



HORTICULTURE TIPS



Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources * Oklahoma State University

DEC 2018/JAN 2019

GARDEN TIPS FOR DECEMBER!

David Hillock

Lawn & Turf

- Remove leaves from cool-season grasses or mow with a mulching mower. ([HLA-6420](#))
- Continue mowing cool-season lawns on a regular basis. ([HLA-6420](#))
- Continue to control broadleaf weeds in well-established warm- or cool-season lawns with a post-emergent broadleaf weed killer.

Tree & Shrubs

- Select a freshly cut Christmas tree. Make a new cut prior to placing in tree stand. Add water daily.
- Live Christmas trees are a wise investment, as they become permanent additions to the landscape after the holidays.
- Light prunings of evergreens can be used for holiday decorations. Be careful with sap that can mar surfaces.

Flowers

- Apply winter mulch to protect rose bush bud unions and other perennials. Wait until after several early freezes or you will give insects a good place to winter.
- Poinsettias must have at least six hours of bright, indirect light daily. Keep plants away from drafts.

Fruits & Nuts

- Cover strawberry plants with a mulch about 3-4 inches thick if plants are prone to winter injury.
- Wait to prune fruit trees until late February or March.

General

- Keep all plants watered during dry conditions even though some may be dormant. Irrigate all plantings at least 24 hours before hard-freezing weather if soil is dry. ([HLA-6404](#))
- Order gardening supplies for next season.
- Now is a great time to design and make structural improvements in your garden and landscape.
- Send for mail-order catalogs if you are not already on their mailing lists.
- Christmas gift ideas for the gardener might include tools, garden books, and magazine subscriptions.
- Clean and fill bird feeders.
- Make sure indoor plants are receiving enough light, or set up an indoor fluorescent plant light.
- Till garden plots without a cover crop to further expose garden pests to harsh winter conditions.
- Visit your county extension office to obtain gardening fact sheets for the new gardening season.
- Join a horticulture, plant or urban forestry society and support community “greening” or “beautification” projects.

- Review your garden records so you can correct past mistakes. Purchase a new gardening journal or calendar to keep the New Year's gardening records.

GARDEN TIPS FOR JANUARY!

- ❖ If precipitation has been deficient (1" of snow = ~ 1/10" of water), water lawns, trees, and shrubs, especially broadleaf and narrowleaf evergreens. Double check moisture in protected or raised planters.
- ❖ Check on supplies of pesticides. Secure a copy of current recommendations and post them in a convenient place. Dilution and quantity tables are also useful.
- ❖ If you did not treat young pines for tip borers in November, do so before March.
- ❖ Check that gardening tools and equipment are in good repair—sharpen, paint, and repair mowers, edgers, sprayers, and dusters.
- ❖ Inspect your irrigation system and replace worn or broken parts.
- ❖ Control overwintering insects on deciduous trees or shrubs with dormant oil sprays applied when the temperature is above 40°F in late fall and winter. Do not use “dormant” oils on evergreens. ([EPP-7306](#))
- ❖ A product containing glyphosate plus a postemergent broadleaf herbicide can be used on dormant bermudagrass in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control.

Mistletoe

David Hillock

Mistletoe is a familiar plant this time of year. The mistletoe that we use for decorations (*Phoradendron* spp.) is native to North America and Oklahoma. The mistletoe of European folklore is actually in the same family, but a different genus (*Viscum album*) than the North American mistletoe. The customs associated with European mistletoe were transferred to the North American mistletoe with the settlers.

Mistletoe is a partial parasite. It can make its own food through photosynthesis, but it also sends roots down into the vascular tissue of the host tree to obtain water and nutrients. Mistletoe is spread by birds. They eat the seeds, which are then deposited on branches in the bird droppings. The seeds then sprout and send rootlets down during the winter; large populations of mistletoe can severely stunt the growth of the tree and even kill it over time. If mistletoe is a problem, there is a product that can help get rid of it. Florel Brand Fruit Eliminator by Monterey Lawn and Garden Products helps suppress mistletoe and can be sprayed on the mistletoe any time after the leaves have fallen from the host trees through mid-winter. This product can also be used in the spring to eliminate nuisance fruit such as sweetgum balls, unwanted apples, crabapples, cottonwood, flowering pear, and other plants.

Tilling the Garden in Winter?!

