



# HORTICULTURE TIPS



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

NOVEMBER 2014

## GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER!

*David Hillock*

### Lawn & Turf

- Fertilize cool-season grasses like fescue with 1 pound nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
- Continue to mow fescue as needed at 2 inches and water during dry conditions.
- Control broadleaf winter weeds like dandelions.
- Keep falling leaves off fescue to avoid damage to the foliage.

### Tree & Shrub

- Prune deciduous trees in early part of winter. Prune only for structural and safety purposes.
- Wrap young, thin-barked trees with a commercial protective material to prevent winter sunscald.
- Apply dormant oil for scale infested trees and shrubs before temperatures fall below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Follow label directions.
- Continue to plant balled and burlapped and containerized trees.
- Watch for arborvitae aphids, which tolerate cooler temperatures in evergreen shrubs.

### Flowers

- Tulips can still be successfully planted through the middle of November.
- Leave foliage on asparagus, mums, and other perennials to help insulate crowns from harsh winter conditions.
- Bulbs like hyacinth, narcissus and tulip can be potted in containers for indoor forcing.

### Fruits & Nuts

- Delay pruning fruit trees until next February or March before bud break.
- Harvest pecans and walnuts immediately to eliminate deterioration of the kernel.

### Miscellaneous

- Leftover garden seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer until next planting season. Discard seeds over 3 years old.
- Gather and shred leaves. Add to compost, use as mulch or till into garden plots.
- Clean and store garden and landscape tools. Coat with a light application of oil to prevent rusting. Drain fuel tanks, irrigation lines and hoses. Bring hoses indoors.

## **Protecting Bulbs from Squirrels**

*Kim Holmes, Oklahoma Gardening Host*

Squirrels and rodents cannot resist digging their teeth into the juicy bulbs we so conveniently place in the ground for them each fall. Though our intention is not to feed wildlife, this is the ultimate fate of many flower bulbs. An easy trick can help protect bulbs over the winter to ensure abundant spring blooms. The tool to use is hardware cloth with ½ inch openings.

To make use of this trick, dig out a small planting bed, rather than plant each bulb individually. Remember that proper planting depth is important. The general rule of thumb is to plant bulbs at a depth equal to 3 times their height. The mulch layer should be included in the final depth of the bulbs, so account for that in the planting bed.

Dig a bed a few inches wider on all sides than the intended bulb planting and set the bulbs. Remember to place them with the growing tip pointing up. Once all the bulbs are set, begin filling the bed with soil until the bulbs are covered, but do not completely fill the planting bed.

Stop adding soil an inch or two below grade. Place the chicken wire over the planting area, securing the edges in the soil with stakes. Finish filling the planting area with soil and mulch. The wire will prevent animals from digging up your bulbs, but the openings are wide enough to allow the foliage and flower stalks of the bulbs to move freely through.

If your bulb problems are caused by burrowing rodents such as moles or voles, you may need a different trick. Construct small boxes or baskets out of chicken wire and place the bulbs inside. Then plant the entire cage in the ground. This method is also useful if you are trying to squeeze bulbs in among perennials and don't have room to dig a larger planting bed.

Squirrels do not find all bulbs to be delicious and are even avoid some. Consider planting a less favored bulb in the landscape, such as daffodils, muscari, hyacinth, scilla or fritillaria.

## **Winter Indoor Plant Care**

*David Hillock*

During the short days of winter, many indoor houseplants that receive little or no artificial light enter a "resting stage." If plants go into a rest period, give them little or no fertilizer.

Avoid placing plants in hot spots or near cold drafty areas. Very few plants will survive the blast of a heater vent. Most will not like to be near a door where cold drafts alternate as people walk in and out.

Watering needs may also change during the winter depending on how warm you keep your home during the winter. Be careful not to overwater. Potting medium in plants like poinsettias should be kept moist to the touch while others should be allowed to dry slightly before watering.

## **Best Turfgrass Management Practices for Environmental Protection**

*Justin Quetone Moss, Associate Professor*

When developing and implementing a turfgrass and landscape management program, environmental fate of pesticides and nutrients should be an important consideration. There are many benefits to healthy turfgrass stands and landscaped areas, but they must be managed properly in order to reduce the chances for off-target and off-site movement of pesticides and fertilizers. One of the best methods for reducing losses is a dense and healthy stand of turfgrass. Frequent monitoring for pests and damage, relatively frequent soil and water testing, and development of economic threshold levels is also important. In addition, properly reading and following labeled directions for any pesticide applications is a must. The following best environmental practices and tips for turfgrass and landscape management is adapted from the MCCarty et al. (2003).

