UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

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October-November 2009 Edition

Cass-Schuyler Horticulture Newsletter

University of Illinois Extension
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Dates to Remember

Lasagna Gardening Demonstration
October 21 12:00 –2:00 pm, Extension Office

Raised Bed Garden Demonstration
October 28 12:00-2:00 pm, Comm. Garden

Wildlife Nuisance Control Workshop
October 29 at 3:00 pm, Extension Office

Working Windbreaks
November 12 at 1:30 and 6:30 pm
Extension Office

Please call the Extension Office to register for any program. (217) 322-3381 or email: schuyler_co@extension.uiuc.edu

University of Illinois Master Gardener

Sponsored by University of Illinois Extension, the Master Gardener program trains adult volunteers to help disseminate up-to-date, research-based horticulture information to home gardeners.

Anyone can become a Master Gardener—it does not require a degree in Horticulture! You do, however need to:

- Have a sincere desire to learn and share home horticulture information.
- Have practical experience or knowledge of gardening.
- Be willing to follow U of I pest control recommendations and home horticulture information.
- Be able to communicate effectively.
- Devote time to training sessions and volunteering.

Training sessions are typically offered one day a week for 11 weeks and are led by University of Illinois Extension educators and other horticulture experts. An online option is also available. A total of 66 hours of instruction is required to complete the program.

The next Master Gardener training will be offered in Macomb in January 2010. Please contact us if you would like more information regarding the program. Check out the State Master Gardener website for more information: http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/mg/

Inside This Newsletter

Wildlife Nuisance Control Workshop—October 29

Many homeowners like being able to see some wildlife around their yards. Some of these homeowners even enhance habitats to encourage birds and animals to come within a few feet of their houses. While in most cases this benefits humans and wildlife, good intentions can sometimes lead to unwanted wildlife near or even in a home. This can also present a threat of disease or damage. What can be done then?

On October 29, the Schuyler County Extension Office will host a Wildlife Nuisance Control seminar. Duane Friend, Extension Educator in Natural Resources Management, will provide information on techniques for excluding or discouraging unwanted wildlife from homes and other areas. Specific types of wildlife control will also be discussed.

The program will begin at 3 pm, and will be held at the Schuyler County Extension Office, 710 Maple, in Rushville. Those wishing to attend may call the Schuyler County office at 322-3381 to pre-register.

Working Windbreaks

November 12, 1:30 and 6:30 pm

Schuyler Extension Office

Windbreaks have been used for many years to stop cold winter winds, to reduce noise, and for aesthetics.

Listen to Extension Educator Dave Shiley discuss how to properly design, plant, and maintain a windbreak for maximum benefits. Tree species, spacing, and weed control will be included in the discussion.

To register for the program, please contact the U of I Extension Schuyler Office, 710 Maple Avenue, Rushville, (217-322-3381) by November 10.

Fall Garden Wrap-up

Source: Sharon Yiesla, Unit Educator, Horticulture

Wrapping up the garden for the season is not the one-day project many people assume. This process is usually done over the course of several weeks, since houseplants summering outdoors may need to come inside in September and some outdoor gardening activities may extend into mid- or late October.

Home gardeners might find it helpful to follow a "to-do" list for fall.

First, bring in houseplants that have summered outdoors. They should come in when night temperatures consistently fall into the lower fifties--and this could be as early as September.

When moving the plants inside, try to avoid abrupt changes in light and temperature. Also check for insects.

Cleaning the pot or repotting the plant may be enough to control pests. Some plants that have outgrown their pot may need to be repotted. Pruning may be in order for plants that have grown vigorously while outside.

Next, clean up vegetable gardens and annual flower beds. First, harvest all usable vegetables and annual flowers. Any leftover debris can be tilled into the soil or placed into compost piles. Be sure to clean up weeds as they can harbor diseases and insects.

Add compost and other organic material to enrich the soil and mulch beds to prevent erosion during the winter.

Third, perennial flower beds need to be cleaned up. Remove weeds to eliminate overwintering sites for insects and diseases. After a couple of frosts, mulch the perennial bed with two to three inches of mulch. The tops of the plants can be cut back now or in the early spring, depending on when you have the time. New perennials can be planted in September, and established perennials can be divided.

