

# Horticulture Tips

## February 2011

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 new season beginning February 19. *Oklahoma Gardening* airs on 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. ([HLA-6412](#))
- Most bare-rooted trees and shrubs should be planted in February or March. ([HLA-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. ([HLA-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. ([EPP-7306](#))

#### Fruit & Nuts

- Spray peaches and nectarines with a fungicide for prevention of peach leaf curl before bud swell. ([EPP-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. Fact Sheet [HLA-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. ([HLA-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. ([HLA-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 2011**

*Becky Carroll*

The graftwood sources for 2011 are listed at the following website:

<http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/pecan/images/graftwood.pdf>.

## ***Amsonia hubrichtii* –Perennial Plant of the Year**

*Kimberly Toscano*

Each year the Perennial Plant Association features an outstanding perennial that has proved its worth in the landscape. This year the honor goes to *Amsonia hubrichtii*, also known as Arkansas blue star or thread leaf blue star. And what better perennial to receive so much attention. Arkansas blue star is a graceful yet hardy plant with exquisite ornamental qualities. Native to Arkansas and Oklahoma, Arkansas blue star is hardy in USDA zones 4 to 9. Plants grow best in full sun to partial shade. *Amsonia* is tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions, but thrives in moist, well-drained soils. Plants will also perform well under low moisture conditions and, once established, are very drought tolerant. Arkansas blue star is unaffected by insect or disease problems.

Light blue star-shaped flowers give *Amsonia* its common name and cover the plant in spring. The exceptional fine foliage of *Amsonia* graces the garden season long, providing a soft, bright green mound to compliment courser-leaved companions. The foliage turns a brilliant golden color in autumn providing one of the best displays of fall color among herbaceous perennials. The fall color is the reason most gardeners grow this outstanding perennial. The billowy golden fall foliage combines well with ornamental grasses, fall-blooming perennials or dark-leaved plants such as ‘Black Lace’ elderberry, *Sambucus nigra*. This large perennial reaches a mature size of 36 inches tall and wide. Allow it plenty of space in sunny borders, native gardens, open woodland plantings and cottage gardens. Plants are striking when massed.

*Amnsonia hubrichtii* can be propagated from softwood cuttings, by seed or by division. Root softwood cuttings in early summer. Gardeners will have greatest success in propagation through

early spring division. Be sure to share this magnificent perennial with all of your gardening friends.

## New and Revised Fact Sheets

*David Hillock*

Two new fact sheets and one revised fact sheet were completed just recently.

New:

- [HLA-6440 Homeowner Garden Design Series: Planning the Landscape](#), By Kimberly Rebek and Michael Holmes. In this fact sheet you will learn how to conduct a site evaluation, identify design objectives and create a rough landscape plan.
- [HLA-6441 Homeowner Garden Design Series: Elements and Principles of Design](#). By Kimberly Rebek and Michael Holmes. This fact sheet will help you in understanding the elements of design and the guiding principles used to bring the elements of line, texture and form together in creating a harmonious, unified landscape.

Revised:

- [HLA-6427 Ornamental and Garden Plants: Controlling Deer Damage](#). Revised January 2011 by David Hillock, Kimberly Toscano, and Dwayne Elmore. This fact sheet was updated and expanded with information on deer behavior, different methods to control the damage they can do to a yard and/or garden, and the types of yard and garden plants they commonly eat.

## 2011 Oklahoma Proven Selections

*David Hillock*

### Collector's Choice – Silver Linden, *Tilia tomentosa*

Silver linden is a beautiful large shade tree that can grow 50' to 70' tall. It is quite tolerant of high pH soils and urban conditions and is more heat tolerant than other lindens making it a great street or shade tree for large yards in Oklahoma. Leaves of silver linden are dark green on the upper surface and silvery beneath, providing an interesting effect when the wind blows; leaves can have a nice yellow fall color. Tiny, fragrant, white, flowers attract bees in late June to July. Cultivars selected for brilliant fall color as well as outstanding performance are available.

