

# Horticulture Tips

## May 2013

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

### **GARDEN TIPS FOR MAY!**

*David Hillock*

#### Trees and Shrubs

- Prune and feed azaleas immediately after blooming.
  - \* Insect Alert: ([EPP-7306](#))
  - \* Bagworms on juniper and arborvitae. (Late May)
  - \* Elm leaf beetles and larvae on elms. (Late May)
  - \* Mimosa webworms on mimosa and honeylocust.
  - \* Lace bugs on sycamore, pyracantha and azalea.
- Soak new transplants and newly planted trees unless rainfall is abundant.
- Pine needle disease treatments are needed in mid-May. ([EPP-7618](#))

#### Turfgrass

- Cool-season lawns can be fertilized again. If you did not fertilize cool-season grasses in March and April, do so now.
- Warm-season lawns may be fertilized again in May. ([HLA-6420](#))
- Seeding of warm-season grasses such as bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass and centipedegrass is best performed in mid-May through the end of June. The soil temperatures are warm enough for germination and adequate growing season is present to promote winter hardiness.
- Dollar spot disease of lawns can first become visible in mid-May. Make certain fertilizer applications have been adequate before ever applying a fungicide. ([EPP-7658](#))
- Nutsedge plants become visible during this month. Post-emergent treatments are best applied for the first time this month ([HLA-6421](#)). Make certain warm-season grasses have completed green-up.
- The second application of pre-emergent annual grass herbicides can be applied in late-May or early June, depending upon timing of first application ([HLA-6421](#)). Check label for details.
- Vegetative establishment of warm-season grasses can continue. ([HLA-6419](#))

#### Water Gardens

- Clean out water garden and prepare for season. Divide and repot water garden plants.
- Begin feeding fish when water temperatures are over 50°F.

## Flowers

- Annual bedding plants can be set out for summer color.
- Plant summer bulbs such as cannas, dahlias, elephant ear, caladiums and gladiolus.
- Shake a leaf over white paper to look for spider mites. If the tiny specks begin to crawl, mites are present.

## Fruits and Vegetables

- Plant watermelon, cantaloupe, cucumber, eggplant, okra, sweet potatoes, etc.
- Fruit spray programs should be faithfully continued during the next several weeks. ([EPP-7319](#))
- Late May is the best time to control borers in the orchard. Check for label recommendations and controls.

## **Planting Trees**

*David Hillock*

To insure successful tree establishment, the following planting techniques and methods should be used.

### When to Plant

The best time to plant most trees is spring or fall; however, many trees can be planted any time if handled properly. Plants installed during the growing season are susceptible to high transpiration rates leading to desiccation of plant tissues.

- Early fall is the best time for container-grown and balled & burlapped (B&B) trees.
- Mid-February through mid-April - bare-root.

### Handling Trees before Planting

Avoiding unnecessary damage and stress to trees prior to planting will insure better success.

- Keep root ball moist.
- Handle tree by the container, not by the trunk.

### Preparing the Hole and Planting the Tree

Preparing the planting hole properly before planting is very critical. When working with heavy clay or sandy soils, organic matter such as composted manure, etc., can improve soil properties.

- Add soil amendments to entire planting area prior to digging the hole. *Do not* apply amendments to backfill only.
- Dig planting hole 2 to 3 times the diameter of tree's root ball and no deeper than the root ball itself.
- Plant trees at original grade OR plant trees 1 to 3 inches above grade if soil is poorly drained.
- *Do not* put crushed stone or gravel in bottom of hole!

- Remove all bags, containers, strings, and wires. Burlap of B&B trees may be left on to decay. Be sure to lay burlap back away from trunk and cover with soil. Synthetic burlap is used by some growers and should be removed.
- If roots are excessive and circling inner walls of pot, score outer edge of root ball by slightly severing or scratching root system. *Do not* cut deeply into root system.
- The butterfly technique may be used for severely rootbound plants by tipping the root ball on its side and making a vertical cut clear through the bottom one-half of the root system. With hands, gently pull the two severed halves apart. Note: the planting hole must be wide and shallow!

### Backfilling the Planting Hole

Fill in the planting hole (backfill) with native soil and tamp lightly. Soil amendments are not necessary and may result in further complications such as root rots.

### Fertilizing

A new tree has a very limited capacity for utilizing fertilizer until it starts to establish itself. Do not overfertilize the new tree. If fertilizer is needed based on a soil test:

- Incorporate fertilizer into entire bed area.
- *Do not* dump fertilizer into bottom of planting hole.

### Watering the New Tree

Apply at least one inch of water weekly during the growing season. Water should not stand longer than 20 minutes. In some soil types, surrounding soil may be moist while the root ball itself is dry. Be sure to occasionally check the root ball for adequate moisture.