David Hillock

Most would not think about tilling a garden plot, for vegetables or annuals, during the winter months. However, this is an excellent time to amend garden soils. Working the soil can be done in the spring too, but usually you are dealing with cold, wet soils then. It is wise to avoid working in wet soils because it destroys the soil structure. Of course working in a dry soil can be difficult too, so it is best to work in a moist soil. If the soil is real dry, water it several days before you plan to till it.

Applying two to four inches of organic matter such as leaf material, preferably chopped up or shredded, will help improve soil conditions as the organic material continues to break down through the winter months. In addition to improving soil tilth, tilling the garden during winter can expose overwintering pests such as insects to the freezing temperatures and reduce the potential for problems next spring.

Houseplants in Winter

David Hillock

During the winter months our attention often turns to plants growing indoors. Like most plants outdoors, many plants indoors also go into a rest stage. This rest stage usually shows up as reduced growth and in some cases the loss of some leaves. This rest stage is a result of the shorter days and reduced light levels inside the home.

During this period plants won't need too much water and little to no fertilizer. When a plant seems to be struggling most people have a tendency to add more water or fertilizer, but this could lead to further problems. Unless your plants are growing under near greenhouse conditions, water only when the top ½ inch of potting soil is dry and avoid adding fertilizer.

Another problem that arises during the winter months is exposure to cold drafts or the dry, blasting air from the heater. Humidity can also be lower. To avoid these problems locate plants away from doorways or the heater registers. Plants grow best at temperatures between 65°F to 75°F and a humidity of 50 to 60 percent. Temperatures are usually easier to control, but controlling humidity is more challenging. Humidity levels of 50 to 60 percent are higher than what most people like. Control humidity with a humidifier or by setting pots on a tray of moist gravel or pebbles. Do not allow the water to touch the bottom of the pot, as water would then be wicked into the potting medium and keep the plant too wet. A transparent polyethylene bag can be draped over plants that are extremely humidity sensitive or are in poor condition.

This is also a good time to see if plants are root-bound too. If they are root bound, plant them in a pot that is only 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter than the pot in which the plant is currently growing.

Providing Adequate Light for Houseplants - Adequate water and light are the two most crucial requirements for growing plants indoors. Of these, light is usually the limiting factor, especially in rooms where outside windows are small, face the north, or not present. Growing under lights relies on the intensity, quality, and quantity of light produced by fluorescent lamps.

Very few plants tolerate dark corners. Most houseplants require the light that would be found within four to eight feet of a bright south window. Some will tolerate a spot very near the window, while others will prefer less light some distance away. Too little light can result in tall, lanky, small-leafed plants. Too much light can cause leafburn on sensitive species like African Violet. Drapes should be left open during the day where houseplants are being grown; however, be careful not to allow the plants' leaves to touch the glass of the window.

Properties of Light Intensity (Brightness) - Plants have different requirements for light intensity. Desert plants, such as cacti, require very high levels of light; whereas, most tropical foliage and flowering plants require medium levels of light. Plants are generally segregated into the following categories based on their light requirement and intensity as expressed in foot-candles (ft c). One foot-candle is defined as the light produced by a single candle's flame as measured at a distance of one foot.

Sunny or very high (>1000 ft c)

- Areas receiving at least 5 hours of direct sunlight in winter
- Window facing southeast, south, or southwest

Semi-sunny or high (500-1000 ft c)

- Areas receiving 2-5 hours of direct sunlight per day in winter
- Window facing east or west

Semi-shady or medium (150-500 ft c)

- Areas having bright, open light, but little or no direct sunlight
- Obstructed window facing east or west

Shady or low (<150 ft c)

- Areas receiving no direct sunlight, but having enough light to cast a shadow
- Window facing north

If the room is not naturally lit, artificial lights should be used. A 100-watt table lamp can be used about three feet above plants. Specially built fluorescent plant lights or plant flood lamps are available.

Fluorescent lamps are a good source of light for growing plants because they distribute light uniformly across the lamp and over lamp life. Plants can be grown very close to the lamps without heat damage. However, intensity rapidly decreases as distance from the lamp increases. Fluorescent lamps are usually suspended a few inches above the plant leaves. Either fluorescent or incandescent plant lights are satisfactory for growing plants.

Quality (Color) - Plant growth lights produce most of their light in the blue, red, and far red regions. Blue light provides energy for photosynthesis. Red and far-red light are important for flower initiation. Standard “cool white” fluorescent lamps produce light in the lower visible spectrum, i.e. blue to green to orange, and thus will satisfy the light requirements of many plants. Combining two of the plant growth lamps with two, cool white lamps will provide good spectral distribution.

