

# Horticulture Tips

## October 2015

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

### **GARDEN TIPS FOR OCTOBER!**

*David Hillock*

#### Turfgrass

- You can continue to replant or establish cool-season lawns like fescue.
- The mowing height for fescue should be lowered to approximately 2 ½ inches for fall and winter cutting.
- Broadleaf weeds like dandelions can be easily controlled during October. ([HLA-6601](#))
- Mow and neatly edge warm-season lawns before killing frost.

#### Ornamentals

- Plant cool-season annuals like pansies, ornamental cabbage or kale, snapdragons and dusty miller when temperatures begin to cool.
- Begin planting spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, hyacinths, crocus and daffodils.
- Good companion plants for bulbs are ground covers such as ajuga, vinca, English ivy, alyssum, moneywort, thrift, phlox, oxalis and leadwort.
- Peonies, daylilies, and other spring-flowering perennials should be divided or planted now.
- Dig and store tender perennials like cannas, dahlias, and caladiums in a cool, dry location.
- Purchase trees from nurseries and garden centers at this time to select the fall color you prefer.
- Many perennials can be planted at this time and the selection is quite nice.
- Plant fall mums and asters and keep them watered during dry conditions. Don't crowd since they take a couple of years to reach maturity.
- Plant container-grown trees and shrubs this month.
- Check and treat houseplants for insect pests before bringing them indoors and repot rootbound plants.

#### Water Gardens

- Take tropical water garden plants indoors when water temperatures near 50 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Close the water garden for the winter by placing hardy plants in the deeper areas of the pool. Stop feeding the fish.
- Cover water gardens with bird netting to catch dropping leaves during the winter months.

## Fruits & Vegetables

- Dig sweet potatoes and harvest pumpkins and winter squash.
- Remove green fruit from tomato plants when frost threatens.
- Harvest Oriental persimmons and pawpaws as they begin to change color.
- There is still time to plant radishes and mustard in the fall garden.
- Use a cold frame device to plant spinach, lettuce and various other cool-season crops for production most of the winter.
- Plant cool-season cover crops like Austrian winter peas, wheat, clover, and rye in otherwise fallow garden plots.
- Remove all debris from the garden to prevent overwintering of various garden pests.
- Start new planting bed preparations now with plenty of organic matter.

## **Fall Fertilizer Tips For Your Lawn**

*Justin Quetone Moss*

Proper fertilization can benefit turfgrass if applied according to certain recommended procedures. Bermudagrass is a warm-season grass with the majority of root growth occurring during the summer months. Cool-season grasses such as tall fescue may lose roots during the hot summer months, but the fall and spring are crucial for root growth. A lawn with a healthy root system will be better equipped to survive moisture and temperature extremes than those with poor root systems.

It is not necessary for homeowners to fertilize warm-season grasses such as bermudagrass or zoysiagrass after early-mid September in Oklahoma. Late, heavy applications of fertilizers containing Nitrogen can actually be detrimental to bermudagrass and zoysiagrass health by encouraging shoot growth which can sometimes lead to disease and/or winter injury.

Cool-season lawns such as tall fescue can benefit from a mid-late October fertilization with Nitrogen at a rate of up to 1 lb of actual Nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. The following are a few tips to remember when fertilizing your lawn.

1. Always be sure to conduct a lawn soil test before applying fertilizers to your yard. You can refer to the soil testing collection procedures and fertilizer schedule as outlined in OSU Extension Fact Sheet [HLA-6420](#).
2. Always use properly calibrated fertilizer spreading equipment. For a good calibration starting point, you may wish to purchase a name brand or local retail brand fertilizer and an accompanying fertilizer spreader. The fertilizer bag will often tell you the proper setting on your fertilizer spreader for proper application of fertilizer to your lawn.
3. Use fertilizers with a mixture of quick-release and slow-release nitrogen sources. Examples of quick-release (also called water-soluble) nitrogen include urea, ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, diammonium phosphate, and potassium nitrate. Examples of slow-release (also called water-insoluble) nitrogen sources include methylene ureas, IBDU, urea formaldehyde, sulfur-coated urea (SCU), and polymer coated urea (PCU).

4. Do not apply fertilizer to impervious surfaces such as sidewalks and driveways. If fertilizer gets on these surfaces, use a broom or blower to remove the fertilizer from the surface. Fertilizers left on the driveway or sidewalk are an environmental concern because they can easily runoff into drains or ditches.
5. Lightly water-in fertilizers immediately following application. Do not apply fertilizer to your lawn immediately before heavy rainfall or deep irrigation.

If you have further questions about fertilizing your lawn during the fall, contact your local OSU County Extension Educator.

## **Fall Leaf Basics**

*David Hillock*

Fall is soon upon us and it is time to begin thinking about what you will do with all those leaves. Just bagging them and letting them go to the landfill is a waste of our tax dollars and a valuable garden resource. Instead of bagging them and hauling off to the dump this year consider these suggestions.

