



# HORTICULTURE TIPS



Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources \* Oklahoma State University

February 2016

## GARDEN TIPS FOR FEBRUARY!

*David Hillock*

### General

- Base any plant fertilization on a soil test. For directions, contact your county Extension Educator.
- Provide feed and unfrozen water for your feathered friends.
- Clean up birdhouses before spring tenants arrive during the middle of this month.
- Avoid salting sidewalks for damage can occur to plant material. Use alternative commercial products, sand or kitty litter for traction.

### Trees & Shrubs

- Fertilize trees, including fruit and nut trees and shrubs, annually. ([HLA-6412](#))
- Most bare-rooted trees and shrubs should be planted in February or March. ([HLA-6414](#))
- Finish pruning shade trees, summer flowering shrubs and hedges. Spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia may be pruned immediately after flowering. **Do not** top trees or prune just for the sake of pruning. ([HLA-6409](#))
- Look for arborvitae aphids on many evergreen shrubs during the warmer days of early spring.
- Gall-producing insects on oaks, pecans, hackberries, etc. need to be sprayed prior to bud break of foliage.
- Dormant oil can still be applied to control mites, galls, overwintering aphids, etc. ([EPP-7306](#))

### Fruit & Nuts

- Spray peaches and nectarines with a fungicide for prevention of peach leaf curl before bud swell. ([EPP-7319](#))
- Mid-February is a good time to begin pruning and fertilizing trees and small fruits.
- Collect and store graftwood for grafting pecans later this spring.
- Begin planting blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, asparagus and other perennial garden crops later this month.
- Choose fruit varieties that have a proven track record for Oklahoma's conditions. Fact Sheet [HLA-6222](#) has a recommended list.

### Turf

- A product containing glyphosate plus a broadleaf herbicide can be used on **dormant** bermuda in January or February when temperatures are above 50°F for winter weed control.

### Vegetables

- Cool-season vegetable transplants can still be started for late spring garden planting.
- By February 15 many cool-season vegetables like cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peas and potatoes can be planted. ([HLA-6004](#))

### Flowers

- Force spring flowering branches like forsythia, quince, peach, apple and weigela for early bloom indoors.

- Forced spring bulbs should begin to bloom indoors. Many need 10 to 12 weeks of cold, dark conditions prior to blooming.
- Feed tulips in early February.
- Wait to prune roses in March.

## **Pruning Shrubs: Rejuvenation and Renewal**

*David Hillock*

Rejuvenation pruning is a severe form of pruning often used to reinvigorate older shrubs that have become too large or contain considerable unproductive wood. The shrub is pruned by cutting off the oldest branches at or near ground level. Such heavy pruning may stimulate an excessive number of new sprouts from the root. This new growth will also have to be thinned to reduce competition and maintain the natural form of the shrub. Some shrubs that tolerate rejuvenation include Barberry, Elderberry, Flowering Quince, Forsythia, Honeysuckle, Hydrangea, Lilac, Mahonia, Privet, Red Twig Dogwood, and Spirea.

Renewal pruning is another way to reinvigorate older shrubs. It is used in cases where few younger stems are found on the plant. It is often a 3-year process in which one-third of the older wood is removed each season over the 3 years. This stimulates new growth while maintaining the overall shape of the plant. As with rejuvenation pruning, the shrub may respond by producing an excessive number of new shoots. This new growth should be thinned to maintain the natural form of the plant. Renewal pruning is used for Abelia, Chokeberry, Deutzia, Dogwood, Forsythia, Kerria, Kolkwitzia, Mockorange, Mahonia, Viburnum, and Weigela.

For more information on pruning trees and shrubs see OSU Factsheet [HLA-6409 Pruning Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, and Vines](#).

## **Fertilizing Asparagus**

*David Hillock*

Asparagus is a wonderful spring vegetable requiring minimal maintenance. To promote a good crop, fertilizer needs to be applied to the crop twice each season; once in late February or early March and again at the end of the harvest season. The first fertilization stimulates shoot development and the second feeds the growth of ferns. Promoting vigorous fern growth will replenish the energy reserves in the roots for next year's harvest.

Before applying fertilizer, remove last year's dead ferns and move those to the compost pile. Apply a side dressing of fertilizer. Side dressing means applying the fertilizer to the soil around the plant, keeping the fertilizer from contacting the plant directly. Generally, nitrogen only is needed, which is the first number listed on a fertilizer bag. Only apply phosphorus and potassium if a soil test indicates a nutrient deficiency.

The fertilizer is applied at a rate of about one half to one pound of actual nitrogen per 50 square feet. As an example a bed about 25 square feet, would need one-quarter to one-half pound of actual nitrogen. An organic source of nitrogen in the form of blood meal has a nutrient content of 12-0-0. This means nitrogen makes up 12 percent of the fertilizer by weight, or .12 pounds of nitrogen per pound of fertilizer. If the goal is to apply ¼ pound of nitrogen to the 25 square-foot asparagus bed, 2 pounds of blood meal will need to be applied. Incorporate the fertilizer into the upper inch of soil. Then spread a thin layer of compost, about 1 to 2 inches thick, to add a little organic matter to the bed. This will help hold back weeds and retain soil moisture. Don't forget to make that second fertilizer application as the harvest dwindles.

See OSU Factsheet [HLA-6016 Asparagus Culture in the Home Garden](#) for more information about growing asparagus.

## **Applying Dormant Oils for Winter Insect Control**

*David Hillock*

For home gardeners and fruit growers an important insect management tool is dormant oil application. Dormant oil is a refined petroleum product formulated for use on trees and shrubs. This refers to the time of application which should be late winter or early spring. Applications should be made when temperatures are above freezing and before bud swell and bud break before new growth forms. Ideal temps are between 40 and 70 degrees.

If applied too early, before hardening off, the trees can sustain winter injury. Also, if the temperature is too low the oil will not mix well in solution and you will not get adequate coverage needed to control overwintering insects. Late February through March should be a good time to make these applications, although check the weather and make sure there will not be any freezing temperatures or rain for a few days after applications.

Dormant oils control scale insects, aphids, and mites that are overwintering on the trees. The oil must be applied with enough water to get thorough coverage (read label recommendations). Coverage is very important so that the spray can reach in between the cracks and crevices of the bark where many insects hide. The oil coats the insects and fills the spiracles. Insects use their spiracles to breathe so when they are blocked they smother. Dormant oils will suppress insects by killing overwintering adults and eggs which will slow the seasonal build up in the spring. This is well worth the extra time.

Applications should be made to apples, pear, plum, pecan and crabapples. Peaches, nectarines, apricots and plums often do not require dormant oil sprays, but if certain insect pests have been an issue in the past it could be beneficial. Dormant oils can also be beneficial for shade trees and woody ornamentals. Consult your label before application to make sure the plant is listed. Some plants are sensitive to dormant oil applications.

Precautions: Do not apply too early or too late. Avoid temperature extremes. Avoid using on plants that are oil sensitive. There will be a list on the label.

Dormant oils will kill annual flowers; do not make applications to trees close to annuals. Do not apply in combination with sulfur containing pesticides such as captan. This will cause plant injury.

Benefits far outweigh the negatives. It is fairly inexpensive. Less toxic than other sprays used to control these pests with little toxicity to birds and mammals. This will provide your plants with a jump start into spring.

Dormant oils can be purchased at any garden center and are relatively inexpensive. Remember to read the label and follow all label recommendations!

## **Pecan Graftwood Sources**

*Becky Carroll*

The updated 2016 Pecan Graftwood Source List is available on the pecan webpage located at - <http://okpecans.okstate.edu/PDFs/graftwood-source>. For information on variety selection or grafting techniques, check out the webpage <http://okpecans.okstate.edu/orchard-establishment-management> for fact sheets or <http://okpecans.okstate.edu/pecan-video-resources> for videos showing different grafting techniques.

## **2016 Pecan & Grape Management Course**

*Becky Carroll*

Brochures are now available detailing the 2016 Pecan and Grape Management Courses. The courses offer an opportunity for potential new or veteran growers to learn or refresh their basic management skills needed to successfully grow pecans or grapes. The classes meet one afternoon a month beginning March 3 for the grape course and March 8 for the pecan course and continuing for the growing season. Having the classes through the season gives participants the chance to see what management requirements are necessary at specific times. Students learn in both the classroom and in the orchard or vineyard setting. The classes meet at the Cimarron Valley Research Station near Perkins. Classes also travel to a couple of pecan orchards or established vineyards/wineries to learn from other growers. Class dates and other information is available in the brochure.

The cost to enroll in either the pecan or grape course is \$250 per student. Registration for the grape course is due by February 22 and pecan course deadline is February 29. County extension educators are encouraged to enroll in the courses *free of charge*.

The link to the brochures are online at <http://okpecans.okstate.edu/pecan-management-course/pdfs/pecan-course-brochure> or <http://www.grapes.okstate.edu/grape-management-course/grape-mgmt-brochure>. Please share this information with interested clientele. If you have any questions, please let me know.

## **Fruit & Pecan New or Updated Fact Sheets**

*Becky Carroll*

Over the last several months, many of the fruit and pecan fact sheets have been updated or revised. We've also added a new one that covers Growing Pecans in Landscapes. Check out the pods collection 217 for links to the up-to-date tree fruit, small fruit and pecan fact sheets at <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-217>.

Below are a few of the newest fact sheets to be added to the list:

*Brand New* - [HLA-6260 Managing Pecans in the Home Landscape](#)

Revised - [HLA-6246 Growing Grapes in the Home Garden](#)

[HLA-6245 Training Pecan Trees](#)

[HLA-6215 Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden](#)

[CR-6242 Weed Control in Pecans, Apples, and Peaches](#)

[CR-6243 Weed Management in Small Fruit Crops](#)

## **2016 Oklahoma Proven Selections**

*David Hillock*

Each year a set of plants is chosen by horticulturists that will help consumers choose plants appropriate for Oklahoma gardens. The program began in 1999 by selecting a tree, shrub, perennial and annual worthy of Oklahoma landscapes. In 2009 a new category was added, the Collector's Choice. This plant has the adventuresome gardener in mind. It is a plant that will do well in Oklahoma and may need special placement or a little extra care, but will be very rewarding and impressive in the garden. Now in its 17th year, there are many plants to choose from on the Oklahoma Proven Plant Selection Program website at <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/>. Selections for 2016 are listed below:

### **Collectors Choice – Deciduous Magnolias (improved varieties), *Magnolia deciduous species***

Deciduous forms of magnolia are spectacular additions to any spring landscape. Deciduous forms such as star magnolia (*M. stellata*) and saucer magnolia (*M. x soulangiana*) and the many hybrids provide a wide variety of flower colors from red to white, yellow, pink, or purple. The most common color available throughout the country is

pink, but many others should be tried such as ‘Elizabeth’, an older selection with creamy yellow flowers, or ‘Butterflies’, a newer selection with deep yellow flowers. Flowers of deciduous magnolias appear just before or while the leaves are emerging in spring. Early flowering varieties can be damaged by late frosts; avoid placing plants in a southern exposure where flowers will open early. Deciduous magnolias can range in size from small to medium shrubs to large trees.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Prefers moist, well-drained, acid soil, but adaptable
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 4-9

### **Tree – Live Oak, *Quercus fusiformis***

Escarpment live oak is a smaller version of the coastal live oak (*Q. virginiana*) growing slowly to 20 to 40 feet high and about as wide with picturesquely gnarled branches and evergreen leaves. Escarpment live oak is native to southern Oklahoma through central and western Texas to northern Mexico, which means it is also more drought and cold tolerant than coastal live oak. Because of its slower growth it is a perfect long-lived shade tree for smaller, urban landscapes. Branches provide excellent nesting sites for birds and small mammals. Acorns are elongated and eaten by wildlife. It is also the larval host of the Hairstreak and Horace’s Duskywing butterflies.

- Exposure: Full sun or light shade
- Soil: Alkaline to slightly acid, well-drained soils
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6-10

### **Shrub – Color Guard Yucca, *Yucca filamentosa* ‘Color Guard’**

Yucca is virtually a stemless evergreen shrub native to the southeast. ‘Color Guard’ is a gold-centered, variegated form with upright sword-shaped leaves that provide striking architectural features to the garden. Flowering stalks arise in late spring from the center of the plant bearing long, terminal panicles of bell-shaped, nodding, fragrant, creamy white flowers. ‘Color Guard’ yucca is free of pests and is tolerant of dry areas. It is excellent in borders, xeriscape plantings, containers, and as an accent plant.

- Exposure: Sun to part shade
- Soil: Dry to medium, well-drained
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 3-8.

### **Perennial – Sedges, *Carex* species and cultivars**

Sedges belong to the genus *Carex*, which is a genus of many species, most from wet areas such as bogs. Sedges have triangular, grass-like stems and panicles of short flower spikes. Foliage can be evergreen or deciduous and colors range from green, brown/rust, golden, blue, to variegated. Sedges are grown in groups or masses, as a lawn substitute, in naturalized areas, perennial borders, and habitat restoration. They are grown particularly in shady areas where the variegated varieties really shine. Some require damp or wet conditions while others are relatively drought tolerant.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Dry to wet soils
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 3-10

### **Annual – Annual Vinca (improved hybrids), *Catharanthus***

Annual vinca, also goes by Madagascar periwinkle and other common names, tolerates the heat and humidity of the southeast. Full sun and warm soil temperature is required for this species to thrive and it is tolerant of low fertility soils and is drought tolerant. Flower colors come in shades of white, pink, red, and purple. Plants grow 6 to 12

inches tall and 8 to 24 inches wide depending on cultivar. Improved cultivars provide an abundance of flowers on stocky plants and disease resistance, which is very important with this species. Improved cultivars include plants in the Cora series, Mediterranean series, Titan series, and many others.

- Exposure: Full sun to part shade
- Soil: Well-drained, slightly dry soil
- Hardiness: Use as an annual

## Upcoming Horticulture Events

**Gardening 101 Workshop.** David Cantrell will be conducting a vegetable garden workshop. There will be two opportunities for you to attend this one session workshop. The first class will be Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm and the second class will be held Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Subjects include: Garden site selection and preparation; Soil fertility management; Choosing vegetable types and varieties; insect and disease control; and Raised bed gardening. Classes will be held at the OSU Extension Office, 707 W. Electric Ave., McAlester, OK 74501. Please pre-register for each class at 918-423-4160. Classes are limited to the first 20 people.



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

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918-423-4120

[www.oces.okstate.edu/pittsburg](http://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](mailto:david.cantrell@okstate.edu)

PREPARED BY:

Stephanie Wilson  
[stephanie.wilson12@okstate.edu](mailto:stephanie.wilson12@okstate.edu)

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