

Horticulture Tips

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

GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER!

David Hillock

Lawn & Turf

- Fertilize cool-season grasses like fescue with 1 pound nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
- Continue to mow fescue as needed at 2 inches and water during dry conditions.
- Control broadleaf winter weeds like dandelions. ([HLA-6601](#))
- Keep falling leaves off fescue to avoid damage to the foliage.

Tree & Shrub

- Prune deciduous trees in early part of winter. Prune only for structural and safety purposes.
- Wrap young, thin-barked trees with a commercial protective material to prevent winter sunscald.
- Apply dormant oil for scale infested trees and shrubs before temperatures fall below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Follow label directions.
- Continue to plant balled and burlapped trees.
- Watch for arborvitae aphids, which tolerate cooler temperatures in evergreen shrubs.

Flowers

- Tulips can still be successfully planted through the middle of November.
- Leave foliage on asparagus, mums, and other perennials to help insulate crowns from harsh winter conditions.
- Bulbs like hyacinth, narcissus and tulip can be potted in containers for indoor forcing.

Fruits & Nuts

- Delay pruning fruit trees until next February or March before bud break.
- Harvest pecans and walnuts immediately to eliminate deterioration of the kernel.

Miscellaneous

- Leftover garden seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer until next planting season. Discard seeds over 3 years old.
- Gather and shred leaves. Add to compost, use as mulch or till into garden plots.
- Clean and store garden and landscape tools. Coat with a light application of oil to prevent rusting. Drain fuel tanks, irrigation lines and hoses. Bring hoses indoors.

Wrapping Young Trees for Protection

David Hillock

Young, thin-barked trees such as maples and other species often sunscald unless protected. The twigs that shade the trunk should be left at planting, but cut back a few inches so they become denser. A twiggy trunk is preferable to tree wraps, but not all trees have enough twigs, nor is it always practical or aesthetically pleasing to leave lower limbs.

Commercial tree wraps are available and may provide protection for thin-barked trees. Plastic wraps may provide better protection than paper wraps against lawn mower, weed-eater and rodent damage. If misused, however, damage may occur in the form of trunk girdling or constriction, insects, disease and excessive bark moisture.

Protective wraps may not be necessary at planting. Use based on the type of protection needed. Normal application of tree trunk wraps is October-March for the first two growing seasons. Wraps should be removed each spring prior to spring growth. During spring growth the trunk expands and increases in size. Wraps too tightly applied or left on during this time may result in constriction to the trunk. Tree wraps should be applied loosely from the base up to the first branch by overlapping for a shingle effect. Plastic wraps should fit loosely and include holes or slits for good air movement. Periodically inspect the wraps for trunk damage and insects.

Seedling trees and shrubs may need a shelter during weather extremes during either the winter or summer. Cheesecloth or various other windbreaks can be used. Unfortunately, anti-desiccants do not relieve plant stress under Oklahoma conditions.

When Should I Cut Back my Perennials and Ornamental Grasses?

David Hillock

As we move into the winter months and many of our perennials and ornamental grasses begin to go dormant, many wonder if this is the time to cut them back. The answer is, not really. How's that for a definitive answer? Okay, let me explain.

In general it is best to wait until late winter or early spring, just before new growth emerges, to cut back most perennials. There are a few good reasons to wait until then. The first is the old foliage acts as a natural mulch protecting the crown of the plant from harsh winter conditions. It also helps to capture precipitation allowing it to percolate down into the root zone, keeping the plant well watered through winter.

Another reason is many have excellent ornamental characteristics in their dormant state. The soft natural tones of gray, tan, brown and even silver provide some interest to an otherwise stark landscape. The wonderful forms and striking seed heads of many plants also add character to the garden. Ornamental grasses are particularly attractive during winter months because of the many interesting forms and textures they provide and the movement and sound created by even the slightest breeze.

Another reason is the added value of providing food for wildlife such as birds. It's quite refreshing to watch birds darting around the garden in search of food, bringing life to a cold wintery day.

Now here is the other side of that not really. If your plants have been riddled with insect and disease problems, then it is a good idea to go ahead and cut them back in the fall. By removing infected plant material in the fall, you are also removing the pests that were causing so many problems. Another reason to cut them back in the fall is to remove the cover that creates a nice habitat for critters. If the planting bed is near the home, these critters might find their way into the home. Removing their cover discourages the critters from taking up residency.

Junior Plant Scientists – A New Opportunity for Youth

Shelley Mitchell

Junior Plant Scientists is a new program created by the Michigan 4-H Children's Gardens, the U.S. Botanic Garden and the American Horticultural Society. It is a free program designed to guide children through a series of 10 explorations regarding plants. Each exploration has three components: 1) in-garden (visit to a local garden or park to complete a few activities), 2) at-home (activities designed to be completed at home or in the neighborhood), and 3) on-line (online activities such as research and investigating online resources). Children completing the program earn a Junior Plant Scientist certificate signed by representatives from the three supporting agencies. The explorations can be done individually or as groups.

