

Horticulture Tips

February 2007

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

GARDEN TIPS FOR FEBRUARY!

David Hillock

General

- Base any plant fertilization on a soil test. For directions, contact your county Extension Educator.
- Provide feed and unfrozen water for your feathered friends.
- Clean up birdhouses before spring tenants arrive during the middle of this month.
- Avoid salting sidewalks for damage can occur to plant material. Use alternative commercial products, sand or kitty litter for traction.
- Join *Oklahoma Gardening* on your OETA station for the start of its 32nd season beginning on February 24 and 25, 2007. Saturdays at 11:00 a.m. and Sundays at 3:30 p.m.

Trees & Shrubs

- Fertilize trees, including fruit and nut trees and shrubs, annually. (F-6412)
- Most bare-rooted trees and shrubs should be planted in February or March. (F-6414)
- Finish pruning shade trees, summer flowering shrubs and hedges. Spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia may be pruned immediately after flowering. **Do not** top trees or prune just for the sake of pruning. (F-6409)
- Look for arborvitae aphids on many evergreen shrubs during the warmer days of early spring.
- Gall-producing insects on oaks, pecans, hackberries, etc. need to be sprayed prior to bud break of foliage.
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. (F-7306)

Fruit & Nuts

- Spray peaches and nectarines with a fungicide for prevention of peach leaf curl before bud swell. (F-7319)
- Mid-February is a good time to begin pruning and fertilizing trees and small fruits.
- Collect and store graftwood for grafting pecans later this spring.
- Begin planting blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, asparagus and other perennial garden crops later this month.
- Choose fruit varieties that have a proven track record for Oklahoma's conditions (F-6222 has a recommended list).

Turf

- A product containing glyphosate plus a broadleaf herbicide can be used on **dormant** bermuda in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control. (F-6421)

Vegetables

- Cool-season vegetable transplants can still be started for late spring garden planting.
- By February 15 many cool-season vegetables like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peas and potatoes can be planted. (F-6004)

Flowers

- Force spring flowering branches like forsythia, quince, peach, apple and weigela for early bloom indoors.
- Forced spring bulbs should begin to bloom indoors. Many need 10-12 weeks of cold, dark conditions prior to blooming.
- Feed tulips in early February.
- Wait to prune roses in March.

Graftwood Sources for 2007

Becky Carroll

The following website lists the updated graftwood sources for 2007:

[http://home.okstate.edu/tools/webtools.nsf/Images/horttips/\\$FILE/07graftwood.pdf](http://home.okstate.edu/tools/webtools.nsf/Images/horttips/$FILE/07graftwood.pdf)

Report of the 2006 Oklahoma Grape Growers Survey

Eric T. Stafne

In total 90 surveys were returned. This number is somewhat disappointing considering the time and effort expended to develop and advertise the survey. Only 16 of the more than 40 wineries participated in the survey. The question of why so few wineries answered the survey questions needs to be addressed. As in any survey, the expectation is less-than-desired participation. There seems to be a general lack of willingness to share information or a lack of understanding as to its importance based on the total number of surveys returned, as well as the number of questions that were not answered by respondents. Another survey may be warranted at a later date.

The acreage reported in the survey is approximately 240 acres. If one were to extrapolate total acreage based on the percentage of wineries that responded (~40%), the total acreage may approach 600 acres statewide; however, that is speculation and in no way constitutes a true estimate. As expected, *Vitis vinifera* varieties are the most widely grown in Oklahoma because of the burgeoning wine industry. Observation and research has shown some vinifera varieties to be highly susceptible to cold damage. More research needs to be conducted to elicit where vinifera varieties do best in Oklahoma. French × American hybrids are good alternatives due to their better cold tolerance, but have not been embraced by Oklahoma grape growers outside of the northeast part of the state. Reasons for this bias likely include hybrid varieties being perceived as lower quality than vinifera varieties, ignorance of available hybrid varieties, personal preference and misinformation.

