Horticulture 2013 Newsletter
No. 12     March 26, 2013

Video of the Week:  Growing Asparagus

VEGETABLES

Asparagus Time!

Asparagus is one of those vegetables where freshness is incredibly important. If you have never eaten asparagus fresh out of the garden, try it. It may convince you to grow some of your own. For those who have an asparagus patch, the new spears should be getting ready to emerge. The first asparagus that comes through the ground always seems to take a long time to reach harvest size. That is because asparagus growth is temperature dependent. The higher the day and nighttime temperatures, the faster it grows. Also, the longer the spear, the quicker the growth. As the season progresses and spears get longer, the growth rate increases.

Harvest asparagus by snapping or cutting. Snapping is quick and easy. Simply bend the stalk near the base until it breaks. Snapped ends dry quickly so refrigerate or use soon after harvest. If you cut asparagus, use a sharp knife to detach the spears slightly below ground level. This base is woodier than snapped asparagus, so it doesn't lose water as quickly. Cut off woody ends before cooking. (Ward Upham)

Onions, Cabbage and Broccoli Can Be Planted Soon

We mentioned in an earlier edition of this newsletter that these plants can withstand colder temperatures. Normally these plants can go in around the middle of March but cold night temperatures this year may have caused many gardeners to delay planting. Watch the forecast before planting.

Following is more detailed information on planting. As with other vegetables, be sure to
fertilize before planting and work the fertilizer into the soil. It is best to have a soil test done to determine what is actually needed as many of our soils have enough fertility to only need a nitrogen-only fertilizer. If you don’t wish to use a soil test, use a vegetable fertilizer at the suggested rate.

Broccoli and cabbage are normally started from seed indoors and then transplanted outside at this time. Acclimated plants can take temperatures down to the mid- to lower-20s without damage. Plants that are coming out of a protected environment (not acclimated) will need to be gradually exposed to the wind and cold so they develop the toughness necessary to thrive in early spring conditions. This may take as long as a week if plants start out “soft.” When planting, use a “root stimulator” or transplant solution to water in after the plants are set. About 1 cup of solution per plant is sufficient.

Onions are normally grown from either sets (small bulbs) or plants. Plants are usually better labeled as to variety. Onions can be planted thickly if young plants are harvested for green onions so that the remaining onions are thinned. Those left to develop bulbs will need to be about 4 to 6 inches apart. Onions are shallow rooted, so be sure to water if the weather turns dry. (Ward Upham)

**FRUIT**

**Apple Tree Sprays**

Two common diseases on apple trees are cedar apple rust and apple scab. Though some apple varieties are resistant to these diseases — including Liberty, Jonafree, Redfree, Freedom, Williams Pride and Enterprise — most varieties are susceptible. For a description of disease-resistant varieties, go to [http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1401.html](http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1401.html)

Fungicide sprays during April and May are critical to preventing disease on susceptible varieties. A fungicide that is available to homeowners and very effective for control of apple scab and cedar apple rust is myclobutanil (Immunox). There are several formulations of Immunox but only one is labeled for fruit. Check the label.

Sprays should be done on a 7- to 10-day schedule to keep the protective chemical cover on the rapidly developing leaves and fruit. An insecticide will need to be added to this mixture after petal drop to prevent damage from codling moths that cause wormy apples. Methoxychlor or malathion can be used as an insecticide. In order to protect bees, DO NOT use any insecticide during bloom.

Although gardeners may continue to use myclobutanil throughout the season, certain other fungicides are more effective on summer diseases such as sooty blotch and fly speck. Consider switching to Captan or to a fruit spray mixture about June 1.
A spreader-sticker can be added to the fungicide-insecticide chemical mixture to improve the distribution and retention of the pest control chemicals over the leaves and fruit. A hard, driving rain of about 1 inch or more will likely wash chemicals from the leaves and fruit. In such cases, another application should be made. You can find information on controlling insects and diseases on fruit trees in our publication titled "Fruit Pest Control for Home Gardens" at http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/c592.pdf (Ward Upham)

**FLOWERS**

**Pruning Hybrid-Tea Roses**

The best time to prune roses is in the spring before new growth appears and after danger of killing frost. Be sure to remove dead stubs. Otherwise, canker fungi may invade stubs and progress into healthy tissue during the summer. Use sharp shears and make cuts at a 45-degree angle about a quarter-inch above healthy buds. How much to prune after dead wood removal depends on the type of rose.

