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REFLECTIONS OF THE 2018 GARDENING SEASON

Despite being a dry year, some gardeners had a good gardening season. Garden productivity depended how much rain was received or how much a gardener watered their plants. Rainfall around the northeast region of Missouri was spotty this summer. Some areas received rain each time storms rolled through the area, while others missed the storms every time.

We had a very productive garden at the Adair County Extension Center. We received very little rainfall, but we watered the garden well at least twice per week when Garden n' Grow met. Over 350 pounds of produce from Garden n' Grow was donated to the Pantry For Adair County, and probably at least that much went home with the kids enrolled in the program. At home, I was focused more on keeping livestock watered, so I didn't water my fruits or vegetables like they needed.

I tend to have the best crop of green beans in the fall. I planted Dragon Tongue beans and bush beans in August and picked a nice crop of them in October. There is much less insect pressure in the fall and the plants grow better in cooler days. I always have a better fall pepper crop also. I harvested a lot of peppers in both the extension garden and my home garden in October. We grow a variety of peppers, mainly sweet.

I grew 'Georgia Jets' sweet potatoes, but after digging them, I was not impressed. They grew long and narrow. I prefer 'Beauregard' which grows large and round. I had a Kirksville gardener bring in a very large sweet potato, which she thought might be the state record. It weighed in at 12.4 lbs. I reported it to the Missouri Department of Agriculture, but they reported that a 17 pound sweet potato had been grown by a gardener in Houston, Missouri in Texas county.

Apples and pears produced well this year. I picked a lot of apples and pears to use in programs and some to preserve. Grapes also did well. Grapes do well in dry weather. I picked two 5 gallon buckets of Concord at the home of a gardener south of Kirksville, and that didn't even put a dent in his crop. He had an abundance of grapes and they were good.

Japanese beetles made a bigger appearance around the region than in the past. They were reported in just about every county in our region, but still not in the numbers found in south Missouri. The most I trapped in one week was 51. Specialists in south Missouri trap thousands in one week. Also, this summer, Emerald Ash Borer was found in Kirksville. Be on the look out for this devastating insect pest. But, just because your ash is in decline or dying, does not mean it has Emerald Ash Borer in it. Gardeners reported high numbers of monarch butterfly sightings this year, more so than in the past. This is a good sign that milkweed plantings are helping sustain the monarchs.

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Depending on where you live, your first frost in the region came on October 15 or 16. This ended the garden season for most gardeners. Now the clean-up can begin. Clear off the garden and test your soil and add amendments if needed. Wait to wrap young fruit trees and cover your strawberry bed with straw. Strawberry plants need to acclimate to the climate before being covered for winter. The end of November is usually a good time to do this. Start preparing bird feeders for winter bird feeding, and sit back and enjoy some time off from gardening.

LARGE SWEET POTATOES REPORTED

Jessica Rooks of Kirksville, along with her family and two other neighborhood families, grew a huge sweet potato in their neighborhood garden this summer. Jessica weighed her sweet potato on a certified scale at 12.4 pounds. Jessica told me she grew her large sweet potato in sandy loam soil, but didn't do anything out of the ordinary to make it grow large. When they went to dig their sweet potatoes, they kept digging and digging and finally this large sweet potato came up out of the ground. They were quite surprised by the size of the potato.

Since then, Linn County producer Rod Belzer of Winigan Farms, grew a large sweet potato that weighed 13.47 lbs. on a certified scale.

The Missouri Department of Agriculture reported that a gardener in Houston, Missouri (Texas county) grew a 17 pound sweet potato. All of the large sweet potatoes reported to me, have been 'Beauregard'. There are no known state records in Missouri, but since these have been reported this year, something is now in the works to start keeping state records. More information about this will be provided in 2019.

BEAUREGARD SWEET POTATO

- **Light:** Full sun
- **Vine type:** Semi-running
- **Matures:** 90 days
- **Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches apart
- **Plant size:** 3- to 6-foot vine

Developed at Louisiana State University in 1987, this variety may be the world's most popular sweet potato. It is favored for high yields of uniform, reddish-purple potatoes with tasty, deep-orange flesh that keeps well in storage. It seems to have fewer problems with white grubs than some varieties and also resists cracking.

Soil requirements: Sweet potatoes need well-drained soil that's not too rich. Work one inch of compost or other organic matter into soil prior to planting. Tubers develop best in loose, sandy soil. Build raised beds in heavy clay soil. Soil pH should be 5.8 to 6.2.