- Exposure: Full sun
- Soil: Prefers moist, well-drained soil; tolerant of high pH soils and pollution
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 4-7



Photos by David Hillock

**Tree** – American Elm Collection, *Ulmus americana* ‘New Harmony’, ‘Princeton’ and ‘Valley Forge’

With the release of improved, disease resistant American elms, they are once again in demand. ‘Valley Forge’, ‘New Harmony’ and ‘Princeton’ are a few of the cultivars available today. ‘Valley Forge’ is upright, arching, and broadly vase-shaped with a full, dense canopy. ‘New Harmony’ develops into a broad vase-shaped crown with arching branches terminating in numerous slender, often drooping branchlets. ‘Princeton’ is also vase-shaped. American elms are adapted to a wide variety of soil conditions, tolerate deicing salts, air pollution, drought, and a range of soil pH. They have yellow fall color.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Prefers well-drained soil
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 5-9



Photo by Lou Anella

**Shrub** – Abelia Collection, *Abelia x grandiflora* ‘Kaleidoscope’, ‘Little Richard’, and ‘Rose Creek’

Several new, compact forms of glossy abelia are becoming very popular. ‘Kaleidoscope’ grows 2-3’ high and slightly wider. In spring leaves appear on bright red stems with lime green centers and bright yellow edges, but variegation does not scorch or burn in hot weather and in fall color deepens to shades of orange and fiery red. Soft pink flower buds open to white in late spring. ‘Little Richard’ is 3’x3’, evergreen, with vivid green leaves in summer, taking on a tangerine-pink color in fall; white flowers bloom from summer to first frost. ‘Rose Creek’ grows 2-3’ high and 3-4’ wide; is evergreen, with crimson stems. New leaves have a pinkish cast, maturing to lustrous dark green, and turn purple in cold weather. Small white flowers are surrounded by persistent rosy pink sepals. Use these abelias in containers, as formal or informal hedges, accent plants, in mass plantings or in foundation plantings under windows. Abelias also attract hummingbirds and butterflies to the garden.

- Exposure: Sun to part shade
- Soil: Moist, well-drained, acidic
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6-9, evergreen in 7 and warmer



Photos by David Hillock

**Perennial** – Giant Coneflower, *Rudbeckia maxima*

Giant coneflower is native to eastern Oklahoma, but does well throughout the state. It is tolerant of moist soils and is quite drought tolerant once established. Giant coneflower has silvery-blue foliage. Flowers have bright yellow ray flowers that dangle from a large, upright, dark brown cone on stems that reach 5-6 feet high. Giant coneflower blooms in early summer but deadheading the spent blossoms will encourage another flush of blooms in late summer. Plant in masses for best effect. Can be used in mixed borders, meadows, native gardens, and open woods. This species makes a strong vertical statement in the landscape.

- Exposure: Sun, part shade
- Soil: Moist, well-drained
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 4-8



Photos by David Hillock

**Annual** – Pink Crystals Ruby Grass, *Melinis nerviglumis*  
'Savannah'

Pink Crystals Ruby Grass is a warm-season grass that likes it hot and performs best in those conditions. Growing only 18 to 22" tall, it is an attractive ornamental grass with blue green foliage and ruby-pink blooms with glistening silky hairs in late spring. Flowers retain their color even when dried and may be used for cut flower arrangements. Pink Crystals Ruby Grass is excellent in beds, borders, and is spectacular in a container planting.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Well-drained
- Hardiness: Use as an annual



Photos by David Hillock

For more information about Oklahoma Proven go to <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/> or contact David Hillock, 405-744-5158, [david.hillock@okstate.edu](mailto:david.hillock@okstate.edu).

## **Water-efficient Irrigation Technologies – Water Conservation Webinar Series**

*Justin Quetone Moss*

A lawn and landscape water-efficient irrigation technologies webinar was on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 featuring faculty from Oklahoma State University, North Carolina State University and the University of Florida. A recording of the webinar and presentation slide sets can be accessed here: <http://www.fred.ifas.ufl.edu/conservation-webinars/Irrigation.htm>

The webinar focused on university extension program efforts to encourage the use of more efficient irrigation technologies. Research with irrigation rain sensors, soil and moisture irrigation controllers, and other smart water application technologies were presented. Challenges faced by the extension personnel in promoting these technologies were discussed, and the approaches to overcome these challenges were presented. The presenters also discussed water savings evaluation results achieved through implementation of “smart” irrigation technologies.

