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WINTER GARDEN PREPARATION

Putting the garden to bed each fall not only marks the end of the growing season but also presents an opportunity to get a head start on the next season.

Start with a clean up. Cut down and remove the past season's annuals and vegetables, and if not diseased or insect infested, add them to the compost pile. Cut back faded or dead foliage on perennials after the first hard frost, and compost, unless they add color to your garden in winter. I leave my coneflowers and black-eyed Susan's for winter interest and for a food source for the birds. You should leave the dead foliage on chrysanthemums. Research has proven that chrysanthemums not cut back over-winter better than those that were cut. You should apply a three to four inch layer of mulch around your perennials. You can use chopped-up leaves from your lawn or other loose materials like pine needles, wood chips, or coarse gravel for the perennials and shrubs. Don't put down un-shredded leaves or other matter that compact easily because it will mat down and suffocate the plants. Cover bulb beds with evergreen boughs.



Modern, bush-type roses (hybrid teas, floribundas, and grandifloras) require protection during the winter months. Exposure to low temperatures and rapid temperature changes can severely injure and often kill unprotected roses. Hilling or mounding soil around the base of each plant is an excellent way to protect bush-type roses. Mound the soil 10 to 12 inches high around the base of the canes. Place additional material, such as straw or leaves, over the mound of soil. A small amount of soil placed over the straw or leaves should hold these materials in place. Prepare modern roses for winter after plants have been hardened by several nights of temperatures in the low to mid-twenties.

Strawberries are also susceptible to winter injury. Temperatures below 20°F may kill flower buds and damage the roots and crowns of unprotected plants. Repeated freezing and thawing of the soil through the winter months can heave unprotected plants out of the soil and also cause considerable damage. The application of mulch in the fall is the best way to protect strawberries. Excellent mulching materials include clean, weed-free straw and chopped cornstalks. Leaves are not a good mulch for strawberries. Leaves tend to mat together and do not provide adequate protection. Apply 3 to 5

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inches of mulch over the plants. Allow the strawberry plants to harden or acclimate to the cool fall temperatures before mulching the bed.

Rake up and compost fallen leaves on the lawn. Before the ground freezes, water evergreens, especially broad-leaved ones deeply. Wrap trees, especially recently planted trees or sensitive varieties like honey locust or Japanese maple. Wrap in burlap from the base of the trunk to the second or third branch, allowing some overlap to allow water to escape, then secure at the crown. If your evergreens brown over the winter, it's because the wind has sucked out their moisture. You have two options to protect your trees: a chemical anti-desiccant spray or windshields. Windshields are easy to erect: simply place wooden stakes in the ground and wrap burlap around them.

During the winter months, rabbits often gnaw on the bark of many woody plants. Heavy browsing can result in the complete girdling of small trees and small branches clipped off at snow level. Apple, pear, crabapple, and serviceberry are frequent targets of rabbits. Small trees with smooth, thin bark are the most vulnerable. The best way to prevent rabbit damage to young trees is to place a cylinder of hardware cloth (1/4 inch mesh wire fencing) around the tree trunk. The hardware cloth cylinder should stand about 1 to 2 inches from the tree trunk and 20 inches above the ground. The bottom 2 to 3 inches should be buried beneath the soil. Small shrubs, roses, and raspberries can be protected with chicken wire fencing.

Cover containers that will remain outdoors to prevent them from filling with water, freezing, and cracking. Clean terra-cotta pots and concrete containers, and store them in the garage or potting shed to protect them from the elements. Drain your water hose and bring it in so it doesn't freeze. Clean and store tools, ceramic pots and birdbaths. Putting them away before the harsh weather starts will prolong the life of these garden essentials.



IS IT A YAM OR SWEET POTATO?

Is there a difference between a yam and a sweet potato?



Yams and sweet potatoes are grown in tropical climates and produce tuberous roots. The two are very distant cousins, but different plants. The sweet potato is native to tropical parts of the Americas, while yams are native to Africa and Asia. Both require a warm climate and plenty of water to support their growth.

The reason their identities are so confused in the United States is that Africans who first came to the U.S. identified the sweet potato in their language, the African "nyami" or yam. Farmers and storeowners later marketed sweet potatoes as yams. Although true yams are rarely seen in the U.S., the USDA actually requires the word "yam" to accompany the word "sweet potato" on labeling.

Call it yams or sweet potatoes, this Southern treat is growing in popularity nationwide because of its abundant nutritional value. They are packed full of dietary fiber, protein, iron, calcium, potassium and vitamins A, C and B6. In fact, the Center for Science in the Public Interest ranked the sweet potato as being the single most nutritional vegetable. Early studies have revealed that sweet potatoes may even help stabilize blood sugar levels and lower insulin resistance.

The sweet potato is easy to grow and doesn't require a lot of fertilizer, and it is naturally resistant to many pests. The plant produces pretty purple blooms. North Carolina grows 40 percent of the annual U.S. production of sweet potatoes. Mississippi is also a major sweet potato producer.

Source: Christi Parker, Great American Agriculture, Volume One – Number One – Southern Edition.

