Horticulture Tips
October 2018

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Department of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture
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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 2½ 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.

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.

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.

Pecan Harvest Field Days

Becky Carroll

Choose Your Date: October 18 or October 25

Agenda:
1:00 pm – Registration
1:30 pm – Preparation or Orchard Floor
2:15 pm – Harvesting Demonstration
3:15 pm – Marketing Decisions
4:00 pm – Q & A Session/Adjourn

Required Registration Information:
Noble Research Institute – October 18: https://www.noble.org/events/pecan-harvest-field-day

Cimarron Valley Research Station – October 25: Email stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu or call 405-744-5404

Season Extenders

David Hillock

To get the most out of a garden, you can extend the growing season by sheltering the plants from the cold weather in early spring and during fall. Very ambitious gardeners harvest greens and other cool-season crops all winter by providing the right conditions. There are many ways to lengthen the growing season; your choice depends on the amount of time and money you want to invest.

Coldframes and Hot Beds

Coldframes, sun boxes and hot beds are relatively inexpensive, simple structures that provide a favorable environment for growing cool-season crops in early spring, fall and even into winter months. Some are elaborate and require a large investment, but may be the best option for those who are serious about having fresh vegetables during winter.

Coldframes and sun boxes have no outside energy requirements, relying on the sun for their source of heat. Hot beds are heated by soil heating cables, steam-carrying pipes or fresh, straw-filled manure buried beneath the rooting zones of plants. Heat is collected by these frames when sunlight penetrates the sash made of clear plastic, glass or fiberglass.

To ensure good drainage and maximum solar absorption, the ideal location for a coldframe is a southern or southeastern exposure with a slight slope. A sheltered spot with a wall or hedge to the north will provide protection against winter winds. Sinking the frame slightly into the ground also provides protection by using the earth for insulation. A walkway in front of the frame, adequate space behind the frame to remove the sash and weights to raise and lower the glass sashes make using a frame easier. Some coldframes are lightweight enough to move between sections of the garden. Another possibility is the Dutch light, which is a large, portable, greenhouse-like structure that can be moved from place to place.

Passive solar energy storage is utilized in coldframe design. For example, barrels painted black and filled with water absorb heat during the day and release it at night. The solar pod provides this type of heat storage. Other coldframe designs are very well-insulated and have a high back and a steep glass slope. Some have movable insulation that is folded up during the day and folded down at night or during extremely cold weather to protect growing plants.

A coldframe is also useful in early spring to harden-off seedlings which were started indoors or in a greenhouse. This hardening-off period is important as seedlings can suffer serious setbacks if they are moved from the warmth and protection of the house directly to the garden. The coldframe provides a transition period for gradual adjustment to outdoor weather. It is also possible to start cool-weather crops in a coldframe, either transplanting them to the garden or letting them grow to maturity in the frame.

Fall is a good time to sow some cool-season crops in frames. With adequate moisture and fertilization, most cool-season crops will continue to grow through early winter in the coldframe's protected environment. Depending on the harshness of winter and whether additional heating is used, your frame may continue to provide fresh greens, herbs and root crops throughout cold winter months.

Growing frames can be built with a variety of materials, but wood and cinder blocks are the most common. Wooden frames are not difficult to build. Use decay-resistant wood, such as high quality cypress, or choose pressure-treated wood. Kits are commercially available and can be easily assembled; some kits even contain automatic ventilation equipment.

There is no standard size for a coldframe. Frame dimensions depend on the amount of available space, desired crops, the size of the window sash, and the permanency of the structure. Do not make the structure too wide for weeding and harvesting; 4 to 5 feet is about the maximum width to comfortably reach across. The frame sash should be sloped southward for maximum sunlight exposure and absorption.

Insulation may be necessary if a sudden cold snap is expected. A simple method is to throw burlap sacks filled with leaves over the frame sash at night to protect plants from freezing. Another method is to stack bales of straw or hay against the frame.

Ventilation is most critical from late fall through early spring on clear, sunny days when temperatures rise above 45°F. The sash should be partially raised to prevent the buildup of extreme temperatures inside the frame. Lower or replace the sash early enough to conserve some heat for evening.

It is possible to convert a coldframe to a hot bed. For a manure-heated bed, remove 2 feet of soil (for better drainage, remove more soil and add a layer of gravel). Add an 18-inch layer of straw-filled horse manure and then cover with 6 inches of good soil. For an electric-heated bed, remove 8 or 9 inches of soil. Place thermostatically-controlled electric cable in 6 to 8 inch loops on the soil, evenly spacing the cable but not allowing it to cross itself. Cover the cable with 2 inches of sand or soil, and then place hardware cloth on top to protect the cable. Finally, cover this with 4 to 6 inches of good soil.

