

# Horticulture Tips

## March 2013

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

### **GARDEN TIPS FOR MARCH!**

*David Hillock*

#### Lawn and Turf

- Remove excessive thatch from warm-season lawns. Dethatching, if necessary, should precede crabgrass control treatment. ([HLA-6604](#))
- Broadleaf weeds can easily be controlled in cool-season lawns at this time with post-emergent broadleaf herbicides. ([HLA-6421](#))
- Preemergent crabgrass control chemicals can still be applied to cool- and warm-season turfgrasses ([HLA-6421](#)). Heed label cautions when using any weed killers near or in the root zone of desirable plantings.
- March is the second best time of the year to seed cool-season turfgrass; however, fall is the best time to plant. ([HLA-6419](#))
- Cool-season lawns such as bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass may be fertilized now with the first application of the season. Usually, four applications of fertilizer are required per year in March, May, October, and November. ([HLA-6420](#))
- Begin mowing cool-season grasses at 1½ to 3½ inches high. ([HLA-6420](#))

#### Flowers and Vegetables

- Cultivate annual flower and vegetable planting beds to destroy winter weeds.
- Apply mulch to control weeds in beds. Landscape fabric barrier can reduce the amount of mulch but can dry out and prevent water penetration. Thus, organic litter makes the best mulch.
- Prune roses just before growth starts and begin a regular disease spray program as the foliage appears on susceptible varieties. ([HLA-6403](#) & [EPP-7607](#))
- Avoid excessive walking and working in the garden when foliage and soils are wet.
- Start warm-season vegetable transplants indoors.
- Divide and replant overcrowded summer and fall blooming perennials. Mow or cut back old liriopse and other ornamental grasses before new growth begins.
- Cool-season vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnips, etc. should be planted by the middle of March.
- Watch for cutworms that girdle newly planted vegetables during the first few weeks of establishment. Cabbage looper and cabbageworm insects should be monitored and controlled in the garden ([EPP-7313](#)).

## Trees and Shrubs

- Prune spring flowering plants, if needed, immediately following their bloom period.
- Plant evergreen shrubs, balled and burlapped, and bare root trees and shrubs.
- Anthracnose control on sycamore, maple, and oak should begin at bud swell. ([EPP-7634](#)).
- Diplodia Pine Tip blight control on pines begins at bud swell. ([EPP-7618](#))
- Chemical and physical control of galls (swellings) on stems of trees should begin now. ([EPP-7168](#) & [EPP-7306](#))
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. ([EPP-7306](#))
- The first generation of Nantucket Pine Tip Moth appears at this time. Begin pesticide applications in late March. ([EPP-7306](#))
- Control Eastern tent caterpillars as soon as the critters appear.

## Fruits

- Continue to plant strawberries, asparagus, and other small fruit crops this month.
- Start your routine fruit tree spray schedule prior to bud break. ([EPP-7319](#)).
- Remove winter mulch from strawberries in early March ([HLA-6214](#)).

## **Priority: Pollinators**

*David Hillock*

Honeybees have been disappearing in record numbers, and they are not the only pollinators that are imperiled. Some butterflies and native bees have experienced significant population declines also, says Eric Mäder, Assistant Pollinator Program Director for the Xerces Society.

It was just a few years ago that homeowners were asking what they could plant that would not attract bees. Now, the question is more likely to be, “How can I attract bees and other pollinators to my garden?”

Pollinators are a diverse and fascinating group of invertebrates, and we have them to thank for beautiful blooming meadows, juicy summer berries, bountiful vegetable gardens, and colorful pumpkins and gourds.

The Home Garden Seed Association, inspired by the conservation work of the Xerces Society, encourages all home gardeners to help the cause of pollinator protection by planting more flowers, an important food resource for all kinds of bees and butterflies. Every flower border, bed, and window box helps!

Visit [www.bringbackthepollinators.org](http://www.bringbackthepollinators.org) and sign the Pollinator Protection Pledge. You can also order a Pollinator Habitat sign for your garden.