1. Do not disturb sensitive wildlife areas and wetlands during design and construction of the area.
2. Take all necessary steps to prevent soil losses and to manage stormwater during and after construction of the site.
3. Develop an integrated pest management plan for the site.
4. Use the right plants in the right place. Select native and adapted plants that require less inputs over time.
5. Use proper cultural practices to maintain a dense, healthy turf stand with an extensive and deep root system.

6. When pesticides are used, select those that have a lower overall active ingredient use rate with the lowest toxicity, leaching/runoff potential, and volatility.
7. Read the pesticide label and only use labeled rates at the proper timing.
8. Always base nutrient applications on soil testing results and use less soluble or slow-release products when possible.
9. Only apply pesticides and fertilizers when conditions are favorable for proper placement.
10. Use backflow prevention and prevent back-siphoning into the water source/hose when filling pesticide sprayers.
11. Do not spray or mix pesticides near surface water sources.
12. Properly dispose of pesticides according to local, state, and federal laws.
13. Use vegetative or turfgrass buffer strips as living filters around all surface water bodies.
14. Create untreated or no-spray zones adjacent to all surface water bodies.
15. Irrigate at a rate to infiltrate and moisten the soil, but do not irrigate at heavy rates that could produce surface runoff.
16. Do not apply pesticides or fertilizers immediately prior to expected rainfall or heavy storms.
17. Lightly water-in/irrigate all fertilizer applications with 0.1 to 0.2 inches of water. Water-in pesticide applications if warranted and allowable on the pesticide label.
18. Use mulching mowers and return grass clippings to the turf area when possible. Do not leave turf clippings or leaves on hardscapes, but sweep them or blow them back into the lawn area to avoid losses in stormwater runoff.
19. Routinely check and calibrate pesticide sprayers and fertilizer spreaders.
20. Keep detailed and accurate application records.
21. Provide regular self-training and make sure all employees understand how to properly handle, mix, and use pesticides and fertilizers.

*McCarty, L.B., I.R. Rodriguez, B.T. Bunnell, and F.C. Waltz. 2003. Fundamentals of turfgrass and agricultural chemistry. John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ.*

## **Alternatives to Japanese Maples**

*Kim Holmes*

Photos by David Hillock

Hot, dry summer winds are a mainstay on the southern plains, which often desiccate the delicate foliage of Japanese maples leaving them ragged. These graceful trees are a big draw for gardeners, with their delicate foliage and intricate branching patterns. But planting one can be a gamble in Oklahoma. Several hardier understory trees offer as much interest in the landscape, with much less hassle.

A native deciduous tree, poorly named Carolina buckthorn, does not have thorns despite its name and is found wide spread beyond the Carolinas, as far north as New York and south to Mexico. The tree's ornamental features include berries, which ripen from a bright red in summer to black in autumn. Beloved by birds, the fruits are edible, but much better for drawing watchable wildlife into the landscape. The glossy green foliage is a constant through summer and continuing well into fall. The tree has a beautiful rounded crown.



USDA hardiness Zones: 5-9; Size: 10-15 feet tall and wide; Conditions: full sun to part shade

With showy white flowers, yellow autumn color, and dark blue fruit on female flowers, fringe tree or *Chionanthus virginicus* offers multiple seasons of interest. The multi-stemmed trunk and open canopy provide a strong specimen for the landscape. Fall fruits attract birds, but do not produce a maintenance issue. Fringe tree is tolerant of air pollution making it an excellent selection for the urban landscape.



USDA hardiness Zones: 3-9; Size: 12-20 feet tall and wide; Conditions: full sun to part shade

The sumacs or *Rhus* species offer dramatic fall color and unique structure. Native to much of North America, sumacs are well known for their brilliant fiery displays along our roadsides each autumn. The newer cultivar, Tiger Eyes® sumac, offers brilliant yellow coloration all season long, followed by a spectacular fall display of orange and red. The open branching structure of *Rhus* creates a unique specimen for the landscape.