Use as a Mulch - An easy way to get rid of leaves is to simply rake them onto the perennial beds as a nice winter mulch. Some say that leaves may suffocate your plants, but use your good judgment. Small leaves generally will not offer any threat, but huge leaves, such as sycamore, might.

Compost Them – Place them in the compost pile along with other garden plant material. You don't need a special compost bin to accomplish this process. A big hole dug behind the garage or some other inconspicuous place works nicely. Fill the hole with lots of leaves and other garden plant material.

Mow 'Em – This is the method I like to use. I simply mow over them as often as necessary before they build up to deep. The chopped leaves return valuable organic matter and nutrients to the soil. If you use a mower with a bag attachment you can capture the chopped leaves and then distribute them as needed. They work well as an excellent mulch, compost fodder, or can be worked into your vegetable garden.

Leaf Power – If you have tons of leaves, you may consider buying or renting a vacuum-shredder. This is more effective than just blowing them around with a blower. Vacuum-shredders suck up the leaves, chop them, and then collect them into a bag. Use as described above. Remember, however, that shredders, blowers, and choppers work well only when the leaves are nice and dry. If they're too wet, they'll just clog.

Back to Nature – If you own a wooded area or large property where you can dispose of leaves, go for it. However, remember that too many leaves can suffocate existing plants, so spread them out a bit.

## **Winter Season Mulches**

*David Hillock*

The principal reasons for winter mulching are to provide more uniform soil moisture and to protect the plant from severe temperatures during cold weather.

Winter mulches generally are applied around and over the tops of low growing plants after the plants are in a dormant or inactive stage of growth. This usually occurs in late November into December.

The amount of mulch applied is influenced by the severity of winter cold, the amount of drying winds, and winter rainfall. Often one will apply a cover, but not totally screen out plants under the mulch. Loose mulch materials are more suitable (straw, pine needles, loose hay).

As growth begins to develop in spring, the young leaves will have a very light green color due to the reduction of sunlight under the mulch. Remove enough of the mulch to allow for normal plant growth. With chrysanthemums this might require removal of at least 3/4 of the mulch while with strawberries removal of 1/2 of the mulch might be adequate.

Often the cause of death in non-mulched plants is the result of low temperature combined with excessive drying of the soil.

## **Selecting Fall Color**

*David Hillock*

Fall is an excellent time to plant trees and shrubs. It is also a good time to select plants for their fall color. Some plants are selected for vivid fall colors and propagated in a way that the fall color is consistent from year to year, if weather conditions cooperate. Some species are grown from seed so genetics provides widely variable fall color from plant to plant. For example, Caddo sugar maple and Chinese pistache grown from seed will provide an array of fall color from yellow-green to vivid orange and red. For species such as these, observing them in the garden center during the fall allows you to select the colors that you would like to see in your garden.

## **The Magic of Autumn**

*David Hillock*

I remember as a kid growing up in Iowa the awesome fall colors of the many maples, ashes, oaks and other species common to the area. We would rake the leaves up into big piles and then play in them for hours. It was even legal back then to burn your leaves and roast marshmallows and hotdogs over the fire (now-a-days it is prohibited in most communities). Much of Oklahoma can also have spectacular fall displays. But what causes those green leaves to turn colors in the fall?

The green in leaves is actually chlorophyll, which is responsible for catching the sun's energy and converting it into energy for plant growth. During the summer the chlorophyll is high and masks other pigments in the leaf. When fall approaches the chlorophyll declines and the other pigments shine through. Pigments that are present include anthocyanins, which are purple and red, and carotenoids and tannins which provide the yellow, orange, and brown hues.

Weather conditions play a vital role in our fall colors. Ideal weather conditions that lead to the spectacular fall colors are bright sunny days and cool nights. Prolonged warm spells in the fall and cloudy rainy weather can lead to poor fall color. Drier soils in fall, but not drought conditions, also lead to brighter fall colors.

## **Cheetah is the New Black**

*Becky Carroll*

I know the title sounds more like a fashion blog about trends from the past couple of seasons in clothing and accessories. This year, Cheetah may be the Rely. I'll get to this explanation a little later. While updating the weed control sections for 2016 Extension Educator's Handbook this week, I stumbled upon some information that I thought might be useful.

During the last couple of years the herbicide Rely 280 has been in short supply. The high demands from other crops for the glufosinate product has made it almost impossible for fruit and pecan growers to locate the herbicide for their vineyards and orchards. Rely is a postemergent herbicide used to control annual grass and broadleaf weeds and suppress perennials. It has been in high demand for its ability to control marestail or horseweed where resistance has been an issue with using glyphosate herbicides. Rely also can control suckers on mature trees and vines when used properly.

