Horticulture 2023 Newsletter

No. 35 September 4, 2023

1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Cntr.
Manhattan, KS 66506 (785) 532-6173

Video of the Week: Overseeding Your Lawn

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seed Saving From Your Garden

Wednesday, September 6th 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Seed saving is a fun way to enjoy gardening without breaking the bank. Most plants produce seeds that can be saved from one year to the next, however, not all seeds are equally suited for saving. Jesse Gilmore, Wildcat Extension District Horticulture Extension Agent, will discuss the merits of seed saving, the different types of flowers and seeds, and which plants are most suited to seed saving.

Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:
ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour

K-STATE Research and Extension

https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/

REMINDERS

- Harvest winter squash when skin is hard enough that it is not easily punctured with a thumbnail.
- Remove small tomatoes from vines to encourage development of more mature fruits.
- Plant garden chrysanthemums for fall color.

VEGETABLES

Asparagus and Rhubarb in the Autumn Season

The harvest is finished for the year, but rhubarb and asparagus plants still need attention. During dry weather apply supplemental water. Keep planters free of weeds. Wait to fertilize rhubarb until early spring (March) and for asparagus wait until after the harvest next year. Leave asparagus foliage intact until it has lost its green color. At that time, it can be cut back, if desired. (Cynthia Domenghini)

Harvesting and Roasting Sunflower Seed

Sunflower seeds are usually ready for harvest between mid-September to October. As the petals turn brown you can wrap the seed heads with a brown paper bag or cheesecloth and secure it with a twist tie. This will protect the seeds from birds as well as catch any seeds that drop. Sunflowers are mature when:

- Florets in the center of the head shrivel
- The head turns downward
- The back of the flower head has a lemon-yellow color

Mature seeds are black with longitudinal white stripes. If the seed shell is empty that may indicate poor pollination earlier in the season. If you choose not to cover the seed head, harvest when several seeds have turned black and white. Though not all seeds may be mature and the flavor won't be as good, this will protect the seeds from becoming bird food.
Cut the seed head free from the plant and place it in a paper bag to dry. Alternatively, cut the head with a foot of stem still attached and hang upside down to dry. Cover the head with a paper bag to catch seeds as they drop. Once fully dried, rub your hand over the seeds to break them free.

Soak mature, unshelled seeds in salt water (2 quarts water:1/2 to 2 cups salt) overnight. To expedite, bring the water to a boil and simmer the seeds for two hours. Spread sunflower seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet. Cook at 300 degrees F for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden

brown, stirring occasionally. Toss seeds with melted butter or olive oil and salt to taste. (Cynthia Domenghini)

MISCELLANEOUS

Reblooming Christmas and Thanksgiving Cacti

Christmas cactus (*Schlumgera bridgesti*) and Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumgera truncata*) are differentiated by the stems. Christmas cacti stems tend to be smooth whereas Thanksgiving cacti stems have hook-like appendages.

Both varieties of holiday cacti require a period of short day-length in order to bloom. Growers control lighting and temperature to the plants forcing them to bloom in time to distribute them to retail sites before the holidays. If you've received a holiday cactus over the years, you may notice it doesn't bloom all year long. By controlling the hours of daylight as well as the temperature you can force the plant to bloom.

For about six weeks, keep the cactus in a cool, dark room. The ideal temperature range is between 50- and 55-degrees F. At these temperatures, the cacti should bloom regardless of daylength. When buds begin to develop you can return the cactus to a warmer room to enjoy the bloom. If buds begin to drop it is likely due to the environment. These cacti prefer bright, but indirect light. Allow the soil to dry between waterings. Avoid fertilizing and repotting during the bloom period. (Cynthia Domenghini)

Using Compost

You've done all the work to prepare, gather, store and maintain a compost pile; now what do you do with it? When you have usable compost there are many ways to incorporate it into the garden.

Fertilization and soil improvement: Though the amount of specific nutrients available in compost varies depending on what was composted, there are nutritional benefits when incorporating it into the soil. Apply about ¼ inch of compost over the garden just before tilling. Work the compost into the soil as you till.
The decomposed organic materials of compost can improve the soil quality by loosening heavy clay soils and increasing water holding capacity of sandy soils.

Compost at planting: Compost can be added to the bottom of holes prior to planting for a slow-release of nutrients early in the growing period. It can also be added after planting as a top-dressing for direct-seeded vegetables and flowers. This will protect the soil from developing a crust layer on the surface.

Potting mix for seedlings: Screen the large particles out of the compost and incorporate soil or sand in equal parts to create a potting mix. Ensure the organic matter is fully decomposed and free from disease.

Use on a lawn: Apply a layer of compost prior to planting and top dress every year to fertilize the lawn. (Cynthia Domenghini)

TREES

Elm Leaf Beetle

Description: Young larvae are dark-colored, hairy grubs. Older larvae are yellow with two long, dark stripes. Adult beetles have green and yellow stripes and are about 1/3-inch long.

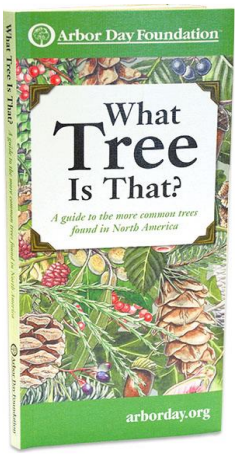
Life Cycle: There are typically two generations of elm leaf beetles each year. They overwinter as adults and emerge from their protective shelters in early spring. As elm trees develop leaves the beetles move in and females begin laying eggs. Larvae hatch and spread throughout the tree to feed. Larvae reach maturity within four weeks and seek shelter to pupate. They may drop to the base of the tree or crawl within cracks of the bark to pupate. Adults emerge in about two weeks and relocate to the leaves to eat and mate giving rise to the second generation of larvae. This generation of adult beetles will wait to lay eggs until the spring.

Damage: Larvae cause most of the damage by skeletonizing leaves of elm trees, giving preference to Siberian (Chinese) elms. Adult beetles chew holes through the leaves. Leaves that have been heavily damaged may turn brown and drop.

Control: For healthy trees, at this point in the season, elm leaf beetles and larvae tend not to cause significant damage so spraying is not recommended. If the larvae are active, they can be controlled with several insecticides. If they have already dropped to pupate spraying will be ineffective.

Larvae and adult sprays include: acephate (Acephate, Orthene), spinosad (Natural Guard Spinosad, Conserve, Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Monterey Garden Insect Spray), lambda cyhalothrin (Scimitar, Spectracide Triazicide). (Cynthia Domenghini)

Tree ID



"What Tree is That?" from the Arbor Day Foundation is a small booklet packed with information about Kansas trees. It includes a step-by-step approach for tree ID and full color illustrations making it a great resource for plant lovers of all levels of expertise. More information can be found at http://www.arborday.org/trees/whatTree/ (Cynthia Domenghini)

Contributors:

Cynthia Domenghini, Instructor
Ward Upham, Extension Associate

Division of Horticulture
1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton
Manhattan, KS 66506
(785) 532-6173

For questions or further information, contact: cdom@ksu.edu, wupham@ksu.edu OR cdipman@ksu.edu
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