The fourth 'to-do' task is tree and shrub maintenance. Prune deciduous trees after they go dormant or in the early spring. Prune late-summer and fall-flowering shrubs after they go dormant. DO NOT prune spring-flowering shrubs in the fall as you will remove the flower buds.

Trees and shrubs can be fertilized after they go dormant. Continue regular watering as long as the ground is not frozen. This is especially important for evergreens.

Finally, there are a number of miscellaneous activities in the garden that are appropriate in the fall season.

These include planting spring-flowering bulbs from mid-September through mid-October, cleaning garden tools so they will be ready next spring, seeing to the proper storage of seeds, fertilizer, and garden chemicals, and draining and storing water hoses.

Recycling Leaves in the Yard

(Source: Home Hort Hints, October-November 2000)

Autumn is a wonderful season until it's time to rake leaves. This year, recycle your leaves at home rather than burning or sending them to a municipal compost site. Burning pollutes the air and makes breathing difficult for people with respiratory disorders. Instead of sending leaves to a commercial or municipal compost facility and then buying them back as compost next year, reap the benefits directly by using your own leaves in a variety of ways.

In heavily wooded areas with native stands of trees, let the leaves lie as they fall. The trees need the natural leaf litter. Leaves enrich the soil's nutrients and quality for maximum root growth. However, if you have lawn beneath the trees, the leaves must be removed or the grass may be smothered.

As you clean up the garden in fall, till or dig leaves into vegetable and annual flowerbeds to improve the soil's quality and tilth.

Shredded or chopped leaves make wonderful mulch around trees, shrubs and perennials. Leaf mulch is an attractive dark brown and slowly decomposes releasing nutrients to the plants. Prevent matting by shredding or chopping leaves. A lawn mower with a bag attached is an easy way to chop and pick up leaves simultaneously. After the soil freezes in late November insulate roses and perennials with crinkly dry leaves instead of straw.

Oak leaves do not make soils too acidic and may be chopped and used as mulch or tilled into gardens. In addition to falling leaves, vegetable and bedding plants are dying and beginning to decompose as the growing season draws to a close. Now is the ideal time to start a backyard compost pile. It is easy, economical and does not smell.

Backyard composting offers more than just a way to get rid of plant material. Compost is an excellent way to improve yard and garden soil, especially the clay soil dominant in our area. Adding organic matter such as compost loosens clay soils, improves drainage and slowly releases nutrients. In sandy soil, compost holds moisture longer and provides nutrients.

By following a few simple rules your compost project will be successful. Start by constructing some type of bin to hold the materials. Bins may be as simple as poultry wire cylinders held up with a few stakes or as elaborate as specially constructed wood and wire bin systems. Piles need to be a minimum of 3 by 3 by 3 feet for best decomposition. Bins must be constructed so air can reach the composting materials.

All organic matter eventually decomposes, but mixing green and brown materials together in a ratio of half green and half brown will speed the process. Green materials, such as grass clippings or fresh green plant parts, supply nitrogen. Brown materials, such as dead leaves and plants, are high in carbon. Mixing the two assures good conditions for the microbes and fungi that actually decompose the plant material.

The smaller the plant materials are, the faster they will decompose. Shred, chop, or mow before putting them in the bin.

Moisture and air are required for the composting process, but too much or too little of either one can cause problems. Compost materials should be about the wetness of a wrung-out sponge. Anaerobic bacteria dominate wet compost piles and create bad odors. The solution is to add air by turning or mixing the pile. If too dry, the materials will decay extremely slowly. Keeping the pile covered is one way to control moisture levels.

Turning every week or two mixes the materials, speeds decomposition and is a good way to monitor progress. Finished compost is well worth the small amount of effort. For more information contact your local University of Illinois Extension office.

Lasagna Garden Demonstration—October 21.

Lasagna Gardening Demonstration, 12:00-2:00 pm, Wednesday, October 21, at the U of I Extension Office, 710 Maple Avenue, Rushville.

Lasagna gardening is a great way to rejuvenate a weedy garden or start a new garden in a grassy area without having to dig or till.

The name comes from the layers of newspapers, leaves, compost, etc. that are piled and left to compost into great soil It is a great way to use extra fall leaves.

