NOVEMBER GARDEN HAPPENINGS

There are plenty of tasks around the yard, garden and landscape to keep a gardener busy during the month of November.

LANDSCAPE/ORNAMENTALS

It is time to clean out flower gardens, put perennial plants to bed, protect young trees, and rake up leaves. Start with cleaning up the garden beds. Cut back perennials unless leaving them for winter interest or as a food source for birds. Do not cut back chrysanthemums until spring. Dead foliage left on mum plants helps them overwinter better than if the foliage was cut back.

Rake out fallen leaves and add them to the compost pile. They decompose rather quickly, especially if they are shredded first. Add other plant debris along with food scraps to make quality compost that can be used in your flower and garden beds.

For added protection, place 3-4 inches of mulch around plants in the landscape after they go dormant and the ground freezes. Weather in November is often unpredictable. It can be warm and sunny, or cold and snowy. If the weather is nice, trees, shrubs and bulbs can still be planted. Bulbs can be planted until the ground freezes, which is more desirable than holding them over and taking the chance they will dry out.

Ornamental shade trees can be pruned now, but do not prune fruit trees at this time. Roses, particularly hybrid teas, need winter protection. After several hard freezes, mound soil 6-10 inches around the crown of the plant and place evergreen boughs, straw or other organic material on top. Wrap the trunks of young, thin-barked trees like maples with a light colored tree wrap. This protects the trees from sunscald injury, also known as Southwest injury. Many plants provide winter interest in the landscape and can be used to make holiday planters for displays. Red-twigged dogwood, also known as Redosier dogwood, *Cornus sericea*; holly, *Ilex sp.*; Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*; and many other plants including pines, spruces, junipers that produce cones, berries or pods provide different colors and textures.

Check over-wintering potted plants for insects like aphids, mealy bugs and scale, and treat as needed. Often potted plants brought in from outdoors go through shock. Leaves may turn yellow and drop. This is common. I’ve had it happen many times to plants I’ve overwintered, and they leaf out just fine the following spring.

FRUIT

Protect young fruit trees from Southwest injury with a light-colored tree wrap applied in early December. Southwest Injury is evident in the spring by a large crack on the southwest side of trees. Use a cylinder of wire mesh to protect the trees from rabbits and other rodents that will gnaw on the bark of the trees.

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when food sources become scarce. The cylinder wire needs to be at least 18 inches tall and be pressed into the ground at a depth of 1-2 inches.

Mulch strawberry beds after several hard frosts, with 3-6 inches of straw mulch for winter protection. Strawberry crowns without mulch can suffer damage or even death when temperatures fall into the teens.

Regularly check stored fruit for any that are rotting and discard. One spoiled apple can ruin the whole basket. If properly stored, some apples can last two to three months. Enjoy fruits harvested earlier in the season like pawpaws, persimmons and berries. These all freeze well and can be used in various holiday dishes and baked goods.

**VEGETABLES**

A tasty stir-fry made with fresh root vegetables like sweet potatoes, beets, parsnips, is hard to beat on a cool fall evening, along with some hot apple cider. Butternut squash soup made with a fresh squash and herbs, right out of the garden, also makes for a tasty supper.

Sweet potatoes should be dug before a hard freeze, but others like beets and parsnips seem to get sweeter the longer they stay in the ground. In a mild autumn, root vegetables can be harvested into December. The harvest can be extended using row covers or a light layer of straw mulch.

Just before a freeze, pick green tomatoes and store in a cool, dark place. To hasten ripening, place them in a brown paper bag. If you want to extend their use, place them in single layers on newspaper and store in an area like a basement. After a hard freeze, remove spent plants from the garden and either compost or burn them. Plants with thick stalks like corn, broccoli and even tomatoes, do not break down very fast, so burning them when they are dry, is a better option. If you live in the city limits, check with your city to see if you need a permit. Some communities have a brush piles where residents can take limbs and garden debris.

- Fall is the best time to test your garden soil. Soil samples can be taken to the MU Extension Center in your county. When nutrients are applied in the fall, they have all winter to work in the soil in preparation for spring planting. Compost and other types of organic matter can also be added at this time. Spread 1-2 inches of organic matter over the garden and till it into the soil. Before putting away tools, tomato cages, stakes and other gardening items, clean and disinfect them with a 10 percent bleach solution to kill any disease pathogens that may be on them.

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**MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER HOURS DUE NOVEMBER 30**

It's time once again for Master Gardeners to submit volunteer hours. The volunteer service requirement was waived this year, but we strongly encourage you to submit the service hours you did in 2020. Six hours of continuing education is still required.

Submit hours online in the volunteer reporting system at [http://report.missourimastergardener.com/](http://report.missourimastergardener.com/), which is the preferred method.

If you have been turning in a form and I have recorded the hours for you in the online system, and now you are going to do it, you must contact me and get your username and password. Everyone who has a computer with internet access should be recording their own volunteer hours. Everyone's hours are important! 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 this way.

Thanks for all you do for the Master Gardener program and University of Missouri Extension! Keep up the good work!

