

Horticulture Tips

February 2013

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 in February; 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 to 12 weeks of cold, dark conditions prior to blooming.
- Feed tulips in early February.
- Wait to prune roses in March.

Deadline for Pecan and Grape Management Courses Quickly Approaching

Becky Carroll

The Pecan Management and Grape Management Courses will again be offered in 2013. The Pecan course will begin on February 26 and the Grape Course starts February 28. Although a few changes have occurred through the past years, the course continues to provide present or potential growers with grape or pecan management requirements throughout the growing season. Participants get to learn in both a classroom and vineyard or orchard setting. Engaging in discussions and meeting other growers allow participants to network and learn from each other as well.

The courses not only can help growers learn but is a great opportunity for County Extension Educators to hone their skills with these crops. Educators can take the course at no cost. The online Pecan Management Course is also available to county educators who would like to learn more about pecans. For questions about the classes, please contact Becky Carroll at becky.carroll@okstate.edu or 405-744-6139.

Pecan Management Brochure - <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/pdf/2013pecanmgmt.pdf>

Grape Management Brochure - <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/pdf/2013grapemgmt.pdf>

Graftwood Sources for 2013

Becky Carroll

The graftwood sources for 2013 are listed at the following website:
<http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/pecan/images/graftwood2013.pdf>

Fruit Tree Pruning

David Hillock

Fruit trees such as peach and apple should be pruned after the worst of the winter is over. Trees such as peach, which are subject to crop loss from late freezes, can be pruned during flowering. This allows pruning to be matched with the crop loss due to freeze, i.e. if crop is light, less wood can be removed.

2013 Oklahoma Proven Selections

David Hillock

Each year a set of plants is chosen by horticulturists that will help consumers choose plants appropriate for Oklahoma gardens. The program began in 1999 by selecting a tree, shrub, perennial and annual worthy of Oklahoma landscapes. In 2009 a new category was added, the Collector's Choice. This plant has the adventuresome gardener in mind. It is a plant that will do well in Oklahoma and may need special placement or a little extra care, but will be very rewarding and impressive in the garden. Now in its 15th year, there are many plants to choose from including the 2013 selections which are listed below. To see all the plants recommended by the OK Proven Plant Selection Program, visit our website at <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/>.

Collector's Choice – Specialty Fruit for Small Spaces: such as columnar apple, patio peach, dwarf pomegranate, and dwarf patio blueberry

Space is often limited in today's landscapes, especially in the urban/suburban environment. Many varieties of popular fruits designed to fit in small spaces are now available.

Columnar apples (*Malus* cultivars) fit into narrow spaces because of their tall, narrow growth habit (approximately 2' wide and 8' to 10' high). In addition to providing delicious apples to eat, they can also be quite attractive providing spring flowers, colorful fruit, fall color, and an element of vertical motion. Because of the narrow growth habit they might also serve as a screen between you and the neighbors. Cultivars include: colonnade varieties, Scarlet Sentinel™, Golden Sentinel™, North Pole™, and the Urban™ Columnar Apple Series (Tasty Red™, Blushing Delight™, Golden Treat™, and Tangy Green™). Hardy to zones 3 through 8.



Patio peaches (*Prunus* cultivars) are miniature trees that are happy growing in a pot on the patio. Patio peaches are also quite ornamental. Spring flower color can be light pink to deep reddish-pink. Foliage of some varieties is reddish-purple in color as with the variety Bonfire. Fall colors can also be quite spectacular. Trees grow from about 4' to 6' tall. Cultivars include: Green Leaf, Bonfire, and Sensation. Hardy to zones 5 through 9.

Dwarf pomegranate, *Punica granatum* 'Nana', is a novelty type plant with deliciously edible fruit that also grows perfectly in a container on the patio. Red-orange flowers appear in summer followed by red fruits. Dwarf pomegranate grows to about 3' high and wide, is deer resistant, and good for fire-wise landscapes. Once established dwarf pomegranate is heat tolerant and requires little water. Because of its small size it can be taken indoors during the winter and is also a popular plant for bonsai. Hardy to zones 7 through 11.



Photos by David Hillock

Dwarf patio blueberries. Eating fresh blueberries right from the bush is delightful, sprinkle some on homemade ice cream and it is heavenly. Dwarf blueberries are about 1/3 to 1/2 the size of regular blueberries, which make them perfect for small landscapes or as a patio container plant. As with the other fruits recommended in this series, blueberries also serve as an attractive landscape feature with white or pink bell-shaped flowers in the spring, followed by blue fruits, dark green to blue-green summer foliage, and then excellent fall color, often being bright red or burgundy. Cultivars include: Chippewa, Northblue, Northcountry, Northsky, Polaris, Sunshine Blue, and Top Hat. Hardy to zones 3 through 7 (10).