Picking Trees for the Long term

Source: Nancy Pollard, Unit Educator, Horticulture

Many trees can be planted in the early fall, allowing the advantage of warm soil for root growth before the tree goes dormant.

With trees in their full fall beauty, this is a good time to get an idea of what kind of tree you might like for your yard. How do you choose a tree you can live with for years to come?

One way is to follow three tips for successfully choosing a tree. Begin by looking at the site where you intend to plant the tree.

Choosing an appropriate site will minimize costly, harmful, or drastic later tree pruning or the premature death of the tree. Every kind of tree has a unique height, width, and spacing, as well as environmental needs to fully mature. Pick a tree that fits in the space and is well adapted to your site.

Take a good look at the site. Look up. Do you see wires? Avoid planting under electrical wires, or, if you do, chose a short variety. Look down. Find out where underground utilities are by calling 811 before you dig. Plant at least 10 feet away from utilities. Look around. Will views of traffic signs, pedestrians, or vehicles be obstructed as the tree grows? What other physical features are nearby?

Finally, observe the growth environment. Is it sunny or shady? Does the soil drain well? What is the soil pH? Is the soil compacted by foot or vehicle traffic? How much root space is there?

The second tip—pick a tree to match your site. When fully grown, how big will the tree be compared to the space available? The mature crown should be 10 feet or more from utility lines Will it need to be pruned away from buildings? Will it obstruct signs or views?

Is the tree native or well-adapted for your site? Is it prone to common diseases or insect pests typical of the region? Answering these questions may take research and insect-resistant tree varieties.

Determine what kind of maintenance will be required in the short– or long-term. Will falling leaves and fruit need to be removed, or can they be left for wildlife? What seasons will showcase the tree at is most interesting?

There are some resources to help you match the right tree to the right locations. A good place to start is a University of Illinois Extension website (http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/go/gc51a).

The third tip involves picking a good tree at the nursery or garden center. Is the trunk straight? Choose a tree with a straight, single central leader. If it has multiple leaders, look for wide branch angles. As they get older, narrow-angled branch V's are prone to split during storms. Good selection and early pruning out of narrow V's reduces storm splitting.

Is the trunk wounded? Reject trees with wounded trunks. Is the crown full and well balanced? Are there many crossing branches that rub and create wounds that will need to be pruned out? Will narrow V's have to be removed to keep the tree strong? How will corrective pruning affect the crown balance?

Also check to determine if you need to purchase mulch or woodchips at the same time the tree is purchased. Mulches keep soil cool and reduce water loss, thereby lowering stress during drought and keeping weeds at bay.

They also protect the trunk from wounds that lead to shortened tree life.

Raised Bed Garden Demonstration

The University of Illinois Extension is offering a Raised Bed Garden Demonstration at the Community Garden (just west of the HELP Center on East Adams St.) 12:00-2:00 pm, Wednesday, October 28th.

If you are looking for a better way to garden next year, consider installing a raised bed garden now.

Some vegetables such as peas and radishes can be (and should be) planted early. With pre-made raised beds, which drain and dry quickly, these crops can be planted with out further tillage in the spring.

Raised beds are better for many plants and they are easier on gardeners. For more information, contact the U of I Extension Office, 217-322-3381.

Autumn Berries on Shrubs

Source: Matt Kostelnick, Extension Unit Educator, Horticulture

Anyone familiar with gardening and the outdoors appreciates the color and vibrancy fall brings to the garden and landscape.

When selecting plants for fall beauty, people often look at fall foliage color. Indeed, leaf color adds to the character of the landscape and season. However, there are other exciting sources of fall color and beauty beyond leaf color, including fruits—typically berries.

Berries and other fruits on shrubs come in many different shapes, colors, and sizes. They often appear on shrubs after blooming in mid- to late summer and remain on the shrubs through fall and sometimes into winter.

Some berries are quite showy, and others are hardly noticeable. In some cases, the berries disappear before you ever get to enjoy them due to birds eating them quickly.

Birds and other wildlife benefit from the berries as an important source of food, particularly in the fall.

A potential tradeoff of shrubs that produce attractive berries for fall--as opposed to those that don't--is the sacrifice of larger, more ostentatious blooms in spring and summer.