“Providing patches of flowers is one thing we can do to improve the environment for pollinators.” The Xerces Society

## FACTS

- Flowers clustered in clumps of at least four feet in diameter are more attractive to pollinators than scattered individual flowers.
- A succession of flowering plants that lasts from spring through fall will support a range of bee species.
- Flowers of different shapes will attract different types of pollinators.
- Pesticides are a major threat to insect pollinators.
- The value, in dollars, of pollinators’ services to our food business is estimated to be upwards of \$4 billion—nothing to sneeze at!

Source: ezfromseed.org. The Home Garden Seed Association promotes gardening from seed — an easy, economical, and rewarding way to garden.

## How to Grow a Pollinator Garden from Seed

*David Hillock*

Now is the time to plan for a bounty of pollen plants that will help pollinators in your region thrive from spring through fall.

Early spring: Where winters are cold, pollinators rely on blooming trees in spring, but early-blooming flowering plants provide additional resources.

Late spring through summer: Choices abound! Many pollinator favorites are annuals that can be easily, and inexpensively, grown from seed.

Late summer into fall: Sunflowers, agastache, herbs, and marigolds supplement late blooming perennials in sustaining pollinators into the fall.

### Bee and Butterfly Plants You Can Grow Easily from Seed

#### Early-blooming Pollinator Plants (Bloom time may differ, depending on location)

Agrostemma	Mustards
Baby Blue Eyes	Osteospermum
Bishop’s Flower/ Ammi majus	Parsley
California poppy	Pea
Chives	Poppy
Clover	Sweet Alyssum
Dianthus	Viola
Larkspur	Wallflower
Lupine	

### Mid-season Pollinator Plants

Bachelor's button

Basil

Black-eyed Susan

Blanketflower/ Gaillardia

Borage

Butterfly Flower/ Asclepias

Calendula

Cilantro

Coneflower/ Echinacea

Cosmos

Dill

Feverfew

Foxglove

Lavender

Lovage

Monarda

Portulaca

Squash, Pumpkin

Thyme

Tickseed/ Coreopsis

### Late-blooming Pollinator Plants

Agastache

Amaranth

Cleome

Dahlia

Marigold

Mexican sunflower/ Tithonia

Salvia

Scabiosa

Sunflower

Zinnia

Source: ezfromseed.org. The Home Garden Seed Association promotes gardening from seed — an easy, economical, and rewarding way to garden.

## **Tips for Growing Transplants Indoor**

*David Hillock*

Many home gardeners are growing their own transplants indoors to save money and get a jump start on the growing season. The most frequent problem they often encounter is inadequate lighting. When transplants do not receive enough light, both in quality and duration, the plants will become long and spindly. Placing transplants in a south facing window is usually not adequate enough; providing supplemental light will usually solve the light problems.

Fluorescent lights are usually best. Incandescent lights get too hot. Placing the fluorescent light within a few inches (2 to 4 inches) of the seedlings after they emerge is important; raise the lights as the seedlings grow, keeping the light within a few inches of the plants.

Duration of light received is also important. Providing about 14 to 16 hours of light each day will encourage strong plants; use a simple timer to help automate the system.

Another task that will help make your plants stocky and strong is brushing your hand over them several times at least once a day; this will strengthen their stems so when they are moved outdoors they will be able to tolerate the windier conditions.

## Spring Cleaning

*David Hillock*

If you haven't cut back your perennials by now, this would be a good time to finish this spring cleaning chore. New growth is already starting to emerge on some perennials; waiting until new growth is several inches high will make it difficult to remove dead foliage without damaging the new growth. In addition, old leaves may be harboring diseases and insects from last season that could infect new growth if not removed from the garden. Removing old leaves also allows plenty of sunlight in to warm the soil and new encourage new growth.

## 2012 Sweet Potato Trial Results

*Lynn Brandenberger*, Extension Horticulture Food Crops Specialist

Sweet potato has historically been grown for fresh and processing markets by growers throughout the southern U.S. Consumers have traditionally used fresh sweet potatoes for baking and boiling.