For shrub roses, pruning consists of removing dead wood. This article focuses on hybrid tea roses. With hybrid teas, there are three pruning styles, each with a specific purpose. Heavy or severe pruning is done on well-established, vigorous plants to produce large, showy flowers. Prune back to three to four healthy canes with three to six eyes per cane. Canes normally will be 6 to 12 inches long. Moderate pruning is done on well-established, healthy plants and is designed to increase the number of flowers produced rather than increase flower size. Leave five to six healthy canes with at least seven buds per cane. Prune stems to 12 to 18 inches long. Light pruning rejuvenates plants after years of neglect or may be performed on newly established plants. Leave five to seven canes of about 18 inches or more in length. This helps maximize leaf area for energy production and rejuvenates plants.

If your plants suffered a significant amount of winter damage, they may need to be cut back more severely than even the heavy-pruning style. This will result in a few large flowers but in this case is your only option. (WU)

**ORNAMENTALS**

**Ten Rules for Planting Trees**

Before you begin spring landscaping, here are some tips on planting trees.

1. Select the right tree for the site. To avoid
serious problems, choose trees that are adapted to your location. Consider whether the tree produces nuisance fruit or if there are disease-resistant varieties available. For example, there are a number of crabapple varieties that are resistant to apple scab and rust diseases. Also consider the mature size of a tree to be sure you have enough room. See http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=731 or ask a local nurseryman for suggestions.

2. Keep the tree well watered and in a shady location until planting. When moving the tree, lift it by the root ball or pot and not by the trunk.

3. Before planting, remove all wires, labels, cords or anything else tied to the plant. If left on, they may eventually girdle the branch to which they are attached.

4. Dig a proper hole. Make the hole deep enough so that the tree sits slightly above nursery level. Plant the tree on solid ground, not fill dirt. In other words, don't dig the hole too deep and then add soil back to the hole before placing the tree. The root flare (point where trunk and roots meet) should be visible. If it isn't, remove enough soil or media so that it is. The width of the planting hole is very important. It should be three times the width of the root ball. Loosening the soil outside the hole so it is five times the diameter of the root ball will allow the tree to spread its roots faster.

5. Remove all containers from the root ball. Cut away plastic and peat pots; roll burlap and wire baskets back into the hole, cutting as much of the excess away as possible. If you can remove the wire basket without disturbing the root ball, do it. If roots have been circling around in the container, cut them and spread them out so they do not continue growing this way inside the hole and become girdling roots later in the life of the tree. Remove any excess soil from the top of the ball so that the root flare is visible.

6. Backfill the hole with the same soil that was removed. Amendments such as peat moss likely do more harm than good. Make sure the soil that goes back is loosened - no clods or clumps. Add water as you fill to insure good root to soil contact and prevent air pockets. There is no need to fertilize at planting. Note: Adding organic matter to larger area than just the planting hole can be beneficial, but it must be mixed in thoroughly with the existing soil. However, adding amendments to just the planting hole in heavy soil creates a “pot” effect that can fill with water and drown your new tree.

7. Don't cut back the branches of a tree after planting except those that are rubbing or damaged. The leaf buds release a hormone that encourages root growth. If the tree is cut back, the reduced number of leaf buds results in less hormone released and therefore fewer roots being formed.

8. Water the tree thoroughly and then once a week for the first season if there is insufficient rainfall.

9. Mulch around the tree. Mulch should be 2 to 4 inches deep and cover an area two the three times the diameter of the root ball. Mulching reduces competition from other plants, conserves moisture and keeps soil temperature closer to what the plants' roots prefer.

10. Stake only when necessary. Trees will establish more quickly and grow faster if they are not
staked. However, larger trees or those in windy locations may need to be staked the first year. Movement is necessary for the trunk to become strong. Staking should be designed to limit movement of the root ball rather than immobilize the trunk. (Ward Upham)

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