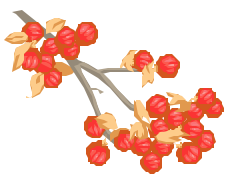
Shrubs in the genus Viburnum are very common in Illinois and make a great addition to a landscape. Viburnums are highly desirable in a landscape because they have attractive foliage, blooms, fruits, and are relatively easy to grow in most gardens. There are about 225 species of Viburnums.

This wide variety of Viburnum species provides ample latitude in finding the perfect one for you. Viburnums bloom in spring and produce fruit in late summer. This fruit can remain on the shrub well into fall, but can also be picked by humans or birds for consumption.

Fruits on Viburnums are typically red to blue-black in color. Viburnums to consider for fall fruit include: *Viburnum dentatum* (Arrowwood Viburnum), *Viburnum lantana* (Wayfaring tree Viburnum), *Viburnum trilobum* (American Cranberrybush Viburnum), and *Viburnum dilatatum* (Linden Viburnum).

Common Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), as the name implies, is great for fall/winter berries. Winterberry is in the genus Ilex (which includes Hollies) and is typically planted in masses or as a screen.

Winterberry develops red berries in late summer/early fall that stay on well into winter. With Ilex species, berries are produced on female plants. In order to get berries, male plants are necessary to pollinate the female plants.



For different colors of berries, consider the following cultivars: for orange fruit 'Aurantiaca'; for yellow fruit 'Chrysocarpa'; for red fruit, 'Cacopon', 'Fairfax', Shaver', and 'Winter Red'. A very close relative of Winterberry is Possum Haw (*Ilex deciduas*). Possom Haw can tolerate a wide variety of soil conditions and planting sites. For lots of bright red berries, consider the cultivar 'Warren's Red' or 'Byer's Golden' for yellow fruit. For Hollies, consider the Meserve Hybrid Holly (*Ilex x meserveae*), an evergreen holly that is cold hardy for Illinois. The Meserve Hybrid Hollies have numerous cultivars to choose from.

Dogwoods (genus *Cornus*), another very common ornamental shrub in Illinois, offers a wide variety of autumn and winter beauty. Dogwoods offer a variety of beauty in their leaves, flowers, fruits, and stems. Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) is an easy Dogwood to grow that produces bluish-black fruit on red stalks. Note, however, that birds snatch the fruit quickly.

If you've had shrubs with berries but the birds seem to eat them before you get to enjoy them, consider Chokeberry shrubs (genus *Aronia*). Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a shrub that can get three to six feet in height, tolerates most soils and conditions, and produces larger, attractive purplish-black fruit in late summer that remains in the fall with red fall foliage.

Black Chokeberry cultivars to consider include: 'Autumn Magic' and the compact 'Morton'. For red-colored berries, consider Red Chokeberry cultivar 'Brilliantissima' for larger fruit.

If you've got some space and want to try something a little different, you might consider Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) in your landscape. These can grow up to 25 feet in height and width. These shrubs have very unique foliage and fruit that will definitely stand out.

Fall foliage can vary from yellow to orange to red. The interesting-looking, furry fruit develops on female plants in summer and remains until winter and possibly into spring.

Male and female plants are needed in order to produce fruit. Two common cultivars are 'Dissecta' and 'Laciniata'. Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*) offers purple color in the foliage in fall.

Not to be left out, roses can also produce very colorful and vibrant fruit as well in the form of 'hips'. Rugosa Roses (*Rosa rugosa*) are excellent for this purpose and are one of the most trouble-free roses for the garden. Rugosa roses have a very unique, leathery texture to their leaves, a number of cultivars are resistant to Black Spot and Powdery Mildew, and they can tolerate a variety of conditions, including salt and harsh winters.

After blooming, Rugosa roses leave behind lovely orange-red 'hips' that are edible. Colors are vibrant and definitely add some excitement after blooming. Cultivars highly resistant to common rose diseases include: 'Alboplena', 'Frau Dragmar Hastrup', and 'Hansa'. Also consider Redleaf Rose (*Rosa glauca*) for colorful 'hips' and foliage.

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WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT!

PUMPKINS AND MORE!

http://urbanext.illinois.edu/pumpkins/

THE MIRACLE OF FALL

http://urbanext.illinois.edu/fallcolor/

HOUSEPLANTS

http://urbanext.illinois.edu/houseplants/

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