Quantity (Duration) - The intensity of light cast on plants’ leaves and the duration are important to the maintenance and growth of those plants.

- Seedlings require 16 hours of light per day.
- Flowering indoor plants require 14-16 hours of light per day.
- Foliage indoor plants require 10-12 hours of light per day.

For more information see fact sheet [HLA-6411](#) Houseplant Care.

Deicing Affects on Landscape Plants

David Hillock

Cold temperatures usually bring ice and snow making it difficult to travel for both motorists and pedestrians. Public safety during this time is a high priority and usually addressed by the use of deicing compounds. While these deicing compounds make it safer for us, they often damage concrete surfaces, automobiles and landscape plants.

There are several deicing compounds, each with pros and cons.

Sodium chloride (NaCl) is the most common and known as table or rock salt. It is the least expensive, most widely used and is most effective when temperatures are above 15°F. Unfortunately sodium chloride is very corrosive and damaging to landscape plants and excessive sodium in the soil can destroy its structure.

Calcium chloride (CaCl₂) dissolves readily, acts quickly and is effective in very cold temperatures - down to -20°F. It is, however, highly corrosive to concrete and metals, but slightly less damaging to plants than sodium chloride.

Potassium chloride (KCl) is a natural material used for fertilizer, but is highly corrosive as a deicer. It is less damaging than sodium chloride to plants.

Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) is an environmentally friendly compound derived from dolomitic limestone and acetic acid. CMA is considered safer for plant material, non-corrosive to concrete surfaces and biodegradable. It is also effective at melting ice to around 15°F. The downside, it is 30 to 40 times more expensive.

Deicing materials are salts that melt ice, creating a brine solution (salty water) which freeze at lower temperatures. The problem in the landscape occurs when this brine solution is splashed onto plant foliage or runs off pavement into the soil. An accumulation in the soil near plant roots results in damage to the plants. Plants suffer a salt-induced water shortage, even though there may be moisture in the soil, because roots are unable to absorb sufficient water.

To minimize damage by deicing materials in the landscape consider the following approaches:

- Mechanical removal – the less ice and snow present, the less deicing material needed
- Use abrasive materials in conjunction with mechanical and/or deicing materials – abrasives such as sand have few impacts on the environment. They do not melt ice, but do improve traction on slippery surfaces.
- Plan ahead – plant salt tolerant plants in areas receiving large amounts of deicing material; locate salt sensitive plants away from areas deicing materials are used; use hardscapes (gutters, barriers) to channel runoff away from planting areas; do not pile snow containing deicing materials onto planting areas; and irrigate once heavily in the spring to leach salts away from root zone.

Continuing Education/In-service Opportunity for Master Gardeners and County Educators

David Hillock

Register now for the Horticulture Industry Show (HIS) on January 3-5, 2019. HIS provides an opportunity to learn more about vegetables, fruits, sustainable Ag, farmer's markets, Christmas trees, and Master Gardener and Public Gardens. This year's theme is People, Plants, & Pollinators.

Pre-Meeting Tour: A High Tunnel Workshop at the Arkansas Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Fayetteville will be held on Thursday, January 3 at 1:00 pm. There is no charge for this workshop, but you are asked to register. This tour is outside and in High-Tunnels so dress accordingly.

Dr. Ray Moranz will kick-off the educational sessions on Friday, January 4 at 9:00 a.m. The topic of his address is “What Pollinators Do for You...and...What You Can Do to Save Pollinators in Arkansas and Oklahoma”. Dr. Moranz is the Grazing Lands Pollinator Ecologist for the Xerces Society, an international non-profit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Hired in September 2016, Ray also serves as a Partner Biologist for the USDA NRCS, and is based at the NRCS Field Office in Stillwater, OK. His current focus is assisting the NRCS with planning and implementation of pollinator (and especially monarch butterfly) conservation efforts in the central United States.

This year HIS will be held at the Chancellor Hotel in Fayetteville, AR. All Master Gardeners and County Educators are invited to attend. If you are a returning Master Gardener you can receive Continuing Education hours that will count towards your recertification hours. If you are a County Educator you can receive in-service hours by attending.

