Ornamental grasses bring variety to winter landscape

The changing nature of an invasive tree creates new challenges

Missouri blueberry school-winter blueberry management workshop

Gardening & nutrition workshop to be held February 5 in Memphis

Spring forward into gardening workshop to be held March 23

Gardening tips for February

Upcoming events

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2013 ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS

Canna 'South Pacific Scarlet' F1 2013 AAS Flower Award Winner
Allow 'South Pacific' to add a touch of the tropics to your garden with showy, 4-inch flowers that bloom all summer long in a delicious shade of scarlet. Large leafed statuesque plants reach 4 to 5 feet tall providing a back-of-the-border focal point. This variety is grown from seed, not tuber. Compact in habit and well suited for both landscape and container use. Canna 'South Pacific Scarlet' prefers warm and humid conditions over 77F. This variety is more vigorous, more uniform, and has more basal branching than Canna Tropical Red.

Echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit' 2013 AAS Flower Award Winner
Stunning first-year flowering echinacea produces a delightful mix of flower colors on well branched, durable plants sure to please the color preferences of any gardener. This stunning first-year flowering echinacea captures the spirit of the North American plains by producing a delightful mix of flower colors from rich purple, pink, red and orange tones to lighter yellows, creams and white. This wide range of flower colors on well branched, durable plants are sure to please the color preferences of any gardener. As an added bonus, 'Cheyenne Spirit' does not require a lot of water and offers a wide range of uses from the perennial border, in a mass landscape planting, in a butterfly garden or as a cut flower.

Geranium 'Pinto Premium White to Rose' F1 2013 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner
Unique flower coloration on numerous beautiful 5-inch long-lasting blooms. Deep green foliage with dark zones provides striking contrast in pots or beds. This addition to the 'Pinto Premium' series is a must-have! Not only is the flower coloration unique and ombre-like, but the numerous 5-inch blooms are long-lasting in the garden. Petals start out white then deepen to rose-pink as flowers mature, giving an attractive bicolor effect. Dense, well-branched plants sport deep green leaves with darker zones that contrast beautifully with the light colored flowers. 'Pinto Premium White to Rose' is a great choice for carefree, colorful summer garden beds or patio containers.

Melon 'Melemon' F1 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner
Piel-de-sapo type melon with a unique sweet-tart taste. The earliness, high yield on healthy, strong plants and superior taste all contributed to this melon becoming an AAS Winner. Judges related the taste of this melon to honey-dew, but with a surprising and delicious tanginess. A uniform fruit shape makes it perfect for market growers as well as home gardeners. Each person-sized fruit has refreshing crisp flesh and a unique sweet-tart taste.

(Continued on page 2)
(Continued from page 1)

Tomato 'Jasper' F1 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner
Excellent tasting, vigorous 7 foot tall indeterminate cherry tomato with high resistance to Late Blight. Excellent taste, a long harvest window and outstanding performance in the trials contributes to this tomato’s success. Judges liked the texture and sweetness of the tomato as well as the uniformity of the fruits that grow on vigorous, healthy plants. Jasper is a high yielding variety with fruits that stay on the vine and then hold well after ripening both on the vine and post-harvest. Vigorous vines require little or no fertilization. An added bonus is Fusarium resistance and the ability to overcome weather-related stresses.

Watermelon 'Harvest Moon' F1 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner
The first ever hybrid, triploid seedless watermelon to win a coveted AAS Award! Similar to the popular heirloom variety, ‘Moon and Stars,’ ‘Harvest Moon’ is an improvement in that it features healthy, shorter vines that produce medium-sized fruits and sweet, crisp pinkish-red flesh. ‘Harvest Moon’ retains the familiar dark green rind with yellow dots, like that of ‘Moon and Stars’ but is seedless, earlier to ripen, higher yielding and better tasting.

Source: http://www.all-americaselections.org/index.cfm; go to this website to see color photos of each of the winners.

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ORNAMENTAL GRASSES BRING VARIETY TO WINTER LANDSCAPE

Landscapes can be just as exciting during the winter as they are during the rest of the year according to Patrick Byers, a horticulture specialist with University of Missouri Extension. During the winter, texture and movement become as important as color, and ornamental grasses have much to offer. Ornamental grasses are grown for their ornamental value, like showy leaves and showy seed heads. They generally are of interest anytime of the year and can range in size from less than 12 inches to over 20 feet. Examples of ornamental grasses include: Maiden or Japanese silver grass (Miscanthus), fountain grass (Pennisetum), giant reed grass (Calimagrostis) and prairie dropseed (Sporobolus). There are both perennial and annual types of ornamental grasses available. It is best to plant ornamental grasses in the spring. Then cut them back in late winter before growth begins.