### Mulching the New Tree

New trees should be mulched using an organic mulch 1 to 3 inches deep; 5 to 6 feet in diameter. Keep mulch at least 1 to 2 inches away from trunk of tree. Benefits of mulching to create a weed and turf-free area include:

- Reduced plant competition for water and nutrients.
- Even soil temperature and moisture.

### Pruning the New Tree

Avoid overpruning new trees. Leave lower limbs intact if possible. Remove injured or diseased branches only. Overpruning may result in sunscald and overall depressed growth.

### Trunk Protective Materials

Protective wraps can provide physical protection against equipment, animals, insects, people, herbicides, etc.

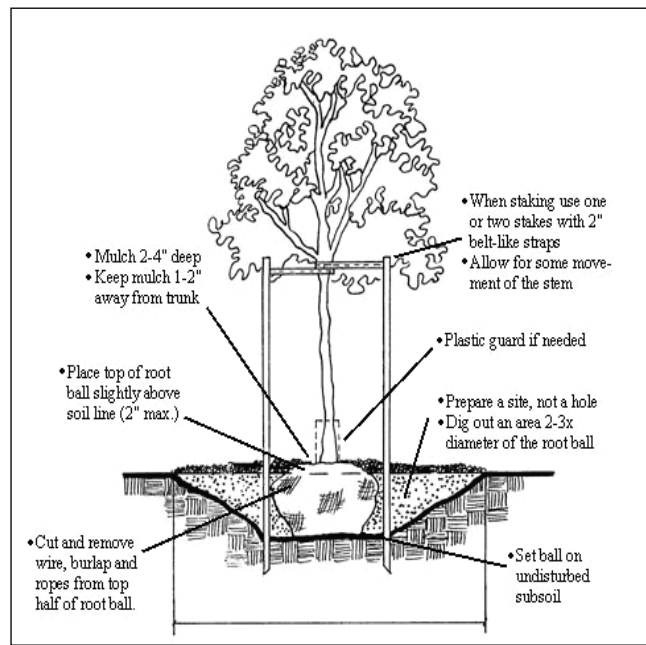
Protective wraps also provide protection by modifying temperatures and bark moisture for thin-barked trees such as ash, birch, linden, and maple.

If misused; however, damage may occur in the form of trunk girdling or constriction, insects, diseases and excessive moisture.

- Protective wraps may not be necessary at planting time. Use based on type of protection needed.
- Wrap loosely from base up to first branch by overlapping for shingle affect.
- Do not use plastic twine.
- Plastic guards should fit loosely and include holes or slits.
- Plastic lasts longer and is quite resistant to rodents.
- Inspect for damage and insects and spray for borers when necessary.

### Staking Trees

Stake young trees sparingly and briefly when possible. Stake when top-heavy or planted in windswept areas. Always allow for sway. Too tight or prolonged staking results in an overall weaker tree. Remove stakes after one growing season or as soon as tree is sufficiently rooted.



### Recommended Tree Species

Though all the trees listed below will grow in Oklahoma, be sure to visit the local nursery/garden center or County Extension Office for proper selection of species best suited for your area.

#### Evergreen Landscape Trees

Arizona Cypress – *Cupressus arizonica*

Atlas Cedar – *Cedrus atlantica*

California incense Cedar – *Calocedrus decurrens*

Chinese Arborvitae – *Thuja orientalis*

Junipers – *Juniperus* spp. cultivars

Southern Magnolia – *Magnolia grandiflora*  
Lacebark Pine – *Pinus bungeana*  
Limber Pine – *Pinus flexilis*  
Live Oak – *Quercus virginiana*  
Loblolly Pine – *Pinus taeda*  
Pinyon Pine – *Pinus cembroides*  
Short Leaf Pine – *Pinus echinata*  
Slash Pine – *Pinus elliotti*

Large Landscape Trees (Over 40' tall)

American Elm – *Ulmus americana* hybrids  
American Linden – *Tilia americana*  
Bald Cypress – *Taxodium distichum*  
Bur Oak – *Quercus macrocarpa*  
Caddo Sugar Maple – *Acer saccharum* ‘Caddo’  
Cedar Elm – *Ulmus crassifolia*  
Chinquapin Oak – *Quercus muehlenbergii*  
English Oak – *Quercus robur*  
Ginkgo (Maidenhair Tree) – *Ginkgo biloba*  
Japanese Zelkova – *Zelkova serrata*  
Kentucky Coffeetree – *Gymnocladus dioicus*  
Lacebark Elm – *Ulmus parvifolia*  
Littleleaf Linden – *Tilia cordata*  
London Planetree – *Platanus x acerifolia*  
River Birch – *Betula nigra*  
Sawtooth Oak – *Quercus acutissima*  
Shumard Oak – *Quercus shumardii*  
Silver Linden – *Tilia tomentosa*  
Common Hackberry – *Celtis occidentalis*  
Water Oak – *Quercus nigra*