Water requirements: Water plants weekly to keep soil consistently moist.

Frost plan: Sweet potatoes are very sensitive to frost. Light frosts (28° F to 32° F) damage leaves and can cause roots to rot. Protect newly planted seedlings from late spring frosts by covering plants with straw or a frost blanket.

Common issues: A soil-borne fungal disease called scurf can devastate sweet potatoes. You can avoid it by always planting certified, disease-free plants. Watch out for Japanese beetles and other leaf-eating insects, sweet potato weevils, wireworms, and

nematodes. Keep deer from nibbling leaves with floating row covers or bird netting.

Harvesting: Potatoes are usually ready as the ends of vines begin to turn yellow or just before frost. Harvest before frost; cool temperatures can reduce tuber quality and storage. To harvest, find the primary crown of the plant you want to dig, and use a digging fork to loosen an 18-inch wide circle around the plant. Pull up the crown and use your hands to gather sweet potatoes. Cut vines out of your way before digging. Cure tubers to develop sweetness by lightly brushing off soil, laying unwashed tubers in a warm (80°F to 90°F), well-ventilated place for about 10 days.



Storage: Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry spot. Do not refrigerate or store below 50°F. Cured sweet potatoes keep up to 6 months when stored around 60°F with high humidity. A basement is ideal, though an air-conditioned storage room or pantry works, too.

Source: Bonnie Plants, <https://bonnieplants.com/product/beauregard-sweet-potato/>

LADY GODIVA PUMPKIN - THE NAKED-SEEDED PUMPKIN

My boys and I like to go to the Kirksville Farmers' Market on Saturday mornings. We enjoy seeing all the different crops, especially in the fall. We also like visiting with the growers, and they enjoy visiting with us. My boys can usually talk the growers we know into giving them stuff like hot peppers, mini pumpkins and other various vegetable crops. We grow much of our own, so anything we buy at the market is because ours is finished growing, or it's unique and we don't grow it.

On October 6, Linn county producer Rod Belzer, gave us a 'Lady Godiva' pumpkin and told us it had naked seeds and they were good for roasting. Naked seeds means they are not in a shell. The next day, we scooped out the seeds, drizzled olive oil on them and salted them with sea salt. I roasted them at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes. They had not even cooled and they were gone. Delicious! We were back at the farmers' market the next week to buy one. This is definitely a pumpkin I would like to grow next year and encourage gardeners to grow themselves. If you don't have a garden, visit your local farmers' market and see if any growers have 'Lady Godiva'. They make a great snack. Seed can be found from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company in Mansfield, MO.



'Lady Godiva' is a 105 day variety. High in nutrition and protein, they are nature's perfect snack. The pumpkins themselves are quite attractive with yellow-orange rinds that are striped with green; perfect for decorations.

More information about 'Lady Godiva' from Terroir Seeds in Chino Valley, Arizona: The naked or hullless greenish seeds are very nutritious and rich in protein in this pumpkin. The pumpkin grows to 4-8 lbs, with 12-15 pumpkins per plant. The flesh is not considered to be very tasty, but does work well in sweet pumpkin breads or pancake recipes. This pumpkin was developed by Allan Stoner of the USDA Agricultural Research Service in 1972 for the hullless seeds as a snack food. He combined two other naked seed pumpkin lines for better flavor and production. Uses include roasted, salted pumpkin seeds, also known as "Pepitas" which are easy to make. Many gardeners will harvest the hullless varieties somewhat green, as they can be prone to sun scald. It is best to harvest the seeds fairly soon after picking, within one to two weeks as they do have a tendency to sprout inside the pumpkin if left too long.



BRINGING PLANTS INDOORS FOR WINTER

Tropical plants or houseplants that spent the summer outdoors should be brought indoors when nighttime temperatures fall below 45 degrees. Most tropical plants will suffer damage at temperatures below 40 degrees, a few even below 50 degrees. Because conditions differ widely between the inside and outside of your home, a gradual reintroduction to the indoors is best. Sudden changes in temperature, light, and humidity can be traumatic to plants, resulting in yellowed leaves, dieback, wilting, and even death.