Grape acreage has increased most years since 1998. As of now, there appears to be no ceiling for grapes in Oklahoma. The industry is vibrant and public interest is high. The main obstacles for development of a sizable and sustainable industry are unfavorable liquor laws, environment (particularly cold damage) and education. Oklahoma State University is making every effort to work toward solving the cold damage and education limitations.

Pest problems that grape growers face are numerous. Insect pests are usually troublesome rather than catastrophic in most cases. Green June beetle is perennially the most damaging. Diseases are more important as related to harvest potential. Black rot is widespread throughout Oklahoma and prevention with fungicides and/or genetic resistance are the only methods to control it. Other diseases like crown gall, downy and powdery mildew, and bunch rot are also serious for grape growers. Growers should look for assurance of crown gall-free plant material before receiving shipments from nurseries. Abiotic problems like environment, herbicide drift and animal pests vary in their importance depending on location. Harsh environmental factors were often mentioned in the survey, including frosts, freezes and drought. As more grapes are grown in Oklahoma depredation will likely increase, especially from birds. In the future, some growers may need to net their vineyards to ensure harvestable fruit. The sensitive crop viewer that vineyard owners can register for with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry is a good initial step to curb potential herbicide drift; however, grape growers must also be vigilant in educating neighbors of the potential ramifications of phenoxy (and other) herbicide drift on grapes.

Fifteen OSU county educators responded to calls for distribution of surveys. In total the survey revealed 33 counties in Oklahoma where grapes are grown; therefore, a disconnect is apparent between grape growers and county educators. Many county educators have no background in viticulture and grape growers may dismiss them due to this lack of knowledge. Grape growers and county educators need to work together to bridge the gap and forge ahead as partners for the good of the industry. Dr. Stafne will provide all interested county educators with in-service training on grapes, as well as other educational materials to foster improvement in this area.

Overall, the survey was successful in identifying what varieties are being grown, what problems growers are encountering, and the future direction for educational programs. The survey fell short in gaining a comprehensive report of the industry in terms of acreage and value. More education needs to be done to inform potential survey takers that information collected will be important to the future of the industry and that all information collected is anonymous and confidential.

Anyone interested in getting the entire report should contact Dr. Stafne at 405-744-5409 or eric.t.stafne@okstate.edu.

Sprucing Up a Drab Winter Landscape

David Hillock

This time of year can be a little drab when most plants are dormant. However, several plants exhibit characteristics that can be interesting even in winter. Some plants have colorful or

interesting bark and twigs, colorful berries, unique seed heads and foliage with subtle natural tones. Some even like to tease us a little reminding us that spring is not too far away by producing flowers.

Many of these characteristics don't just jump out at you so you may have to look closely. Sometimes a little stretch of the imagination is helpful to enjoy these intricate details provided by nature.

Several woody plants have interesting bark or twigs that sometimes go unnoticed until the leaves have fallen in the fall. Red twig dogwood can have bright red stems, yellow twig dogwood with yellow stems and Japanese kerria bright green stems. Trees with attractive bark include Heritage river birch, crapemyrtle, bald cypress, lacebark elm, paperbark maple and London planetree. Harry Lauder's Walkingstick has twisted, gnarly stems that really stand out in winter and make for great additions to indoor flower arrangements.

Plants with showy fruits include chokeberry, cotoneaster, dogwood, euonymus, firethorn, hawthorn, hollies (especially the deciduous forms), nandina and viburnum.

Many perennials develop unique seed heads that persist into the winter months and can also serve as food for wildlife. Ornamental grasses often develop attractive plumes and the neutral tones of the foliage that sway back and forth in the breezes adds additional beauty and interest to the senses.

Winter jasmine can bloom as early as late December and January if we have a mild winter. Otherwise its small, bright yellow flowers appear in February, even before forsythia. Winter jasmine's young twigs can also be bright green. Witchhazel sports small flowers, not usually as showy, so the plant should be located in an area where they can be viewed up closely - like outside the kitchen window or next to an entryway or patio. Witchhazel flowers have strap-like petals and may be brownish to orange, red, maroon or yellow. They appear anywhere from November to March depending on species and cultivar. Winter honeysuckle produces creamy white flowers tinged in pink or red that are lemon-scented and extremely fragrant. Flowers of winter honeysuckle can appear in late winter to early spring.

