel Brand Fruit Eliminator by Monterey Lawn and Garden Products helps suppress mistletoe and can be sprayed on the mistletoe any time after the leaves have fallen from the host trees through midwinter. This product can also be used in the spring to eliminate nuisance fruit such as sweetgum balls, unwanted apples, crabapples, cottonwood, flowering pear and other plants.

Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

Horticulture Industries Show (HIS) - January 5-6, 2007. The program and pre-registration forms are now available - <http://home.okstate.edu/Okstate/dasnr/hort/hortlahome.nsf/toc/HIS>. Pre-registration ends December 15 and is \$50; after December 15 registration is \$60. This year HIS will be held in Fort Smith, Arkansas at the Holiday Inn Convention Center. All Master Gardeners are invited to attend. If you are a returning Master Gardener you can receive Continuing Education hours that will count towards the minimum 20 hours you need to keep active status. Remember, however, that only the time actually spent in class counts as training received. Travel and in-between times do not count.

Though we do offer a Master Gardener/Public Garden session, you may also choose from any other session offered during the conference. There are 8 commodity groups represented during HIS all conducting seminars, workshops and business meetings. You may choose from any of the following groups - Vegetables, Fruit, Herb, Sustainable Ag, Farmers Market, Master Gardener/Public Garden, General and Christmas Tree.

The theme for this year's program is "Horticulture for Food and Fun". Topics for the Master Gardener/Public Garden session on Friday include: Unusually Inspired Vegetable (and Fruit) Gardening; Wine as a Food, a 6th Generation Growers Perspective; Garden Whimsy; Winter Beauty in the Landscape; and How to Have an Award Winning Design and Update of UA Ft. Smith Botanical Garden. Sessions on Saturday include: "Going to the Chapel" and More at Garven Woodland Gardens; Metamorphosis: Changing Children's Lives with Butterflies; Hosta Diseases; A New Gardening Experience in NW Arkansas; and Edible Landscaping.

2007 State Master Gardener Conference

Plans are underway for next year's State Master Gardener Conference to be held in Claremore at the Claremore Expo Center on June 8, 2007 with a preconference Evening Social on June 7. Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend. The Rogers County Master Gardeners are hosting the conference and are working hard to make this conference another fantastic one! Watch for updates coming early January.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

CANCELLED - Poinsettia Open House

December 6, 2006, OSU – Stillwater Research Greenhouse

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.

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