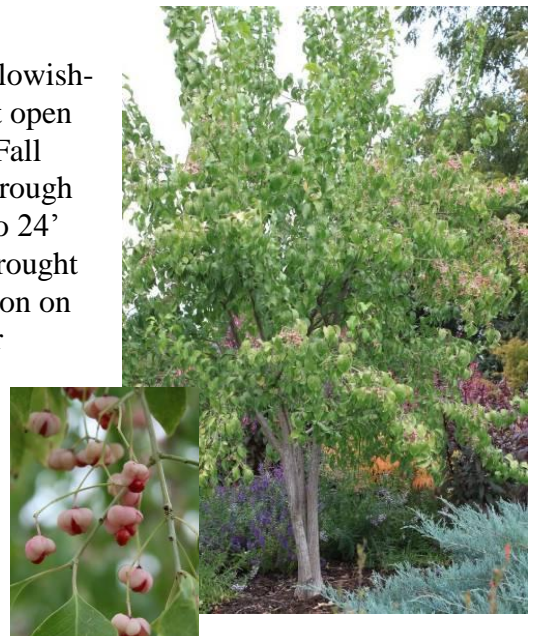
All plants described above prefer full sun to part shade; moist, well-drained soil; a slightly acid soil pH, except blueberries which require a pH of 4.5 to 5 for best performance.

Tree – Winterberry

Euonymus bungeanus

Winterberry euonymus is a large shrub to small tree with pendulous branches and light green foliage. Flowers are yellowish-green but not showy. Fruits are pinkish capsules which split open at maturity revealing an orange aril (fleshy seed covering). Fall color can be yellow to orange and red. Bark is green with a rough texture and is also quite attractive. Winterberry grows 15' to 24' high and just about as wide. It is very adaptable and quite drought tolerant. It is mostly resistant to scale insects that are common on other euonymus species. Winterberry makes a great patio or specimen tree.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Tolerates a wide range of soils
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 4 – 7



Photos by David Hillock

Shrub – Chaste Tree

Vitex spp.

Vitex is a multi-stemmed large shrub, but can be trained into a small tree. Leaves are palmately compound and dark green. Flowers appear in early summer and continue to bloom sporadically throughout summer and fall. Flowers of *Vitex* can be blue, lavender, pink or white. Old strains had small spikes of flowers; improved varieties have large spikes (8” to 12” long) of colorful flowers that are fragrant and make excellent cut flowers. Improved varieties include ‘Montrose Purple,’ ‘LeCompte,’ ‘Salinas Pink,’ and ‘Shoal Creek.’ *Vitex* is not too picky of soils and is easy to grow being very heat, drought and pest tolerant making it an excellent choice for a xeric garden. Spent flower spikes are often cut off promptly to encourage continuous flowering; it can also be severely pruned on occasion to rejuvenate older plants. *Vitex* is often considered an excellent replacement for lilacs, which grow much better in colder climates, and it attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. *Vitex* belonged to the official medicinal plants of antiquity and is still an ingredient of herbal remedies today. Native to China and India it became naturalized throughout the south hundreds of years ago.



Photos by David Hillock

- Exposure: Sun to part shade
- Soil: Moist, well-drained
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6 – 9

Perennial – Catmint

Nepeta x faassenii ‘Walker’s Low’

Walker’s Low Catmint was the Perennial Plant of the Year in 2007 and is an easy to grow, pest free perennial. This hybrid *Nepeta* develops into a mound of aromatic, grayish green foliage. Lavender-blue flowers appear in spring and continue to bloom if properly pruned by trimming after initial flowering. Walker’s Low grows 1 to 2 feet high and 1 ½ to 3 feet wide and can be used as edging or in a border, herb or rock garden, naturalized area, as groundcover, or is quite attractive spilling over the edge of a wall. *Nepeta* attracts bees and butterflies; it also tolerates some shade, dry, rocky soil, and is quite drought and deer resistant.



Photo by David Hillock

- Exposure: Sun, part shade
- Soil: Moist, well-drained
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 3 – 8

Annual – Sneezeweed
Helonium ‘Dakota Gold’

Common names for *Helonium* include sneezeweed and bitterweed, a native wildflower of Texas. Dakota Gold is a cultivar with excellent ornamental qualities and because it is native to Texas it is also very tough, tolerating heat and dry conditions well, in fact, you just need to be careful to not overwater. Dakota Gold was selected through a rigorous testing program initiated by Texas A&M University and then further refined by the Ball Horticultural Co. breeding program. Dakota Gold performs well as far south as Florida and as far north as Chicago. Dakota Gold grows as low, 6” to 8” mounded cushions, of finely textured, dark green foliage covered with golden yellow flowers all summer long. Dakota Gold looks great in beds, containers, rock gardens, borders, and as an accent.



Photos by David Hillock

- Exposure: Full sun
- Soil: Almost any soil (well-drained)
- Hardiness: Use as an annual

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

Edible Flowers

David Hillock

Many gardeners are interested in planting flowers to both admire and eat. Common edible flowers grown in Oklahoma include the chrysanthemums, rose, yucca, daylily, and squash blossoms.