Register today by going to the conference web site www.hortindustriesshow.org. Registration before December 15 is \$55 for the two-day conference or \$42 for Friday only or \$25 Saturday only. After December 15 registration goes up to \$75 for two days and \$60 for Friday only and \$35 for Saturday only so don't delay and register before December 15.

Horticulture Tips – 2018 Index

Allium Millenium Selected as 2018 Plant of the Year, 03/18
Attracting Butterflies to the Garden, 03/18
Bring Spring Indoors, 02/18
Control Peach and Nectarine Leaf Curl Now!, 02/18
Controlling Caterpillar Pests, 05/18
Controlling Insects in the Landscape and Garden, 04/18
Cool-season Lawn Planting and Renovation, 08/18
Culinary Herbs for Oklahoma Gardens, 07/18
Cutting Back Ornamental Grasses, 02/18
Deadheading!, 06/18
Deicing Affects on Landscape Plants, 12/18
Don't Bag It: Autumn Leaves, 11/18
Dothistroma Needle Blight of Pine, 05/18
Earth-Kind Landscaping, 02/18
Fall – A Good Time to Control Broadleaf Weeds, 10/18
Fall is for Planting Trees and Shrubs, 08/18
Forcing Bulbs for the Holiday, 11/18
Fruit Elimination on Ornamental Trees, 02/18
Garden Tips for February, 02/18
Garden Tips for March, 03/18
Garden Tips for April, 04/18
Garden Tips for May, 05/18
Garden Tips for June, 06/18
Garden Tips for July, 07/18
Garden Tips for August, 08/18
Garden Tips for September, 09/18
Garden Tips for October, 10/18

Garden Tips for November, 11/18
Garden Tips for December and January, 12/18
Getting a Head Start – Growing Plants from Seed, 02/18
Growing Fall Irish Potatoes, 08/18
Growing Vertically, 04/18
Harvesting, Curing, and Preparing Gourds for Decorations, 08/18
Houseplants in Winter, 12/18
Injury Prevention Tips for Gardening, 07/18
Magic of Autumn, 10/18
Mahonia, 05/18
Mistletoe, 12/18
Moving Plants Indoor for Winter, 08/18
Mow at the Right Height, 06/18
Oklahoma Proven Selections for 2018, 02/18
Onion Care and Handling, 04/18
Pecan Grafting Demonstrations, 02/18
Pecan Graftwood Sources, 02/18, 04/18
Pecan, Peach, Apple, Grape & Blackberry Tissue Sampling for Fertilization Recommendations, 07/18
Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs Now!, 10/18
Powdery Mildew, 05/18
Protecting Spring Bulbs from Squirrels and Other Critters, 11/18
Protecting Young Trees, 11/18
Pruning Blackberries, 03/18
Pruning Roses, 03/18
Saving Seed of the Amazing Squash, 08/18
Season Extenders, 10/18
Selecting Deciduous Trees for Oklahoma, 06/18
Selecting Fall Color
Seven Steps to Landscaping Your Yard for Wildlife, 04/18
Soil Testing...the Right First Step, 08/18
Staking Trees, 08/18
Summer is for Fall Harvest, 07/18
Ten Tips to Save Money and Protect the Environment
While Enjoying a Healthy Yard, 05/18
Tilling the Garden in Winter?!, 12/18
Tomato Blossom-End Rot, 07/18
Truck Protective Materials, 10/18
Twig Girdlers, 10/18
Urban Friendly Trees, 08/18
Water Irrigation, 02/18
What is ThinkWater?, 02/18
Winter Damage to Broadleaf Evergreens, 03/18



The *Horticulture Tips* newsletter distributed monthly (except January) by the following:

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
707 West Electric Avenue
McAlester, OK 74501
918-423-4120 www.oces.okstate.edu/pittsburg

This newsletter is one way of communicating horticultural information to those interested.

DAVID CANTRELL
Extension Educator, Agriculture
david.cantrell@okstate.edu

PREPARED BY: Stephanie Wilson
stephanie.wilson12@okstate.edu

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Higher Education Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal and state laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, genetic information, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, or status as a veteran, in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This provision includes, but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. The Director of Equal Opportunity, 408 Whitehurst, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078-1035; Phone 405-744-5371; email: eeo@okstate.edu has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies. Any person who believes that discriminatory practices have been engaged in based on gender may discuss his or her concerns and file informal or formal complaints of possible violations of Title IX with OSU's Title IX Coordinator 405-744-9154.