Medium-sized Landscape Trees (25-40' tall)

American Hornbeam – *Carpinus caroliniana*  
Chinese Pistache – *Pistacia chinensis*  
Chittimwood – *Bumelia lanuginosa*  
Goldenraintree – *Koelreuteria paniculata*  
Ironwood – *Ostrya virginiana*  
Japanese Pagoda Tree – *Sophora japonica*  
Shantung Maple – *Acer truncatum*  
Western Soapberry – *Sapindus drummondii*  
Whiteshield Osage Orange – *Maclura pomifera* ‘Whiteshield’

Small Landscape Trees (10-25' tall)

Amur Maple – *Acer ginnala*  
Chastetree – *Vitex negundo*

Crapemyrtle – *Lagerstroemia indica*  
Desert Willow – *Chilopsis linearis*  
Oklahoma Redbud – *Cercis canadensis* var. *texensis*  
Shantung Maple – *Acer truncatum*  
Smoketree – *Cotinus coggygria*  
Winterberry Euonymus – *Euonymus bungeanus*

## **Dealing with Slopes**

*David Hillock*

When dealing with slopes in the landscape you have several options. You could just ignore it and let nature take care of it, but this may not be a good idea depending on the soil type, slope, and existing vegetation. Usually this approach results in erosion.

A more common approach is growing turfgrass. While many of the turfgrass species are excellent stabilizers of slopes, maintaining them on a slope like the rest of your lawn can be quite difficult. Mowing a steep slope can be dangerous. Trying to keep it properly watered and fertilized is also a challenge.

Building terraces is a very good solution. It controls erosion and creates usable spaces. However, it can be very costly due to the type of equipment that may be needed to install it and the type of material used to build the retaining walls.

A simpler and effective approach is growing groundcovers and ornamental grasses on the slope that are good at controlling erosion. This approach is very practical, easier to maintain, relatively cheap (compared to building terraces and building retaining walls), and is more attractive.

The following plants are good soil stabilizers. Which one works best will depend on the exposure (sun vs. shade), soil type, available water, what part of the state you live in, and care during establishment.

Daylilies, Liriope, mondograss, Virginia creeper (also climbs), English ivy (climbs), carpet bugleweed, hardy plumbago, purple ice plant, northern sea oats, creeping three-leaf sumac ‘Autumn Amber’, creeping Mahonia, showy evening primrose, common periwinkle, prostrate abelia, weeping love grass, sideoats gramma, perennial quaking grass, sedges, creeping or carpet type junipers, barberry cotoneaster, wintercreeper, cross vine, creeping St. John’s wort, willowleaf cotoneaster, hardy plumbago (leadwort), bishop’s weed, winecup, various euphorbias, creeping jenny, beebalm, creeping raspberry, lamb’s ear, and possibly sedums.

This is obviously not a comprehensive list. Many plants work well in stabilizing slopes, some better than others depending on the steepness of the slope; even certain shrubs that form colonies work well.

## **Washington Redskins' FedEx Field Slated for Resodding with OSU's Latitude 36 Bermudagrass**

*Dennis Martin*

FedEx Field, home of the NFL's Washington Redskins, is scheduled for resodded in June with Oklahoma State University's newest turf bermudagrass release 'Latitude 36.' The announcement appeared in an April 24 article entitled "NFL Report: Redskins to re-sod field - ESPN" (available on-line at <http://m.espn.go.com/nfl/story?storyId=9206806&src=desktop>). Latitude 36 bermudagrass is a 2010 turfgrass release by Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station. Sod Solutions Inc obtained production rights for the grass and currently has sublicensed nine sod producers of Latitude 36 in the US. Latitude 36 is an interspecific hybrid between common bermudagrass and African bermudagrass and is propagated vegetatively by sprigs or sod only (no seed). The grass has excellent traffic tolerance, sod tensile strength, fine texture, high shoot density, and dark green color as well as significantly improved cold hardiness. Latitude 36, tested under the experimental designation OKC 1119, was the top ranking bermudagrass in the 2007-2012 National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) National Bermudagrass Test (<http://www.ntep.org/bg.htm>). It is recommended for use in the US transition zone and southern states. The variety is only available through special licensed producers and only as blue-tag Certified sod or sprigs. Latitude 36 turf bermudagrass has a U.S. Plant Patent pending. For more information on Latitude 36 adaptation, performance and sod sources visit Sod Solutions Inc website at: <http://www.sodsolutions.com/latitude36>.

## **Upcoming Horticulture Events**

### **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).