



Pottawatomie County Cooperative Extension Service
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Pottawatomie County Horticulture Newsletter



The Proper Time to Prune

An important aspect of pruning is knowing when to prune plants. Proper timing helps insure attractive, healthy, productive plants. The proper times to prune various woody plants in the yard and garden are indicated below.

Deciduous Shrubs--Many deciduous shrubs are planted in the home landscape for their attractive flowers.

Spring-flowering shrubs bloom in the spring on the growth of the previous season. Two widely planted examples are lilac and forsythia. The proper time to prune spring-flowering shrubs is determined by their condition.

Old, neglected spring-flowering shrubs often require extensive pruning to rejuvenate or renew the plants. The best time to rejuvenate large, overgrown shrubs is late winter or early spring. While heavy pruning in late winter or early spring will reduce or eliminate the flower display for a few years, the long term health of the shrubs is more important.

If spring-flowering shrubs need only light pruning, prune them immediately after bloom. Pruning immediately after bloom allows gardeners to enjoy the spring flower display and gives the shrubs adequate time to initiate new flower buds for next season.

Summer-flowering shrubs, such as crape myrtle and spirea, bloom in summer on the current year's growth. Prune these shrubs in late winter or early spring. Summer-flowering shrubs pruned in late winter or early spring will still bloom in summer.

Many deciduous shrubs don't produce attractive flowers. These shrubs may possess attractive bark, fruit, or fall leaf color. Prune these shrubs in late winter or early spring before growth begins. Don't prune deciduous shrubs in late summer. Pruning shrubs in July or August may encourage a late flush of growth. This new growth may not harden sufficiently before the arrival of cold weather and be susceptible to winter injury.

Evergreen Shrubs--Prune evergreen shrubs, such as juniper and yew, before new growth begins. Light pruning may also be done in late June or early July.

Deciduous Trees--While deciduous trees can be pruned anytime during the year, the best time to prune is late winter or early spring before the trees leaf out. Some trees, such as maples, bleed heavily when pruned in late winter or early spring. The heavy bleeding, however, doesn't harm the trees. The trees won't bleed to death and the flow of sap will gradually slow and stop.

Fruit Trees--The best time to prune fruit trees is from late February to early March. Fruit trees pruned in fall or early winter may be susceptible to winter injury.

Grapes--Prune grapevines in February. Grapevines pruned at this time of year will bleed heavily. The bleeding, however, is not a problem.

Raspberries--All raspberries should be pruned in February to early March. Summer-bearing raspberries also require summer pruning. Remove the old fruiting canes of summer-bearing raspberries after the summer crop has been harvested. Also, pinch out the shoot tips of purple and black raspberries when the new growth reaches a height of 36 inches.

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Evergreen Needles are Falling

The term "evergreen" used to describe conifer trees isn't exactly accurate. It's normal for some of the needles on evergreens to turn yellow or brown and fall from the tree in autumn. This seasonal needle loss, also called fall needle drop, is a natural occurrence. The oldest (innermost) needles are eventually shed from trees such as pine and spruce. The discoloration and loss of needles can be alarming to tree owners that are not

aware of this normal process. Some fear that a disease is rapidly occurring.

Seasonal needle loss is especially striking on bald cypress. All of the needles turn brown and fall from these trees. Unfortunate events have occurred in the past, where owners or caretakers of such trees removed them after incorrectly concluding that the barren trees were dead!

Environmental stresses, such as drought and hot temperatures, may cause greater-than-normal loss of needles. The normal pattern of seasonal needle loss is a gradual discoloration and eventual loss of inner needles from the top to the bottom of the trees. In contrast, fungal diseases often cause browning of the newest (outermost) needles, death of entire branches, or thinning of needles on just the lower branches.

Fall Care of the Poinsettia and Christmas Cactus

In order to bloom during the upcoming holiday season, the poinsettia and Christmas cactus must be given proper care this fall.

Poinsettia

Poinsettias are short-day plants. Short-day plants grow vegetatively during the long days of summer and produce flowers when days become shorter in the fall. In order for poinsettias to flower for Christmas, they must receive complete darkness from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. each day from early October until the bracts show good color, usually around early December. (Most poinsettia varieties require 8 to 10 weeks of short days to flower.) Gardeners can protect their plants from light by placing them in a closet or by covering with a cardboard box. When using cardboard boxes, cover any openings to insure complete darkness. Exposure to any type of light between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. will delay or possibly prevent flowering. During the remainder of the day, the poinsettias should be placed in a sunny south window. Keep the plants well-watered and fertilize every 2 weeks during the forcing period.

Christmas Cactus

Day-length and temperature control the flowering of the Christmas cactus. Like the poinsettia, the Christmas cactus is a short-day plant. Plants will not bloom properly if exposed to artificial light at night. Flowers may also fail to develop if the plant is exposed to temperatures above 70°F. Night temperatures of 60 to 65°F with slightly warmer daytime temperatures are ideal for flower formation. In late summer/early fall, place the Christmas cactus in a cool location that receives bright light during the day, but no artificial light at night. An unused bedroom or basement may have the proper environmental conditions. Keep the Christmas cactus a bit on the dry side in fall. A thorough watering every 7 to 10 days is usually sufficient. Continue to give the Christmas cactus good, consistent care during flower bud development. Moving plants from one location to another, excessive watering, or other marked changes to their care during flower bud development may cause the buds to drop off. The Christmas cactus can be moved and displayed in another room when the first flowers begin to open.