So, this winter take a look around your landscape and see what you can find and appreciate. And if you don't have many plants to enjoy this winter, think about planting some this year to spruce up the landscape next winter. Remember, the next time you go shopping for plants consider other attributes that plants may have beside the typical spring/summer flower or fall leaf color that we often seek.

Winter Insect Control

David Hillock

Insects such as aphids, scale, mites, gall insects and others overwinter on woody plant material by hiding in the cracks and crevices of bark and stems. Populations of these insects and others can be reduced significantly during the winter months by the use of dormant oils.

Oils are petroleum-based products that also contain certain fatty acids which form layers on plant parts to smother insects or provide a mechanical barrier to prevent damage. There are two kinds of oils: growing season (summer) and dormant. Some common examples include:

- Sunspray UltraFine (6E Plus): Normal dormant use. Summer use on vegetables, greenhouse ornamentals, flower and foliage plants, some fruit and nut trees, some field crops, blueberries and grapes.
- SAF-T-SIDE: Normal dormant use. Delayed dormant use on shade trees, shrubs, ornamentals, flower and foliage plants, home greenhouse ornamentals, vegetables, tree fruits and nuts and small fruits.
- Ortho Volck Oil Spray: Dormant and summer use on citrus, fruit and shade trees, evergreens and some shrubs. Outdoor use only.
- Scalecide: Dormant and summer use on fruit and shade trees, ornamentals, evergreen and small fruit. Indoor or outdoor use.
- All Seasons Spray Oil: Dormant or summer use on fruit trees, shade trees, evergreens, ornamentals, flowers and houseplants.

Mixes of dormant oil and sulfur are also available. "Dormant" refers to the time of year the application is made. Remember, as a general rule, that oils control insects, not plant diseases. Sulfur-type products control diseases. An exception is the use of some sulfur products to control mites.

Be sure to READ THE LABEL of every product for cautions and proper instructions for use. Oils should only be used when temperatures are above 40°F and less than 85°F. Some products may not be listed for use on evergreens, foliage plants and certain woody plants so be sure to read entire label before applying. DO NOT apply during periods of drought or when plants exhibit moisture stress.

2007 OKLAHOMA PROVEN! SELECTIONS

David Hillock

Annual

Blanketflower, *Gaillardias*

- Exposure: Full sun
- Soil: Most well-drained soils
- Hardiness: Use as an annual

Perennial

'Comanche Campfire' Evening Primrose, *Oenothera macrocarpa* 'Comanche Campfire'

- Exposure: Full sun
- Soil: Any well-drained soil
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 4

Shrub

Southern Waxmyrtle, *Myrica cerifera*

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Tolerant of infertile soils
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 7

Tree

'Oklahoma' Redbud, *Cercis canadensis var. texensis* 'Oklahoma'

- Exposure: Full sun
- Soil: Well-drained
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6

For more information about Oklahoma Proven go to <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/> or contact Lou Anella, 405-744-6593.

2007 ALL AMERICA SELECTIONS WINNERS

David Hillock

This year's winners in the All America Selections program include three annuals and one vegetable.

Flowers

Celosia 'Fresh Look Gold' - 2007 AAS Flower Award Winner

Correctly named, these plants look as fresh in September as they did when planted in the spring. 'Fresh Look Gold' plants are embellished with bright golden plumes that remain colorful all season, not "browning" with maturity. Since the plumes remain attractive, there is no reason to deadhead and no pest problems are expected, thus 'Fresh Look Gold' needs little maintenance in a sunny garden. It is a carefree annual useful in formal or informal gardens. The golden plumes can be woven into a garden bed like a living tapestry because the plumes have a soft layered texture. 'Fresh Look Gold' proved to be heat, humidity and rain tolerant in AAS Trials across North America. Plants will grow to a height of one foot. This celosia is one of the best annuals for season-long performance.