USDA hardiness Zones: 3-8; Size: 6-15 feet tall and wide, spreading; Conditions: full sun to part shade

Another tree that offers not only beauty, but also food, is *Amelanchier* or serviceberry, a deciduous tree that produces tasty berries in June. Another common name for this plant is June berry. It is an early spring bloomer, with extremely showy white blossoms. Flowers are followed by blue-black berries set against dark green foliage. In autumn, foliage changes to yellow or orange. The smooth gray bark often displays vertical ridges and is excellent to highlight through structural pruning. Serviceberry is wonderful for a wildlife garden or a stately accent.



USDA hardiness Zones: 4-9; Size: 10-25 feet tall and 10 to 15 feet wide; Conditions: partial to full sun

Many gardeners are drawn to the colorful foliage of Japanese maples. Smoke tree offers a hardy alternative. New growth emerges in a brilliant wine color, turning to plum red as it matures. In fall, colors shift to orange and purple. Summer brings a mix of textures as pink clouds of blossoms erupt against the colorful foliage. There is also a native smoke tree, *Cotinus obovatus*, which has chartreuse foliage that turns golden orange in fall.



USDA hardiness Zones: 4-8; Size: 20-30 feet tall and wide; Conditions: full sun

While Japanese maples put on a great show in spring and fall, desert willow, *Chilopsis linearis*, is best in the summer and an ideal tree for hot, dry climates. Its most prominent feature is its blossom; large, showy purple flowers that cover the tree in waves from late spring through summer. The upright and open branching structure provides a nice specimen for the landscape, while making it easy to plant beneath. Desert Willow is an excellent choice for the water-wise landscape and a favorite of hummingbirds.



USDA hardiness Zones: 7-9; Size: 15-25 feet tall and 15 to 20 feet wide; Conditions: full sun

## Master Gardener Corner

David Hillock

Horticulture Industries Show (HIS) - January 16-17, 2015. The HIS program is complete and registration forms can be found on-line at <http://www.hortla.okstate.edu/research-and-outreach/programs/2015HIS>. This year HIS will be held at the Holiday Inn City Center, Fort Smith, AR. All Master Gardeners are invited to attend. If you are a returning Master Gardener you can receive Continuing Education hours that will count towards the minimum 20 hours you need to keep active member status. Remember, however, that only the time actually spent in class counts as training received. Travel and in-between times do not count.

Though we offer a Master Gardener/Public Garden session, you may also choose from any other session offered during the conference. There are 7 commodity groups represented during HIS, all conducting seminars, workshops, and business meetings. You may choose from any of the following groups: Vegetable, Fruit, Sustainable Agriculture, Farmer's Market, Master Gardener/Public Garden, Christmas Tree, and Oklahoma Agritourism.

The conference theme is "*Modern Tools and Technology for Growers and Marketers*" with Keynote Speakers Emily Oakley and Michael Appel of Three Springs Farm, presenting *Farming as a Living: Making a Career from Organic Vegetable Production*, and Merritt Taylor, Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, OSU, presenting *Risk Management for Specialty Crops: Modern Tools and Common Sense*.

Topics for the Master Gardener/Public Garden session include: Emerald Ash Borer Part I and II - Tamara Walkingstick; Web-Based Tools to Connect with Agriculture - Ron Rainey; New Crapemyrtle Scale - John Hopkin; A New Twist on School Gardens - Neal Mays; Mix of Art and Science with the Spiral Wetlands - Colin Massey; New Annual Introductions - Richard Cleaver; Growing Mushrooms in Your Home - Dr. Vic Ford; Wine 101 for Home Gardeners - Isaac Witt; Connecting Consumers to Agriculture - Zach Taylor; Dover High School's Outdoor Campus and Hiking Thru Habitats - Shelby Hartzell and Jordan Jorgensen; Five Year Fig Trial - Susan Randolph; Grow Bucket Gardening - Cheryl Anderson; Creating Topiaries for Garden Display - Bob Byers; Facebook, Is it Still Useful? - Julie Treat; and Using a Blog to Share Horticulture Information - Janet Carson.

This should be another great conference, hope to see you there!



The *Horticulture Tips* newsletter is 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](http://www.oces.okstate.edu/pittsburg)

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