MASTER GARDENERS- ALL VOLUNTEER HOURS ARE DUE NOVEMBER 30

It's time once again to begin compiling your volunteer hours for 2009. Report forms should be submitted to your club advisor at your November meeting or submit your hours online in the new reporting system at <http://report.missourimastergardener.com/>. If you do not belong to a club and are not submitting your hours online, and you are in the following counties (Adair, Macon, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Linn, Sullivan, Lewis, Clark, Putnam, Knox), please mail your volunteer report form to me at the Adair County Extension Center, 503 E. Northtown Rd., Kirksville, MO 63501. If you are in Pike, Ralls, Marion, Shelby and Monroe counties, please mail them to Alix Carpenter at the Marion County Extension Center, 100 S. Main, Room 201, Palmyra, MO 63461. You can download a form off of the state Master Gardener website: <http://mg.missouri.edu/>. If you have internet access, you are encouraged to enter your hours in the new online reporting system. It is an easy way to keep track of your hours.

We will include the volunteer hours in the extension annual reports for each county in the northeast region. I will start pulling reports from the online system and tallying all reports received, on December 1. Please do not be late or your hours will not be included. It is very important that I receive your hours in a timely manner so I can write an accurate report for your county. Please remember to use the correct project codes for your activities. Also, 45 minutes is recorded as .75, 30 minutes is .5, and 15 minutes is .25. Please be sure to record your time in this manner; 45 minutes is not recorded as .45 and 30 minutes are not recorded as .30. It takes a lot of time to go through and make all the changes if they are not recorded properly, and I don't know if I will be able to make the changes for you in the online system, so please record your hours correctly. If you have questions on which project code to use or how to record hours, please contact me or your club advisor for help. We would prefer you ask for help, rather than having to make corrections later.

A regional summary on volunteer hours will be published in a later issue of this newsletter.

GRAPE SESSIONS TO BE FEATURED AT MISSOURI LIVESTOCK SYMPOSIUM ON DECEMBER 5

Grapevine Diseases and Their Control and Managing Vineyard Nutrition will be two of the topics for the "Around the Home & Farm" session at the 2009 Missouri Livestock Symposium to be held at the Kirksville Middle School on December 5. Andy Allen, University of Missouri Extension Viticulturist will present the sessions at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm. There is no cost to attend. A free Governor's style lunch will be held at noon. For more info. visit www.missourilivestock.com.



Steve Holy performs Saturday night at 7:30. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at the Adair County Extension Center. For info. on Steve Holy go to www.stev holy.com.

COMPANION PLANTING & RAISED BED GARDENING SESSION TO BE OFFERED AT MISSOURI LIVESTOCK SYMPOSIUM ON DECEMBER 5

Jane Hays, Master Gardener from Atlanta, MO will be presenting a session on "Companion Planting & Raised Bed Gardening" from 9:00-11:00 am in the "Around the Home & Farm" session at the 2009 Missouri Livestock Symposium to be held at the Kirksville Junior High on December 5. Jane has years of experience using organic methods, companion plants and raised beds. In fact, Jane taught me all about companion planting which we have been doing for the past three years at the Adair County Extension Center, and it sure does work to control insects. If you are a gardener, you don't want to miss this talk. You will learn so much in a short time from Jane. There is no cost to attend any of the sessions offered at the symposium. A free Governor's style lunch will be held at noon. You can go to www.missourilivestock.com for more information. Steve Holy will be performing on Saturday night of the Symposium at 7:30. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at the Adair County Extension Center. For more information about Steve Holy, go to www.stev holy.com.

GARDENING TIPS FOR NOVEMBER

- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

(Missouri Botanical Garden)



WREATH MAKING CLASS TO BE HELD IN KIRKSVILLE ON DECEMBER 14



A class on wreath making will be held on Monday, December 14 at 7:00 pm at the Kirksville Vo-Tech. Each participant will make their own wreath to take home which will include a 16" wreath frame, pine greenery, pinecones, silk poinsettias, red bow, and cinnamon sticks. Each person needs to bring a pair of clippers to cut greenery. The cost of the class is \$10 and must be paid by the deadline. Class is limited to 30 people. Most holiday wreaths will cost you between \$25.00-55.00 if you were to buy one. **Pre-registration and the class fee are required by Tuesday, December 1.** No late registrations can be accepted after the deadline. To pre-register, contact the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866. The program is being offered as an adult education class through University of Missouri Extension and the Adair County Young Farmers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 2: Fabius Master Gardener club meeting, 6:30
Presbyterian Church, Memphis.

November 3: Salt River Master Gardener meeting, 7 p.m., The Gardner House, 417 S. Main St., Palmyra, Program-gourds.

November 10: Sullivan County Master Gardener meeting, 6:30 p.m., American Legion Building, Milan.

November 10: Magic City Master Gardener meeting, Randolph County Extension Center.

November 12: Cut flower Workshop, Missouri State Fruit Experiment Station, 8:30-4:00, Mtn. Grove, MO. For more information go to: <http://mtngrv.missouristate.edu/commercial/CutFlower.htm>

November 17: Kirksville Area MG club meeting, 7:00 pm, Adair County Extension Center.

November 23: Macon-Shelby Master Gardener meeting.

December 4 & 5: Missouri Livestock Symposium. Go to www.missouri.livestock.com for more info.

December 14: Wreath-making class, Kirksville Vo-Tech, 7 pm. See article.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
Extension

Garden Talk!

Jennifer Schutter, University of Missouri Extension
Horticulture Specialist
503 E. Northtown Road, Kirksville, MO 63501-1999
schutterjl@missouri.edu 660-665-9866