Petunia F1 'Opera Supreme Pink Morn' - 2007 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

Iridescent pink blooms are the unique feature of this vigorous trailing petunia. A silvery shine causes blooms to shimmer, capturing an admirer's attention from a distance. The 2.5-inch flowers are pink, shading to creamy white in the center, with a yellow throat. These three colors on a bloom are named a "morn" type. 'Opera Supreme Pink Morn' plants have many qualities that every gardener wants to find. Plants are continuously flowering. Gardeners can relax and let the plants do what comes naturally - flower. The hybrid plants are capable of growing 3 feet in sunny locations. This spreading quality covers garden soil and can choke weeds beautifully. Plants attain a height of only 4 to 6 inches. 'Opera Supreme Pink Morn' can be relied on for exceptional garden performance without pruning or deadheading. Less work enables gardeners more leisure time in the garden.

Vinca 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' - 2007 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' is the first vinca with a burgundy halo surrounding a large white center. This bicolor bloom is a vivid contrast, exceptionally visible in an annual garden. Early flowering with a well balanced plant form, 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' is highly recommended for spring or summer plantings. With proven heat and drought tolerance, the garden performance of 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' is assured. In a full sun garden location, these vinca plants will reach a foot tall and wide when mature. Due to the ease of growing and continuous flowering, 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' is perfectly suitable for any garden or patio planters that receive sun. Because Vinca needs less water than other annuals, planting 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' in containers means fewer trips with the hose to water. Gardeners can rely on 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' to provide color all summer without pinching or tending to plant maintenance.

Vegetable

Pepper F1 'Holy Molé' - 2007 AAS Vegetable Award Winner

'Holy Molé' is a memorable name and the plant will provide a memorable harvest of peppers. It is the first hybrid pasilla-type pepper, which is used to make the famous molé sauce. 'Holy Molé' showed improved vigor, earliness and considerably higher yield than the comparisons in side-by-side trials. A reason for the higher yield is the virus resistances bred into the variety. 'Holy Molé' is resistant to two common viruses that stunt plants and reduce pepper production. The immature green peppers are 7 to 9 inches long and can be harvested in about 85 days from transplanting. If fruit is left on the plant, they will mature to a dark chocolate color. The pepper flavor is nutty and tangy. Mature plants are 3 feet tall; a perfect size for patio containers. 'Holy Molé' is easily grown in a sunny location and thrives on summer heat.

To learn more about these and other AAS winners go to <http://www.all-americanselections.org/>.

2007 PERENNIAL OF THE YEAR™

David Hillock

Nepeta 'Walker's Low'

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title of Perennial Plant of the Year to Nepeta 'Walker's Low'. Introduced in 1988 in Europe, Walker's Low catmint has become increasingly popular with each passing year due to its lovely blue-violet flowers and its long bloom time, attractive grey-green foliage, ease of propagation, lack of pest or disease problems and low maintenance requirements.

- Hardiness - USDA Zones 3 to 8
- Size - 30 to 36 inches tall and wide. Walker's Low is named for a garden and the name is not related to plant size
- Light - Best in full sun, but can tolerate shade in hot climates
- Soil - Prefers well drained soil and neutral pH
- Uses - Good companion plant for early and late blooming plants. Great for perennial borders, but can be used in herb gardens, rock gardens, as a ground cover, or as a container plant.

- Unique Qualities - Will bloom continuously throughout the season if properly pruned. Great for attracting bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects, but is deer and rabbit resistant. Leaves release a wonderful aroma when crushed.

For more information about the 2007 Perennial of the Year visit www.perennialplant.org.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

State Master Gardener Continued Training Conference

June 8, 2007, Claremore, Oklahoma

Oklahoma Gardening Summer Gardenfest

June 9, 2007, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater

Greenhouse Production Short Course

June 27-28, 2007, OSU-Oklahoma City

Contact Mike Schnelle for additional information at Mike.schnelle@okstate.edu or 405-744-7361.

Oklahoma Greenhouse Growers' Fall Update

October 10, 2007, OSU-Stillwater

Contact Mike Schnelle for additional information at Mike.schnelle@okstate.edu or 405-744-7361.

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