In the past the canning industry has traditionally processed smaller roots not suitable for fresh market. During the past two decades, sweet potato production within the state of Oklahoma has decreased significantly due to increased production in the south eastern U.S. Recently potato processors have begun to market new products, namely sweet potato fries. Consumer demand is increasing for this new product and processors are coming into Oklahoma to produce sweet potatoes for this growing market. As a result, there is a renewed need for information on the performance

of sweet potato clones by Oklahoma farmers. Our goal this past year was to observe advanced sweet potato breeding lines that have been developed by Louisiana State University and North Carolina State University breeding programs for their performance in Oklahoma. There were twelve breeding lines/commercial varieties in the trial five of which are commercially available varieties.

For Oklahoma farmers that are growing for the processing market, Jumbos and U.S. # 1's are primarily what processors are wanting. Of the twelve lines/cultivars in the trial L07-146, L05-111, and 'Beauregard B14' had combined yields for U.S. # 1's and Jumbos of 1325, 1296, and 1253 bu/acre, respectively, indicating that these should be considered for processing production in the future. For fresh market farmers, 'O'Henry' should be considered if a white fleshed sweet potato is desired as it is a good yielder and also has a high percentage of U.S. # 1's, while orange fleshed types to consider would be 'Evangeline' and 'Covington' which yielded well in the trial. More complete results are available in the 2012 Vegetable Trial Report available at: <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/industry/vegetables/index.htm>.

Trials are currently being planned for the 2013 sweet potato trial that will be located in south western Oklahoma.

**Table 1.** National sweet potato collaborators trial, 2012, Ft. Cobb, OK.

Source	Selections	U.S. # 1's Bu/acre	Canners Bu/acre	Jumbos Bu/acre	Total mrkt. Bu/acre	U.S. # 1's %	Culls Bu/acre
Orange fleshed							
LSU	Beauregard B14	396 cd	66 a	857 a	1319 abc	29.9 e	89.0 a
NCSU	Beauregard B94-14	418 cd	149 a	578 bc	1145 bcd	36.6 de	71.2 a
NCSU	Covington	328 de	129 a	407 cde	864 de	38.7 de	86.4 a
LSU	L05-111	640 ab	120 a	656 ab	1416 ab	45.3 cd	30.5 a
LSU	L07-146	795 a	176 a	530 bcd	1501 a	53.6 abc	48.6 a
NCSU	NC04-032	222 e	133 a	122 f	476 f	46.6 cd	100.6 a
NCSU	NC05-198	231 e	100 a	158 ef	489 f	46.3 cd	106.7 a
NCSU	NC07-364	205 e	77 a	196 ef	478 f	50.1 abcd	49.5 a
LSU	Evangeline	543 bc	133 a	186 ef	861 de	63.0 a	30.5 a
White fleshed							
LSU	Bonita	476 cd <sup>z</sup>	113 a	184 ef	773 e	60.2 ab	65.5 a
LSU	O'Henry	681 ab	99 a	328 def	1108 cd	62.5 a	31.1 a
NCSU	NC07-847	327 de	88 a	272 ef	686 ef	47.8 bcd	30.0 a

<sup>z</sup> Numbers in a column followed by the same letter exhibited no significant differences based on Duncan's Multiple Range Test where P=0.05.

## Mark Your Calendars! 2013 State Master Gardener Continuing Education Conference – June 13-14

*David Hillock*

This year's conference is starting to take shape. The Canadian County Master Gardeners are working hard to put together a fantastic conference. The conference theme is *Picture Yourself in a Country Garden*. Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Robert E. Lyons, Professor of Landscape Horticulture, Program Director for the Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture, and Director of the Center for Public Horticulture at the University of Delaware.

The conference will begin Thursday, June 13 with an evening social at the Redlands Community College Darlington Agricultural Education and Applied Research Center for those who want to come early. Regular conference activities will be at the Redlands Community College campus Friday, June 14 with several breakout sessions and various tours that afternoon.

Conferences are designed to help you better serve your community as a Master Gardener. We hope that you will mark your calendars and plan to attend. Planning and organization of the conference is still underway; we will keep you posted.

## **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](mailto:stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu).