

## Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

We have gotten about two inches of rain the last few days and there is a prediction of additional amounts of the wet stuff coming next week. For those of us who planted new trees and bushes and had the good fortune of getting spring flower bulbs in the ground the perfect fall weather has been a true blessing. Now that our gardening season has passed into the record books, many of us are contemplating the changes and additions for next spring. Soon our mailboxes will be overflowing with the annual deluge of flower, seed, and plant catalogues to titillate our desires and to energize our dreams of gardens to come. If you have not decided upon any specific plants to grace your landscape, you might want to consider some the following. [Note: All of these offerings are categorized as “natives” and can be purchased at: Missouri Wildflowers Nursery, 9814 Pleasant Hill Road, Jefferson City, MO 65109.]

If you are looking to fill in a space that gets dappled light then look no further than Witch Hazel. This small tree grows to 10 to 15 feet and is the earliest bloomer of the year with its fragrant, yellow flowers. Do not be surprised on a late walk in January to early February to see wild honey bees visiting the tree in bloom. Some folks refer to this next example as a tree but ours has always been a shrub. It does not matter what you call this plant which grows 4 to 6 feet and has golden trumpet shaped flowers giving off a scent of clove. Well, what is it? Golden Currant. Do you want to attract more birds to your particular piece of heaven? Look no further than planting the Scarlet Elder. Growing 4 to 8 feet and producing very red berries is its main charm; but, even more is the lure of those berries to approximately 23 different types of our feather friends – now that’s advertising! Maybe you are in the market for a multitasker – a tree 15 to 30 feet tall, nice pink flowers in the spring, and feeds both critters and humans. Well then, you are looking for the Prairie Crabapple. I’ll close this month’s article with some planting instructions for this hard to grow but very worthwhile addition to your landscape. Do you like the color purple? What about some very vibrant orange to red fall foliage? The American Beautyberry is the shrub for you and is one of my most favorite native plants. When everything has died or turned brown and a I’m walking in the yard on those warm days we get during the winter, coming up on the beautyberry with all those delightful purple berries as late as December makes my heart smile – I think it will yours too.

Back to the crabapple – After eight years of replanting, moving, fertilizing and not fertilizing, watering too much or not enough (and probably a few choice words thrown in the mix just to have all bases covered) we have finally achieved success and achieved our first year of fruit! What did we

do? The trees are planted on a southern facing slope (which means it is well drained and protected from the north winter wind), the soil was greatly amended with compost and peat moss, we did not stake the tree, we did not provide additional fertilizer, and during the first three years we watered it once a week whether we got any rain or not. Now that the tree is established we have quit watering. The only remaining chores have been to prune out dead and diseased branches and any branches that cross over another and the annual addition of leaves around its base out to the drip line. If you decide to plant one of these, please let me know how it grows for you. And, oh, did I mention the fruit makes terrific tasting jelly; but, don't bother trying to eat the fruit direct from the tree – it's really sour.

As always if you have a question or concern write to 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: [mandpak@embarqmail.com](mailto:mandpak@embarqmail.com) and I'll get right back with you. Until next month – enjoy this wonderful fall weather.