Source: Patrick Byers, Horticulture Specialist, Green County Extension Center.

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THE CHANGING NATURE OF AN INVASIVE TREE CREATES NEW CHALLENGES

The spread of invasive ornamental pears (Pyrus calleryana) into riparian corridors, prairies and transportation and power line right of ways has become a well-documented phenomenon in Missouri as well as many other Midwestern and Eastern states. These invasive hybrids, an unintended cross of the numerous ornamental pear cultivars, are highly variable in their traits and characteristics. The invasive wild populations of Callery pears for example, can often be very thorny, an undesirable trait not usually found in most cultivars. A new twist in this unfortunate saga of landscaping plants gone bad are the reports of wild callery pears with oversize fruit that are golf ball size or bigger. Pyrus calleryana in both its native range of Asia and in its introduced range of the United States had seeds generally the size of large peas. It is unclear at this time whether these large fruit are the result of a cross with another Pyrus species or if it is new mutation of the Pyrus calleryana species. Either way it spells trouble, as invasive trees with large, messy, inedible fruit is the last thing any community forest needs. Wild Callery pears with oversize fruit have been reported in Westerville, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; and Columbia, Missouri.

2013 MISSOURI BLUEBERRY SCHOOL-WINTER BLUEBERRY MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

University of Missouri Extension will hold a Winter Blueberry Management workshop on Friday, March 1 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Lost Branch Blueberry Farm east of Kirksville. Workshop topics will include: Introduction to Lost Branch Blueberry Farm; the blueberry industry and food safety; blueberry weed control; small fruit options: Brambles, straw-berries, grapes, minor berries; blueberry disease management; blueberry pruning; and a pruning and disease management field visit. There will be a hands-on field demonstration and participants will get to practice their pruning skills.

A hot lunch will be provided at noon. Participants need to dress appropriately for the field visit in the afternoon. The cost of the workshop is $20 and includes refreshments, lunch, and workshop handouts/materials. The workshop will be taught by University of Missouri Extension Horticulture Specialist and former Missouri State Fruit Advisor Patrick Byers, University Extension Specialists Jennifer Schutter and Max Glover, and Robert Price, owner/manager of Lost Branch Blueberry Farm.

Pre-registration is required by calling the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or emailing schutterjl@missouri.edu.

SPRING FORWARD INTO GARDENING WORKSHOP TO BE HELD MARCH 23

The Spring Forward Into Gardening workshop will be held Saturday, March 23 at the Kirksville Vo-Tech School from 9:30-3:30. Sessions will be an hour and 10 minutes in length, with 10 minutes between sessions. A box lunch will be served from 12-1 p.m. and will include your choice of a turkey sandwich on whole grain wheatberry bread (the bread will contain pieces of wheat) or a spinach wrap with baked chips, fruit, oatmeal-raisin cookie and a bottle of water. There is a vegetarian option. Cost of the workshop is $16. The cost of a healthier lunch is a dollar more than last year’s, so we have to budget for that increase.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the Adair County Garden n’ Grow program. Last year’s proceeds were used to purchase blackberry, raspberry, grape, gooseberry, strawberry and asparagus plants, which were planted in and around the garden. Also planted were peach, apple, pear, plum and a cherry tree. I would like to expand and plant some unique fruits this year including jujube, hardy almond and hardy fig. This will allow me to do some pruning workshops and fruit classes in the future. We are also in need of soil amendments for the garden.

Pre-registration is required by March 19.

A list of class descriptions and a registration form can be downloaded from the Adair County Extension website at http://extension.missouri.edu/adair, or email schutterjl@missouri.edu or call the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866.

GARDENING & NUTRITION WORKSHOP TO BE HELD FEBRUARY 5 IN MEMPHIS

University of Missouri Extension will hold a gardening and nutrition workshop on Tuesday, February 5, 2013 from 1:30-4:00 p.m. at the Scotland County Regional Hospital meeting room in Memphis, MO. The topics will be “The Truth about Preservatives, Organic, and Public Nutrition,” “Growing and Cooking with Herbs,” and “Microgreens-Nutritional Powerhouse.”