**USING WOOD ASHES IN THE GARDEN**

By: Kelly McGowan, Field Specialist in Horticulture, University of Missouri Extension, Greene County

Nothing is cozier than a wood burning fireplace on a cold winter night. Once that fire is gone, ashes make a great soil amendment and have been used by gardeners for generations. Ashes are a good source of plant nutrients, especially calcium. While the calcium is good for plant health, it can work similar to lime and effect soil pH. Excessive use of wood ash can lead to a pH above the ideal level, which in turn can effect nutrient availability. Be careful to not over apply and soil test every one to two years to monitor soil fertility and pH.

The recommended amount is five to ten pounds per 100 square feet. Ash can be applied pre-planting and incorporated in the soil, or used as a side dressing around growing plants. Store unused ashes in a dry place. If stored outdoors, the weathering process can decrease its nutritive value. Make sure to only use wood ash and never ashes from burning trash. Trash burning ashes contain toxins that are undesirable in the vegetable garden. Also, keep in mind that wood ash is highly alkaline, so wear a dust mask and other protective equipment when handling to prevent inhaling or getting into your eyes.
BLACK WALNUT HARVEST AND CURING
By: Tom Fowler, Field Specialist in Horticulture, University of Missouri Extension, Buchanan County

Missouri is home to the Eastern Black Walnut. As a kid growing up, our fall family ritual was to pick up walnuts as they fell from the trees. The walnuts are starting to fall in Northwest Missouri and I imagine they are in most of the rest of the state. This growing season we have seen varied weather conditions. In northern Missouri we have had moisture throughout most of the year. Other parts of the state have some severe drought conditions. Through wet and dry it seems walnut trees produce a crop. In a dry growing season the walnuts may not get as big as they do when they have moisture, but they will still taste good!

Black walnuts are ready to be harvested when the hull can be dented with your thumb and/or as the nuts start falling from the tree. It is important to hull the walnuts soon after harvest. The hull is the green outer layer around the nut that eventually turns yellow then black. And if not removed, the hull will leach a stain through the nut and into the meat. The stain will not only discolor the meats but also give them an off flavor. The hull will also stain your hands and clothing so wear gloves to protect your hands and old clothes you don’t mind being permanently stained.

You can hull walnuts by running them through an old corn sheller or by pounding each nut through a hole in a board. The hole must be big enough for the nut, but smaller than the hull. We would lay walnuts out in the driveway and run over them to knock the hull off. This method would be for more rural areas as some homeowners associations my frown on this! You can also take them to a hulling station and have them remove the hull. However you get the hull off you should rinse the hulled nuts by spreading them out on the lawn or on a wire mesh and spray them with water or place them in a tub of water. If you wash them in a tub of water you can cull out the poorly filled nuts. The good walnuts will sink and those that float are not well-filled with kernels. The floaters should be discarded. Once they are rinsed they should be allowed to dry by spreading them in layers no more than three deep in a cool, shady and dry place such as a garage or tool shed. You can also place them in burlap bags or onion sacks and hang them up to dry. Drying normally takes two weeks.

For information on black walnut production, harvest and curing see the MU Extension Agroforestry guide: https://extension2.missouri.edu/af1011/ or contact your county MU Extension office for a copy. This guide also has information on starting your own walnut orchard.

A way to raise some extra cash is to sell walnuts. Each year hulling stations are set up across the state where black walnuts are hulled and purchased. Last year they paid $16 per 100 pounds after hulling. I could not find the 2020 price. You can contact a hulling station to find the 2020 price they will be paying. We would have them hulled and sell some and keep some to process at home. There are numerous hulling “stations” across Missouri that are scheduled to open October 1st. Across the Midwest there are over 200 hulling stations that purchase walnuts for the only commercial walnut processor in the United States, and it is located in Missouri. Information on buying stations near you, harvest etc., can be found at this web site: https://black-walnuts.com/. It is work processing your own walnuts but they sure are good in banana nut bread!

TAKE CARE OF GARDEN TOOLS

Taking care of and protecting garden tools is just as important as protecting plants. Good garden tools are built to last, but if they are put away with caked on mud or stored in a damp shed for the winter, the life and effectiveness of the tools will be shortened. Scrape off all mud and dirt from tools and give them a good cleaning before storing them away. Remove rust with sandpaper, and after cleaning, give metal surfaces a protective coating of WD-40 or vegetable oil spray. Wood handles can be treated with linseed oil.
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

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 6: Mushroom Production Workshop, Winigan Community Center.

November 11: Horticulture Town Hall Meetings, 12 pm, second Wednesday through March. Taught by state and regional specialists. It is a great opportunity to ask your gardening questions and learn from others. To register, go to https://ipm.missouri.edu/TownHalls/

November 11: Chronic Disease Self-Management Course, free class via Zoom starting November 11, 1-3 p.m. Class is 6 weeks. For more info call DeEtta at 660-292-1513 or email dajones01@atsu.edu.


December—February: Missouri Livestock Symposium goes virtual. Go to missourilivestock.com for more information.

Check out the MU IPM YouTube channel for educational videos on timely gardening topics, and answers to some of your questions. https://www.youtube.com/user/MUIPM/videos