If some plants need repotting, make sure you have potting mix, containers, and the supplies you need on hand. Before bringing plants in, inspect them for insects and diseases, and treat as appropriate. Soaking the pot in a tub of lukewarm water for about 15 minutes will force insects out of the soil. If snails, earthworms, or other insects burrowed in the soil, you might want to repot the plants, placing a piece of wire screening over the drainage hole to keep them out next year. If necessary, repot plants into larger containers. If plants have gotten leggy, remove them from the container, and prune the top and roots in equal proportions. Scrub the pot, add fresh potting mix and replant.

To prevent shock when you bring houseplants back indoors, expose plants gradually to reduced lighting. Usually, if they've been in bright light and you move them into much lower light, expect some leaves to fall off. However, new ones should form as the plants readapt to the lower light. It's best if they've been outside in high light to put them in similar light indoors, like a south window or under plant lights on a timer for 16 hours a day.

Don't overwater! Let the soil surface get dry to the touch before watering again. If in doubt, don't water. Water succulents less often, when the soil is dry for several days. Don't water during cloudy or rainy weather, as plants won't get sufficient light indoors to dry out.

GARDENING TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

Vegetables

- Any unused, finished compost is best tilled under to improve garden soils.
- Fall tilling the vegetable garden exposes many insect pests to winter cold, reducing their numbers in next year's garden.

Fruits

- Keep mulches pulled back several inches from the base of fruit trees to prevent bark injury from hungry mice and other rodents.
- Fallen, spoiled or mummified fruits should be cleaned up from the garden and destroyed.
- Mulch strawberries for winter with straw. This should be done after several nights near 20 degrees, but before temperatures drop into the teens. Apply straw loosely, but thick enough to hide plants from view.

Ornamentals

- Continue watering evergreens until the ground freezes. Soils must not be dry when winter arrives.
- Now is the ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Before digging the hole, prepare the site by loosening the soil well beyond the drip line of each plant. Plant trees and shrubs at the depth they grew in the nursery and no deeper. Remove all wires, ropes and non-biodegradable materials from roots before back filling. Apply a 2 to 3-inch mulch layer, but stay several inches away from the trunk. Keep the soil moist, not wet, to the depth of the roots.
- Remove the spent flowers and foliage of perennials after they are damaged by frost.

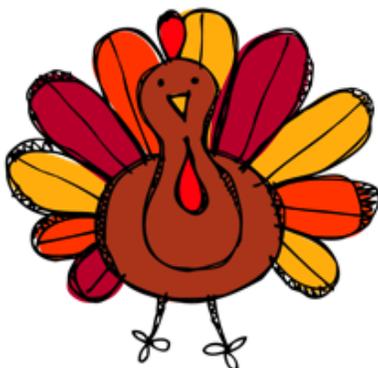
Lawns

- To prevent injury to turf grasses, keep leaves raked up off of the lawn.
- Continue mowing lawn grasses as long as they keep growing.
- A final fall application of fertilizer can be applied to bluegrass and fescue lawns now.

Miscellaneous

- Now is a good time to collect soil samples to test for pH and nutritional levels.
- Roll up and store garden hoses on a warm, sunny day. It's hard to get a cold hose to coil into a tight loop.

(Missouri Botanical Garden)



gobble 'til
YOU wobble!
HAPPY TURKEY DAY!

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2: Mushroom workshop, Winigan Community Center, Winigan, MO.

November 6: Salt River Master Gardener meeting, program-demonstration on how to make an affordable fall decoration, 7 pm at the YMCA, 3100 Brookside Rd., off McMasters Ave. in Hannibal. The meeting is free to the public.

November 10: Pantry For Adair County (PAC) soup bowl fundraiser, 11-2, First Christian Church, Kirksville. Select a soup bowl and enjoy a bowl of soup, crackers and desserts. Pottery bowls cost \$30, other unique bowls cost \$20, no bowl-just the meal is \$10. Tickets are available in advance at PAC or from PAC board members. I have tickets at the Adair County Extension office.

November 30-December 1: Missouri Livestock Symposium, William Matthew Middle School, Kirksville. missourilivestock.com

December 1: Holiday Flower Arranging class at the Missouri Livestock Symposium, 3-5 pm, no cost. Create your own table centerpiece to take home using pine greenery, pinecones, red and white carnations, baby's breath and a red candle. Bring your own clippers or hand pruners. Limited to the first 30 people that enter the room. missourilivestock.com

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 Extension *Garden Talk!*

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