Chrysanthemums are a favorite culinary flower of the Orient. In Japan and China, both the flower and the leaves are eaten; however, most varieties grown in the United States have leaves too tough and bitter to eat. The chrysanthemum flowers; however, can be eaten. They are generally used in soups.

Roses have long been used in candies, cakes, spreads and jams. The old-fashioned or wild varieties are best for cooking. The petals make an excellent salad mixed with chicory and served with oil and rose-vinegar. Rose “hips” are also an excellent source of vitamin C.

Yucca blooms are sold in Guatemala in the produce section of the supermarket. Boiled or fried, they slightly resemble asparagus in flavor.

Daylily and squash blossoms may be used in about the same ways, although they have distinctively different tastes. The buds may be picked before they are fully open and boiled, fried, pickled, or used in omelets or fitters.

Other edible flowers include:

- Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) - Perennial plants that grow 2 - 3 feet tall and bloom from July - September. Flowers are indigo to violet in color and the taste is a strong anise-licorice flavor.
- Basil (*Ocimum basilicum* cultivars) - Annual plant that grows 1 - 3 feet tall depending on the cultivar. Usually grown for the leaves. Plant a few extra basil plants and let them set flowers to use in dishes.
- Borage (*Borago officinalis*) - Annual plant that grows 2- 2 1/2 feet tall. Blooms from June - July with blue-purple flowers. The taste is slightly cucumber and makes a great garnish for dips. Also candies well.
- Chive (*Allium schoenoprasum*) - Perennial herb that grows to 1 - 2 feet tall. Blooms May - June. Has strong onion flavor.
- Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia* cultivars) - Perennial that grows 1 1/2 - 2 feet tall. Blooms June - July and has a strong, perfumed taste.
- Marigold, African (*Tagetes erecta*) - Annual that grows 1 1/2 - 3 ft tall depending on cultivar. Blooms May - September. Can have bitter taste. Use petals as decoration.
- Marigold, Signet (*Tagetes tenuifolia*) - Annual that grows 1- 2 feet tall depending on cultivar. Blooms May - September. Milder taste than erecta.
- Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*) - Annual that grows 1 - 1 1/2 feet tall. Blooms July - August. Has peppery taste like watercress or radish. Leaves are edible too.
- Pink (*Dianthus* sp.) - Perennial that grows 1/2 - 1 foot tall. Blooms May - July. Not much flavor. Some varieties spicy/sweet with slight clove flavor.
- Scarlet Runner Bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) - Vining tender perennial (annual here). Blooms June - August with red blooms. Taste like raw bean, but milder. Good in salads.
- Scented Geranium (*Pelargonium* sp.) - Tender perennial grows 1 - 3 feet tall. Flowers sporadically throughout year. Taste slightly like scent. May be bitter.
- Violet, Pansy, Johnny-Jump-Up (*Viola odorata*, *V. x wittrockiana*, *V. tricolor*) - Perennial and Annuals that grow 1/2 - 1 foot tall. Blooms in spring. Has mild taste like a leafy green except *V. odorata* which is sweet.

Warning: Individuals should limit their initial consumption of any new species to determine any possible allergic reactions that could occur from the plant. When cooking with flowers, it is best to use flowers you have grown yourself as flowers from a florist or garden center have usually been sprayed and therefore aren't a good choice. Be sure that blooms are free of insects, rinse and pat dry, and again, never use flowers that have been sprayed with pesticides. If you are unsure about the edibility of a flower - don't eat it! Some flowers are quite poisonous.

Upcoming Horticulture Events

Open House at The Botanic Garden

First and Third Saturdays; March through October; 9 AM to 3 PM
The Botanic Gardens at OSU – Stillwater, OK

Why not grab your family and friends and head out to The Botanic Garden during open house. You will be greeted by our friendly Ambassadors who are eager to help answer your gardening and plant questions.

Current Challenges in Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Conference

June 4, 2013
Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

This conference will discuss timely challenges that we are facing in both aforementioned disciplines. Exceptional drought, a potentially warming climate and other matters will be tackled with suggestions for mitigating and/or coping with these problems.

GardenFest

September 21, 2013; 10 AM to 4 PM
The Botanic Gardens at OSU – Stillwater, OK

Join us at The Botanic Garden at OSU for our annual GardenFest. The theme for 2013 is "Art in the Garden". GardenFest is a fun filled day of art and gardening ideas, demonstrations, children's activities and merchandise.

Indigenous Plant Materials Conference

October 10, 2013
Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

This conference will highlight underutilized ornamental plant materials, both native to Oklahoma and/or anywhere else in the Lower 48, and their possible uses in the green industry and ultimately in our landscapes.

Native American Horticulture Conference

November 21, 2013
Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

This conference will provide a horticulture overview of Native Americans' contribution to both historical and current-day foods, ornamentals and medicine.

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