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. Dryer soils in fall, but not drought conditions, also lead to brighter fall colors.

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 in the fall allows you to select the colors you are interested in.

Fall - A Good Time to Control Broadleaf Weeds

David Hillock

Summer temperatures make it too risky to use the broadleaf postemergence herbicides due to the volatility and threat of drift, which could then damage desirable plants in the landscape. However, the cooler daytime temperatures associated with fall make it an excellent time to think again about controlling broadleaf weeds in the yard. Dandelion and other broadleaf weeds are easily controlled with post emergence herbicides such as those that contain a Trimec solution or other 2, 4-D formula. Remember to spray early in the day when winds are low and before temperatures begin to get too warm. Care should be used when applying these herbicides around desirable landscape plants. Do not over apply especially around tree and shrub roots. Spot spray when possible as it is not necessary to do a blanket cover spray when only few weeds actually exist in the yard. Spraying young weeds as they first appear this fall will be more effective than waiting until the foliage is more mature. Mature foliage resists the herbicide more easily than the younger shoots. Always read and follow label directions!!

Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs Now!

David Hillock

The latter part of this month and into November is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, etc. Be sure to get to the garden centers early so you can pick out the largest and healthiest of bulbs. They will bloom better for you than the smaller, discount types. Most bulbs should be planted to a depth that is about two times the diameter of the bulb. Be sure to plant your bulbs in well-drained soil; most will rot in our heavy, wet, clay soils during the winter if proper drainage is not provided.

To increase the spring bulb display, plant pansies at the same time. Pansies don’t mind the cold weather and can even provide a little extra color during the winter months. Come spring, they really take off and provide an understory of color to the overstory of color provided by the spring bulbs.

Trunk Protective Materials

David Hillock

Young, thin-barked trees such as ash, birch, linden, maples and others often sunscald unless protected. The twigs that shade the trunk should be left, but cut back a few inches so they become denser. A twiggy trunk is preferable to tree wraps, but not all trees have enough twigs, nor is it always practical or aesthetically pleasing to leave lower limbs.

Protective wraps are available and may provide protection by modifying temperatures for thin-barked trees. Plastic wraps may provide better protection than paper wraps against lawn mower, weed-eater, and rodent damage. If misused, however, damage may occur in the form of trunk girdling or constriction, insects, diseases, and excessive bark moisture.

Protective wraps may not be necessary at planting time. Use based on the type of protection needed. Normal application of tree trunk wraps is October to March for the first two growing seasons. Wraps should be removed each spring prior to spring growth. During spring growth the trunk expands and increases in size. Wraps too tightly wrapped or left on during this time may result in constriction to the trunk. Tree wraps should be applied loosely from base up to the first branch by overlapping for a shingle effect. Plastic wraps should fit loosely and include holes or slits for good air movement. Periodically inspect the wraps for trunk damage and insects

Advantages of tree wraps for young plants:

- Deter animals from browsing on bark.
- Reflects sun that either scalds the trunks or makes them susceptible to southwest injury during the winter months (bark is warmed followed by a sudden plunge in temperature which kills that portion of the bark).

Twig Girdlers

David Hillock

Recently I have seen many small branches from the tips of my oak tree lying on the ground; they are quite messy and I have to pick several up each day. These small branches accumulating on the ground are a good indicator of an insect called a twig girdler.

The twig girdler is a small beetle that has one generation in Oklahoma per growing season. Some indicators that these branches lying on the ground are due to twig girdlers include the presence of clean-cut twigs and/or dangling (flagged) branch tips within a tree. The Twig girdler female chews a V-shaped groove around a small twig, girdling it. She then will lay an egg underneath the bark on the girdled limb. This portion of the limb dies quickly and will fall to the ground with the larva inside. The small larva will overwinter in the fallen twig. During the following spring, the larva resumes feeding, consuming most of the wood. As the larva grows it bores further down into the twig and fills the tunnel with wood

shavings and waste. Pupation occurs in a cavity within the twig. Adults emerge in late summer and early fall.

Twig girdlers are a pest that can be managed easily with good sanitation practices. Homeowners should collect and destroy infested twigs and branches they find on the ground, beginning in the fall or early spring. This will eliminate the overwintering larvae. Infested limbs should also be pruned out and burned, if feasible. Sanitation is a cheap environmentally friendly way to manage these pests, especially for small plantings.