Master Gardener Class Scheduled



The Pottawatomie County Extension Office is pleased to announce they will be hosting a Master Gardener program again this year. The Master Gardener program is a volunteer organization for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Projects and volunteer work is approved by the Extension Educator in the county. The program is for anyone with a high school education or equivalent, a genuine interest in horticulture and would enjoy sharing their research-based information with others. During the course of the eight-week program, participants will learn the latest OSU horticulture research results, techniques and practices.

Master Gardener classes will begin in early January. These courses will be held on Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. You will receive approximately 40 hours of training from local OSU Educators and State Horticulture Specialists. Educational materials will be provided. After training, 40 hours of assistance to the local OSU Extension Horticulture program is required through community service projects and assisting your local extension horticulture program.

We currently have a number of openings available. The deadline for application is November 14, 2008. The registration fee is \$75, non-refundable, with half due at sign up and the balance due the first day of class. This is to cover the cost of materials. If class does not have the required number of participants, your initial sign up money will be refunded promptly. This year, the class will be canceled if less than 20 participants, with a maximum of 25 participants. Applicants will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications are available in the OSU Extension Center, 14001 Acme Road, Shawnee or by calling the OSU Extension Center at 273-7683.

Advanced Masters to Meet

The Advanced Master Gardener Association would like to invite anyone interested in becoming a Master Gardener, or those that have taken the class in the past, to a luncheon on **October 15, 11:30**

at **San Remo's Restaurant**. San Remo's is located on the grounds of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, south of Shawnee on Beard Street. The cost is \$10 which pays for your meal. David Hillock, State Coordi-

nator for Master Gardeners, will speak about the program. Please R.S.V.P. by October 8 by calling 273-2929 or 273-0136. See you on the 15th!

Rooting and Growing a Pineapple

When using a fresh pineapple, don't throw away the leafy top portion of the fruit. The leafy top can be rooted and turned into a unique houseplant.

Select a fresh pineapple with attractive, green foliage at your local grocery store. At home, cut off the top of the pineapple about 1/2 inch below the cluster of leaves. Trim away the outer portion of the pineapple top leaving the tough, stringy core attached to the leaves. Also, remove a few of the lowest leaves. The pineapple top should then be allowed to dry for several days. The drying period allows the moist core tissue to dry and discourages rotting. After drying, insert the pineapple top into perlite, vermiculite, or coarse sand up to the base of its leaves. Water the rooting medium. Keep the rooting medium moist, but not wet, during the rooting period. Finally, place the pineapple top in bright, indirect light. Rooting should occur in 6 to 8 weeks.

When the pineapple has developed a good root system, carefully remove it from the rooting medium. Plant the rooted pineapple in a light, well-drained potting mix. Water well. Then place the plant in bright, indirect light for 2 or 3 weeks.

After 2 to 3 weeks, the plant can be placed in a sunny window. Keep the potting mix moist with regular watering. Using a soluble houseplant fertilizer, fertilize the pineapple plant once or twice a month in spring and summer, but only once a month in fall and winter. The plant can go outside in late May, but must come back indoors before the first fall frost.

Pineapples are slow growing plants. Most plants mature in 2 to 3 years. At maturity, pineapples are capable of blooming. To encourage flowering, place a mature pineapple plant and an apple in a plastic bag for 3 or 4 days. The apple gives off ethylene gas, which stimulates flowering of the pineapple. Flowering (hopefully) should occur within 2 to 3 months of the treatment.

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Two Common Houseplant Diseases

Powdery mildew is a common disease affecting many different houseplants, including jade plant, African violet, begonia, kalanchoe, and others. Powdery mildew appears as a white, dusty growth on the surfaces of leaves. The growth may appear in circular spots that coalesce or may cover the entire surface of the leaf. Severely affected leaves may be distorted.

Powdery mildew is favored by cool, moist conditions. Keeping plants away from cold air drafts and watering early in the day so foliage has time to dry off can help to prevent this disease. Plants should be kept in good vigor by avoiding drought stress. Plants should be inspected before purchasing. Severely diseased plants may need to be discarded. Several fungicides are available for use against powdery mildew, but most are not labeled for use on indoor houseplants.

Root and crown rots, caused by the fungi *Phytophthora* and *Pythium* as well as others, are another common disease that can affect nearly all indoor plants. The leaves of a plant with root rot may wilt, droop, or turn yellow. Rotted roots appear black or brown instead of healthy white, and often the outer root tissue easily strips off from the root, leaving the root core behind.

Root and crown rots are favored by warm, wet conditions. Plants undergoing other stresses are also more susceptible to root rots. Using potting mix with adequate drainage and aeration and maintaining optimal temperature, light, pH, moisture, and fertility will help to prevent root and crown rots. Avoiding overwatering is perhaps the most critical step to take to avoid root and crown rots.

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