The explorations currently available include: Plant Discovery (plants in common and curious places) and Plant Names (scientific naming). Soon to be available are: Plant Uses, Plant Life Cycles, Plant Morphology, Plant Physiology, Plant and Animal Interactions, Rare and Endangered Plants, Taking Care of Plants and Celebrate Plants. There is a section on the website for kids to record their findings, as well as a "Wonder Wall" where Junior Plant Scientists can ask questions of experts in the field. The "Wrap Up" section is a checklist for each discovery, so that explorers can keep track of their progress and determine when they are ready to go to the next exploration.

To see the activities and requirements, you must be logged on. The webpage for Junior Plant Scientists is <http://jrplantscientist.ath.cx>. Individual students may sign up via the webpage. In the future, group leaders/teachers will be able to sign groups up on the webpage, but that option is not yet available. To enroll a group, email Norm Lownds, Curator, 4-H Children's Gardens, at lownds@msu.edu.

New Certification Area for Junior Master Gardeners

Shelley Mitchell

Junior Master Gardeners (JMG) has introduced a new Golden Ray Series ® certification area – "Growing a Vegetable Garden." Thirteen specific activities from the Level 1 curriculum are

required for this certification. See the Junior Master Gardeners website for details:
www.jmgkids.us.

Attention all JMG groups: Annual registration of groups assists with planning training and programming needs, as well as determining overall involvement in the JMG program. Please register your group each year (it is free!). If you need the forms, see the JMG website (www.jmgkids.us) or email shelley.mitchell@okstate.edu. Thank you!

2009 Oklahoma Cucurbit Production and Marketing Educational Meeting

Jim Shrefler

The 2009 Oklahoma Cucurbit Production and Marketing Educational Meeting will emphasize topics that should be of particular interest to Market Gardeners and Farmers' Market Growers. The meeting is intended to provide information of value to Extension Educators, market garden growers, commercial farmers and agricultural supply businesses. The event will address numerous topics related to cucurbit fruits and vegetables, crops that include watermelon, cantaloupe, squash, pumpkins and others. This year's program is being developed to provide growers with a diversity of ideas on which crops to grow, how to grow them and new ideas on how to market. Here are a few examples:

- Squash comes in many forms, flavors and sizes. A cucurbit crop breeding specialist will shed some light on the different types of squash and how they are used.
- Marketing of cucurbits is done in various ways, one of these being the farmers' market. Several programs are in place to encourage the public to purchase in farmers' markets. One presentation will discuss the in and outs of these programs in order to help growers better understand requirements for participating in this marketing opportunity.
- Finally, getting youth involved in gardening can be a win-win situation for all. A youth education expert will discuss ways to use horticulture and gardening as a stimulating educational experience.

Other talks will address grower marketing experience, food safety, fertilization, insect, disease and weed control and season extension using hoop houses. Updates will be provided on various issues of importance to Oklahoma cucurbit vegetable production. Experts will be on hand to answer your questions.

The meeting will be held Wednesday, December 9, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Community Building in Chickasha (Grady County Fairgrounds).

Please note that there will be a \$10 registration fee for this year's event and registration will be required by December 1 to guarantee the noon meal. Watch for further details at www.lane-ag.org or contact the Lane Agriculture Center at 580-889-7343 or by email jim.shrefler@okstate.edu.

Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

Horticulture Industries Show (HIS) – January 8-9, 2010. The HIS program is nearly complete and preregistration forms will be mailed late November – early December. This year HIS will be held at the Tulsa Community College Northeast Campus in Tulsa; all Master Gardeners (MG) are invited to attend. If you are a returning MG you can receive Continuing Education hours that will count towards the minimum 20 hours you need to keep active member 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 MG/Public Garden session, you may also choose from any other session offered during the conference. There are six commodity groups represented during HIS, all conducting seminars, workshops and business meetings. You may choose from any of the following groups – Vegetables/ Farmers Market, Fruit, Herb, Sustainable Agriculture, Master Gardener/Public Garden and Christmas Tree.

Topics for the MG/Public Garden session includes: *Growing in Harmony with Native and Non-native Plant Materials; Exemplary Youth Gardening Programs; Weeding out the Adults; Designing a Children's Garden; Japanese Landscape Design; Top 5 Insect Problems of 2009; There's Something About Vines; OSU Insect Adventure – Entomology Up Close and Personal!; Managing Turf in Shady Areas; The Xeriscape Demonstration Garden at Bickham-Rudkin Park, Edmond.*

This should be another great conference, hope to see you there!

2010 State Master Gardener Continuing Education Conference – June 17-18, 2010. Next year the Cleveland County Master Gardeners will host the State Master Gardener Conference in Norman. The conference will be held June 17-18, 2010 at the J. D. McCarty Center. Thursday, June 17 will be an evening social at the Cleveland County Extension Demonstration Garden. Regular conference activities will begin on Friday, June 18. We hope that you will mark your calendars and plan to attend. Planning and organization of the conference is still underway, but you can keep updated of the progress by visiting <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/hortla/mastergardener.htm>.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Global Horticulture

December 2, 2009, Stillwater

Horticulture Industries Show

January 8 and 9, 2010, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa

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