There are a lot of preservatives in the foods we eat. By growing your own herbs you can season foods without all the preservatives. At this workshop you will learn the truth about preservatives, identify live and dried herbs and spices, and learn how to make salad dressings, sausage, salsa, chicken coating and many others uses. Samples will be given of foods made with these flavorful seasonings and you will be given recipes to take home.

There will also be a presentation on microgreens. Microgreens are the tender, young seedlings of greens that come in a rainbow of colors. Learn in this session why they are nature’s powerhouse of nutrition and how you can grow them yourself. Time permitting, each person will plant their own micro-green seeds to grow at home.

University of Missouri Extension Horticulture Specialist Jennifer Schutter, along with Nutrition Specialist Jennifer Mayfield, will present the program. There is no cost attend, but you must pre-register by calling the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or email schutterjl@missouri.edu. Please leave your name and a phone number when you register. The workshop will be cancelled and rescheduled in case of bad weather.

Pre-registration is required by calling the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or emailing schutterjl@missouri.edu.
GARDENING TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

Ornamentals
- Water evergreens if the soil is dry and unfrozen.
- Inspect summer bulbs in storage to be sure none are drying out. Discard any that show signs of rot.
- Winter aconite (Eranthis sp.) and snowdrops (Galanthus sp.) are hardy bulbs for shady gardens that frequently push up through snow to bloom.
- Take geranium cuttings now. Keep the foliage dry to avoid leaf and stem diseases.
- Sow seeds of larkspur, sweet peas, Shirley poppies and snapdragons where they are to grow outdoors. To bloom best, these plants must sprout and begin growth well before warm weather arrives.
- Seeds of slow-growing annuals like ageratum, verbena, petunias, geraniums, coleus, impatiens and salvia may be started indoors.
- Start tuberous begonias indoors. "Non-stop" varieties perform well in this climate.
- Dormant sprays can be applied to ornamental trees and shrubs now. Do this on a mild day while temperatures are above freezing.

Fruit
- Inspect fruit trees for tent caterpillar egg masses. Eggs appear as dark brown or gray collars that encircle small twigs. Destroy by pruning or scratching off with your thumbnail.
- When pruning diseased branches, sterilize tools with one part bleach, nine parts water solution in between cuts. Dry tools at day's end and rub them lightly with oil to prevent rusting.
- Begin pruning fruit trees. Start with apples and pears first. Peaches and nectarines should be pruned just before they bloom. Grapes and bramble fruits may be pruned now.
- Established fruit trees can be fertilized once frost leaves the ground. Use about one-half pound of 12-12-12 per tree, per year of age, up to a maximum of 10 pounds fertilizer per tree. Broadcast fertilizers over the root zone staying at least one foot from the tree trunk.

Vegetables
- Run a germination test on seeds stored from previous years to see if they will still sprout.
- Start onion seeds indoors now. Sow seeds of broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and cabbage indoors now for transplanting into the garden later this spring.
- Season extending devices like cold frames, hot beds, cloches and floating row covers allow for an early start to the growing season.
- If soil conditions allow, take a chance sowing peas, lettuce, spinach and radish. If the weather obliges, you will be rewarded with extra early harvests.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 5: Nutrition and Gardening Workshop, 1:30-4:00, Scotland County Memorial Hospital, Memphis. Call 660-665-9866 for more information.
February 23: Winter Tree ID, Missouri Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office, Kirksville, 1-2 pm. Most trees are dormant and bare for the winter. With the leaves gone, how can we identify them? Learn what to look for and put your skills to the test at this hands-on program. Open to all ages. For more information, call MDC at 660-785-2420. This is an MDC sponsored event.
March 1: Blueberry School, Lost Branch Blueberry Farm, Kirksville. Call 660-665-9866 for info or go to http://extension.missouri.edu/adair for a flyer.
March 27: Lewis County Lady Landowner workshop, 10:00-3:30, Methodist Church, Monticello. Topics include SWCD, NRCS and Extension updates; caring for plants during a drought; growing & eating microgreens; the truth about preservatives, organic, and public nutrition; and farm estate planning. To register call the Lewis County Extension Center at 573-767-5273. No cost to attend.
July 15-20: NEMO Fair, Kirksville
September 20-22, 2013: Missouri State Master Gardener Conference, Springfield, MO.
December 6 & 7: Missouri Livestock Symposium, Kirksville.