After asking Jackie Lee and Charles Luper from the Pesticide Safety Education Program about another possible glufosinate product, Charles sent me a list of potential products that he located on the website [www.kellysolutions.com](http://www.kellysolutions.com). Kelly Solutions state "that they connect the entire regulated community with state governments, such that they can make better business decisions and accelerate commerce". There are drop down boxes or a map to select the proper state and then you can search for needed information. You can search using various classifications but a few include product name, site (i.e., pecan, grape), pest, ingredient, or even by multiple search items. There are some products available that look like they would be a good alternative chemical but are not registered for use in Oklahoma but all of these pesticides listed under the Oklahoma tab are registered for use in Oklahoma. This website gives the user the opportunity to determine if the product is also sold under another brand name.

Under glufosinate, there are 13 products listed but after clicking on the product and then viewing its label, only 6 are labeled for use on fruits and pecans. Even if a product has a label linked to the webpage, the instructions to follow will be on the label that is attached to the product you are using. I found two different labels for Ignite, one lists fruits and pecans, except peaches and the other label doesn't include any of these commodities. As far as I can tell, Ignite is not to be used

on fruits and nuts on the most recent label that I located. Other glufosinate labels that list fruits and pecans include Cheetah, Forfeit 280, Lifeline, Reckon 280SL, Summit Agro Refer 280SL plus Rely 280. So you can see the reason for my title – Cheetah could be a new option for Rely 280 users and I’ve found at least one company that does sell it.

My ‘go-to’ website to check out chemical labels is [www.cdms.net](http://www.cdms.net). Click on label database at the top and then on product search. Put in the name of the chemical you are interested in and hit enter. Read carefully but remember – the label that is the law is the one attached to the product that is used. It’s always good to do a little research into the product before purchase. Just because the farm store employee or chemical representative said everyone else has been using it this year, doesn’t always make it the best choice. Pesticides are expensive and if used improperly can damage the crop, not give the adequate protection against the pest, harm the environment and quite possibly injure the pocket book. Take the time to study the product before the purchase.

When a pesticide loses its patent after a number of years, many new names pop up with the same ingredients, similar to a generic product. Surflan is a good example. A few years ago, other options surfaced with oryzalin in the ingredient list. Often this makes the pesticide more affordable and available. Some equivalents for Surflan are Oryzalin 4S and Fugitive. Be sure when using Surflan that it is the ‘agricultural’ type and not the ‘specialty’ that is labeled for non-bearing fruit, turf and ornamentals. Some herbicides have the same active ingredients but different labels listing bearing fruits on one and only non-bearing or no fruits at all on other labels. If the fruit or pecan isn’t listed, you can’t legally use the product.

Paraquat has been sold as Gramoxone for many years, but now can be found listed as Bonedry, Cyclone SL, Firestorm, Helmquat 3SL and Parazone 3SL. Diuron has been sold as Karmex, and Diruon, additional diruon herbicides are Parrot, Cleanshot and Determine. Oxyfluorfen or Goal is now also found as Goaltender, Galigan and Collide.

Probably the one pesticide most affected by a patent release was glyphosate. Glyphosate labeled as Roundup was sold for years but now is also sold under numerous names such as Showdown, Buccaneer 5, Envy, Glypo 41, Duramax, RapidFire, Cornerstone, MadDog, GlyStar and many others. Some have different additives for less drift, anti-foam, surfactants, and some even come with ammonium sulfate added to increase effectiveness in uptake. It’s best to consider how it will be used, the cost to apply and the benefits before purchasing these with additives.

Current Reports – [CR-6242 Weed Control in Pecans, Apples, and Peaches](#) and [CR-6243 Weed Management in Small Fruit Crops](#) will be updated soon to reflect any important changes. Take some time to research the products, study how it should be used and at what stage of weed development that it is most effective. Timing is important to get good results. Keep records of what you applied, rates used, and rainfall or irrigation applied to evaluate the effectiveness later in the season. Weed control is the most critical management during establishment of most fruit and pecan crops.

The pesticide information presented in this publication was current with federal and state regulations at the time of printing. The user is responsible for determining that the intended use

is consistent with the label of the product being used. Use pesticides safely. Read and follow label directions. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.

## **70<sup>th</sup> Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show**

*Justin Quetone Moss*

The 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Oklahoma Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show will occur on December 1-2, 2015 at the Oklahoma State University Wes Watkins Center. You can register as an attendee or exhibitor by visiting <http://www.otrf.net/> and choosing either the online or mail-in registration link. On December 1, there will be five educational tracks including: golf course management, sports field management, lawn care operators, sod production, and turf mechanics. On December 2, there will be a pesticide continuing education general session. For both days of the conference, CEUs will be available for Oklahoma pesticide applicators in categories 3A (turf and ornamental) and 10 (demonstration and research). The trade show will feature 40 turf industry companies and representatives from around the state and region. The event will also be available for in-service credit for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension personnel.

## **Upcoming Horticulture Events**

### **Tree Care Issues Conference**

October 29, 2015

Wes Watkins Center – Stillwater, OK

<http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/tree-care-issues-conference>

### **Horticulture Industries Conference and Show**

January 8 and 9, 2016

Tulsa Community College, NE Campus

<http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/events/HIS>

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