Presentations were made by:

- Michael D. Dukes, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, University of Florida
- Garry Grabow, Associate Professor and Extension Leader, Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, North Carolina State University
- Justin Q. Moss, Assistant Professor, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, Oklahoma State University

The webinar series uses Elluminate software which can be freely downloaded through your internet browser after clicking on the “Water Conservation: Half-empty or Half-full” webinar series website provided by the University of Florida and the USDA Southern Regional Water Program, a partnership of USDA NIFA & Land Grant Colleges and Universities. More information on the webinar series can be found here: <http://www.fred.ifas.ufl.edu/conservation-webinars/>

Future webinars include:

- February 15, 2011: 4H and water: How to empower youth to protect water resources
- March 1, 2011: Rainwater harvesting and water re-use: State specialists' and county agents' perspectives
- March 22, 2011: Household behavior and homeowner education strategies
- April 12, 2011: Water and Energy: Can we conserve both?
- April 26, 2011: Water conservation for developers – 101
- May 3: Turf management best management practices and regulations
- May 10, 2011: Evaluation of a water conservation program: Is there a "silver bullet"?

## **2011 Grape Management Course**

*Eric Stafne*

The grape management course will be offered again in 2011. The grape course will meet once per month beginning February 24 through September 15 at the Cimarron Valley Research Station near Perkins. Each class will meet from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The class does not meet in March.

Registration is \$250 per person and the course is limited to 70 participants. Preregistration is required and is due by February 11. Registration information can be found online at <http://orangehub.okstate.edu/usstores/web/index.jsp>. Click on the Horticulture/Landscape store, and then select "Short Courses and Schools." Click on "2011 Oklahoma Grape Management." For additional information, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404, or e-mail at [stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu](mailto:stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu).

The course is designed to cover all aspects of the grape growing industry. This class is geared toward those who have just planted their vineyard as well as those who are still in the planning stage or simply want more information.

Participants will experience both the classroom learning environment in addition to hands-on experiences during each class. The hands-on lessons will take place in the demonstration vineyard at the Cimarron Valley Research Station near Perkins.

Each class will cover a variety of topics such as vineyard establishment, pruning and training, site selection, soils/water, insect and disease management, weed control, economics, fertilization, propagation, rootstocks, canopy management, harvest preparation and petiole sampling.

## **2011 Pecan Management Course**

*Eric Stafne*

The pecan management course will be offered again in 2011. The course will meet once a month beginning March 1 through October 18, with the exception of June. The classes will take place from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Registration is \$250 per person and the registration deadline is February 18. For more information, call Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404, or e-mail her at [stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu](mailto:stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu). Participants may register online at <http://orangehub.okstate.edu/ustores/web/index.jsp>. Click on the Horticulture/Landscape store, and then select "Short Courses and Schools." Click on "Fundamentals of Pecan Management."

The classes will combine traditional classroom learning with hands-on experiences, as well as an optional web-based study component. The course will take place at the Cimarron Valley Research Station, located one-half mile north of the intersection of State Highways 33 and 177 near Perkins.

Each of the monthly workshops will cover subjects that deal with pecan management during that particular part of the growing season. Topics that will be covered throughout the course will include management overview, fertilization, planting bareroot trees, pesticide application, insect management, weed control, pecan cultivars, disease management, crop load estimates, nut thinning, preparation for harvest, equipment needs, orchard floor management, sanitation, marketing, harvest, quality evaluation and graftwood collection, just to name a few.

Participants also may attend the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association Meeting in Bartlesville on June 26-28, 2011. The fee for attending this meeting is not included in the registration fee for the pecan management course. Those who would like more information about the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Association may visit the group's website at <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/pecan/opga>.

## **Upcoming Horticulture Events**

**April 14, 2011**

Gardening with Disabilities  
Stillwater, OK

For more information about upcoming events, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404 or [stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu](mailto:stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu).