



HORTICULTURE TIPS



Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources * Oklahoma State University

February 2017

GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

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.
- Join *Oklahoma Gardening* for the start of its new season beginning on February 11, 2017. *Oklahoma Gardening* airs on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m. and Sundays at 3:30 p.m. on your local OETA station.

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.

Fruit Elimination on Ornamental Trees

David Hillock

Every summer we get calls from homeowners who are dealing with messy fruits from landscape trees. Unfortunately, when we receive these calls it is usually too late to do much about it that year. Fruit control is possible, but timing is critical and must be done when flowers and fruits are forming in spring/early summer. Of course the best approach is to plant trees that don't produce messy fruits or if you still have an appreciation for the fruiting characteristics, make sure you locate the plant in the landscape where the fruits can fall, but not be a nuisance. You could also consider planting fruitless varieties. These come as sterile forms of the tree species or in some cases as male selections. Some species produce male and female trees; obviously the female trees have the potential for producing those unwanted fruits; the males won't produce fruit. For example, fruitless sweetgum varieties are available like 'Rotundiloba' which is a sterile or near sterile variety of sweetgum; Kentucky coffeetree is an example of a species with male and female plants, the most common male selection being 'Espresso'.

If you are just stuck with existing trees in the landscape that produce those annoying fruits, you have some chemical options. Two types of chemical products are available for fruit control. Ethephon is a plant growth regulator that when applied to plants reacts by liberating ethylene, which interferes with the plant growth process resulting in reduction or elimination of fruit. The only product registered in Oklahoma that is packaged for the homeowner is Florel® Brand Fruit Eliminator by Monterey Lawn and Garden Products. This product should be applied to the tree when it is in mid-to full-bloom and temperatures should be between 65-95 degrees Fahrenheit. The plants should also not be under stress. Complete coverage is necessary to achieve satisfactory control. This may be a problem for the homeowner who is trying to control fruits on a large, mature shade tree such as sweetgum or sycamore, but may be an option for a smaller ornamental tree like crabapple. Most homeowners won't have the equipment to reach high into large trees and get complete coverage so they have to hire a pesticide applicator or arborist to do the work. Drift should also be avoided as it may cause temporary modifications to plant growth of nearby plants. Of course, always be sure to read and follow all label directions!

The other products registered for use can only be applied by an arborist or commercial pesticide applicator. The products are applied as a trunk injection, usually at the beginning of bud break for best results.

Snipper (active ingredient IBA) is a product applied as a trunk injection and should be applied by a licensed professional. The active ingredient IBA is a plant hormone, which promotes premature drop of flowers. It also must be applied at flower bud break and will have to be applied yearly to get satisfactory control.

Pinscher (Dikegulac-sodium) is another trunk injection product that must be applied by commercial applicators. Timing of application is different depending on the species of tree, but still must be applied annually.

No matter which chemical approach you choose, both will need to be repeated yearly. Remember, the best approach is to plant trees that don't produce those annoying fruits.

Winter Annual Weed Control: Henbit and Carolina Geranium

Justin Moss

Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) is a common winter annual or biennial found throughout Oklahoma and commonly invades lawns in the late fall/winter. The most common feature that homeowners will notice is the

purple flowers that appear in whorls in the axils of the upper leaves. Henbit is often confused with purple deadnettle (*Lamium purpureum*) which can also be found growing in Oklahoma and displays purple flowers in the late winter/early spring.

Link to image: http://www.turfgrass.ncsu.edu/images/Plants/purpledeadnettle/web/henbit_deadnettle2.jpg

Carolina geranium (*Geranium carolinianum*), also known as cranesbill, is a winter annual or biennial that is found throughout Oklahoma in the late fall/winter. The leaves are deeply lobed and with five to seven lobes per leaf. The lobed portion of the leaves are also lobed and bluntly toothed. The flowers may appear in early spring and are white to lavender colored. Carolina geranium is often confused with common mallow (*Malva neglecta*), another broadleaf winter annual or biennial. Common mallow does not have the deeply lobed leaves like Carolina geranium, but rather is more sharpened tooth along the leaf margins.

Link to images: http://www.weedalert.com/weeds-by-name.php?WEED_ID=131

http://www.weedalert.com/weeds-by-name.php?WEED_ID=38

Both henbit and Carolina geranium can also be confused with ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*). Ground ivy is a perennial with creeping stems which root at the nodes. Because of this characteristic, it is often called “creeping” Charlie.

Link to image: http://www.weedalert.com/weeds-by-name.php?WEED_ID=64

Henbit and Carolina geranium can be controlled by applying a tank mixture of glyphosate and a three-way type broadleaf herbicide containing 2,4-D, dicamba, and mecoprop (MCP) in January or February. The three-way product can control the winter annual broadleaf weeds while the glyphosate can control both broadleaf weeds and winter annual grassy weeds. The glyphosate application is only recommended for dormant bermudagrass that has a dense canopy and is not recommended for tall fescue lawns or if the bermudagrass is beginning to green-up in the spring. For tall fescue lawns, only apply the three-way product and do not apply glyphosate. With any product application, always read the label and only apply according to labeled directions.

Pecan Graftwood Sources

Becky Carroll

The updated 2017 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.

2017 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. To see all the plants recommended by the Oklahoma Proven Plant Selection Program, visit our website at <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/>.

Selections for 2017 are listed below:

Tree – Fringetree, *Chionanthus* cultivars

Chionanthus virginicus is a deciduous, native shrub or small tree with a spreading, rounded habit that typically grows 12-20 feet tall and most often occurs in rich, moist woods and hillsides, moist stream banks, limestone glade margins and rocky bluffs and ledges. The common name fringetree refers to the slightly fragrant, spring-blooming flowers which feature airy, terminal, drooping clusters (4-6 inches long) of fringe-like, creamy white petals. Fringetrees are dioecious (separate male and female plants), but also may have perfect flowers on each plant. Male flowers are showier than female flowers. Plants with perfect or female flowers may give way to clusters of olive-like fruits which ripen to a dark, bluish black in late summer and are a food source for birds and wildlife. The wide, spear-shaped leaves turn yellow in autumn.

Chionanthus retusus, commonly called Chinese fringetree, is native to China, Korea and Japan. As with the native U.S. species (*C. virginicus*), this plant is noted for its profuse spring bloom of fragrant white flowers. It is most often seen in cultivation as a large, multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub growing to 10-20 feet tall with a rounded, wide-spreading form. It also may be grown as a small tree (multi-trunked or trained as a single trunk), ultimately reaching up to 30-40 feet tall. Clusters (to 4 inches long) of mildly fragrant, pure white flowers with fringe-like petals bloom in late spring to early summer. Blooms appear about 2-3 weeks before that of *C. virginicus*. Lustrous, leathery leaves are bright green above and whitish-green plus downy beneath. Leaves turn yellow in fall (reportedly more attractive in northern areas). Exfoliating gray-brown bark is attractive in winter.

'Tokyo Tower' was brought to the United States from Japan by Harald Neubauer of Hidden Hollow Nursery in Tennessee. It is a narrow, strongly upright branching tree with tan and gold exfoliating bark. 'Tokyo Tower' has abundant clusters of fluffy white flowers that mature into blueberry-like fruit and dark green foliage turns bright yellow in fall. It grows 12 to 15 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide.

Fringetree grows in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Plants prefer moist, fertile soils, but are adaptable even tolerating clay soils, though they are intolerant of prolonged dry conditions. Fringetree seldom needs pruning and is tolerant of air pollution and adapts well to urban settings.

Fringetree has no serious insect or disease problems; however, there is some susceptibility to scale and borers, particularly when grown in dry locations.

Grow in groups or as specimens in lawns or in shrub or woodland borders, in native plant gardens, or near streams or ponds; they can be spectacular in full bloom.

Exposure: Full sun or light shade

Soil: Tolerates wide variety of soils

Hardiness: USDA Zone 3-9 (*C. retusus* – Zone 5-9)

Shrub – Dwarf Palmetto, *Sabal minor*

Dwarf palmetto favors the wet alluvial soil in swamps and river bottoms in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and North Carolina and is the only member of the palm family native to Oklahoma. This very slow growing, ground-hugging rugged fan palm produces pale green or bluish fan-like, evergreen leaves atop spineless stems arising from a crown of underground roots reaching 4 to 6 feet high or more. Flowers are yellowish-white in late spring followed by edible black, BB-sized fruits that taste like dates.

Dwarf palmetto provides interest and variety to a damp, shaded place. Although this plant grows native in areas of high to moderate moisture, once established in a garden setting it is fairly drought tolerant. Provide it with plenty of water during establishment; afterwards palmetto is quite hardy through droughts although the tips of the leaves may turn brown. Dwarf palmetto is a good accent plant for moist areas and will tolerate poor drainage. It is the most cold-tolerant *Sabal*. In the landscape it works well as a specimen plant, in mass plantings, or in containers.

Exposure: Sun to part shade (best in part shade)

Soil: Organically rich, moderately fertile, moist, tolerates poor drainage

Hardiness: USDA Zone 7-10

Perennial – Milkweed, *Asclepias* species

Asclepias species are the milkweeds and include the commonly known species butterfly weed or butterfly milkweed, *Asclepias tuberosa*. Native to America they are well adapted to many soil types. Best known as the host plant for monarch butterflies, the milkweeds have gained a lot of attention lately and efforts across the country to reestablish lost habitat to help save the declining monarch population is taking the front stage for gardeners, butterfly enthusiasts, and conservationists.

Butterfly milkweed is the most popular of *Asclepias* species with bright orange to yellow-orange flowers on upright stems growing 1 to 3 feet tall. In fact, butterfly milkweed has been named the Perennial of the Year in 2017 by the Perennial Plant Association. Butterfly milkweed does not have the milky sap like other species of milkweed. Flowers are a nectar source for many butterflies and the leaves are a food source for the monarch butterfly larvae.

Milkweeds in general grow in average, dry to medium, well-drained soils in full sun and are very drought tolerant and have no serious pest problems. Mature butterfly milkweed do not transplant well due to the taproot and division is difficult but can be done in early spring before new growth starts. Don't cut back plants in fall, instead wait until early spring.

Butterfly milkweed and other milkweeds are grown in native plant gardens, wild gardens, meadows, naturalized areas, perennial borders, and cottage style gardens. Butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the colorful, fragrant flowers.

Exposure: Sun, part shade

Soil: Tolerates about any soil

Hardiness: USDA Zone 4-10

Annual – Firecracker Flower, *Crossandra infundibuliformis*

Crossandra infundibuliformis, commonly called firecracker flower, is native to India and Sri Lanka where it is a tropical evergreen subshrub that grows 1-3 feet tall. Flowers are apricot to salmon pink in color and form in terminal racemes. Yellow and red flowered forms are also available. Plants bloom throughout the summer and attract pollinators. Leaves of firecracker flower are shiny dark green. 'Orange Marmalade' has long lasting blooms on a plant that thrives with heat and humidity. Large clusters of frilly, bright orange flowers shine against the glossy green foliage. 'Orange Marmalade' has outstanding disease and insect resistance, which means great garden performance.

Firecracker flower prefers light, organically rich, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun or part shade, but will tolerate bright full shade. Plants thrive in warm, humid weather and have no serious insect or disease problems.

Firecracker flower is beautiful in beds, borders, containers or as a houseplant.

Exposure: Full sun to part shade

Soil: Moist, well-drained soil

Hardiness: Use as an annual

Collectors Choice – Jujube or Chinese Date, *Ziziphus jujuba*

Jujube or Chinese date is a fantastic small tree with attractive foliage and branching structure with the added bonus of attractive, edible fruits. The naturally drooping tree is graceful, ornamental and often thorny with branches growing in a zig-zag pattern. Jujubes are fast growing trees to 15 to 30 feet high and just about as wide. Trees grow in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun, and tolerate alkaline soils. Mature plants have some tolerance for

drought, but perform best with regular and consistent moisture; avoid heavy, poorly drained soils. While jujube grows best in hot, somewhat dry climates they grow well throughout Oklahoma. Plants will sucker from the roots.

Leaves are glossy green with finely toothed margins in summer and turn yellow in fall. Non-showy, white to yellowish green flowers are fragrant. Flowers bloom in the leaf axils from late spring to early summer. Fruit is a round to elongate drupe of varying size (from cherry to plum), but typically to 1 ¼ inches long with a single stone within. When maturing from green to red, each smooth-skinned fruit has a sweet, crisp flesh somewhat reminiscent of an apple. After maturing to red/reddish brown, the fruits wrinkle and take on the appearance (and some say taste) of a date, hence the alternate common name of Chinese date for this plant. Many excellent cultivars exist in China. Two common cultivars in the U.S. are 'Li' and 'Lang' (virtually spineless). Fruits may be eaten fresh or may be dried, candied or canned.

Jujube has no serious insect or disease problems. Fruits can be difficult to produce in the northern areas of the growing range because the growing season is not long enough for the fruits to properly ripen. Fruits can create litter problems. Jujube is primarily grown in home gardens for its fruits, but can also be grown as an edible ornamental. The fruit has been used medicinally for millennia by many cultures.

Exposure: Full sun

Soil: Best in moist, well-drained; pH and drought tolerant

Hardiness: USDA Zone 6-9

For more information about Oklahoma Proven go to <http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu/> or contact David Hillock, 405-744-5158, david.hillock@okstate.edu.



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