UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Training
Wednesday, February 10
(Holiday Inn, Topeka, KS)

This year the focus of Spring Training is to introduce you to a new program for K-State: Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities. The program is designed to educate the public on environmentally conscious lawn and garden care techniques. Our choices in our yards influence the entire community. By choosing practices that minimize impact, everyone benefits. An online assessment tool for homeowners is available at www.kansasgreenyards.org.

We want you to be prepared for homeowners coming your way with questions about the program and how the services you offer can help them obtain status as a Kansas Healthy Yard. To that end, we have prepared a workshop to explain what K-State Extension will be training homeowners to understand about their yards so you can be ahead of the game this spring.


FRUIT

Fruit Trees May Be Pruned Now

January is a good time to think about pruning fruit trees. The pruning can also be done in February or March. But if you wish to do it early, trees are fully dormant and have been for a few weeks. Pruning when temperatures are below 20 degrees F is not advisable due to possible injury. It is important to prune before dormant sprays are applied to avoid pruning out sprayed wood and discarding it. Also, you are more
likely to get total coverage of limbs, branches and shoots after you have pruned. Prune older trees first because older, larger wood tolerates lower temperatures than young trees with small diameter wood. (WU)

**Cloning Apple Trees**

We occasionally receive calls from gardeners who want to know how to treat an apple seed so it will germinate. Usually, the gardener is trying to reproduce an old apple tree that was special for some reason (good quality fruit, planted by grandparents, etc.). Unfortunately, apples grown from seed will not be like the parent. About 1 in 80,000 apple trees grown from seed will be as good as the apples we are used to eating. Usually you end up with a tree that has small and inferior quality fruit. If you want a tree exactly like the parent, you must propagate that tree vegetatively. In the case of apples, this usually means grafting. Apple trees are easy to graft, even for novices. Don't be afraid to try this even if you haven't done it before. The step that needs to be done soon is choosing and cutting of scion wood or small branches that will be grafted on top of a rootstock. Here is the procedure.

The ideal branches for scion wood will be from about 1/4 to ½ inch in diameter. Good propagation wood can be made of water sprouts that grew from limbs in the tree or suckers that grew from the trunk. Water sprouts are those small branches that grow straight up from larger, more horizontal branches. If you use suckers, be sure the suckers are growing from above the graft at the base of the tree. This propagation wood is normally taken during February. These can be cut in lengths up to about a foot long. They can be stored in your refrigerator at about 40 to 45 degrees F. Do not freeze. The next step is to decide what rootstock you will graft them onto.

Fruit trees are normally grafted (or budded) onto specially selected rootstocks. These rootstocks normally reduce tree size. For example, a tree that normally would get 25 feet tall will only reach 10 feet if it is grown on a certain rootstock. Dwarfing rootstocks also allow apples to fruit earlier.

A tree on its own roots normally takes 5 to 7 years before it will bear. Semi-dwarf trees bear in 4 to 5 years, and dwarf trees bear in 3 to 4 years. Unfortunately, dwarfing rootstocks are not well-adapted to Kansas. Semi-dwarf trees are usually a better choice for us. Note that rootstock reduces tree size, not fruit size. For example, a Golden Delicious tree that only reaches 8 feet tall due to a dwarfing rootstock will bear the same size fruit as a Golden Delicious tree that is 25 feet tall.

Most nurseries only sell trees that are already grafted. A company that does sell rootstocks is Raintree Nursery, Morton, WA, (360) 496-6400, [http://www.raintreenursery.com](http://www.raintreenursery.com) Another is Cummins Nursery, (865) 233 3539, [http://www.cumminsnnursery.com](http://www.cumminsnnursery.com) though there is a surcharge on any tree that you order less than three rootstocks. If you know of other nurseries that sell rootstocks, let me know, and I will post them in later newsletters. It is also possible to buy a tree from a local nursery and graft your clone into it. One disadvantage of this method is that it is possible to prune off the special clone instead of the cultivar branches by mistake. For details on grafting or budding and care see the Missouri Extension publication, titled "Grafting," which can be found at [http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/agguides/hort/g06971.htm](http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/agguides/hort/g06971.htm) (WU)
Research from K-State’s John C. Pair Horticultural Center has quantified the effect of controlling grasses around newly planted trees. Jason Griffin, William Reid and Dale Bremer conducted a study to investigate the inhibition of growth of transplanted, seedling trees when lawn grasses were allowed to grow up to the trunk. There were five treatments including three with different species of grass. Those treatments were:

1. Bare soil maintained with herbicides
2. Area under tree mulched 3 inches deep
3. Tall fescue allowed to grow under tree
4. Bermudagrass allowed to grow under tree
5. Kentucky bluegrass allowed to grow under tree

All treatments were applied to Eastern redbud seedlings as well as to pecan seedlings. All trees were fertilized according to recommendations and watered during the growing season with up to one inch of water if rainfall was deficient. At the end of two years, trees were measured and harvested. Data was taken on caliper (diameter) 6 inches above the ground, weight of above ground portions of the tree, leaf area and leaf weight.

There were no differences in any measure between the mulched treatment and the bare soil treatment for either tree species. But all measures showed very significant growth increases when lawn grasses were controlled around the tree. Specific results were as follows:

1. Caliper: Measurements taken 6 inches above the soil surface were twice as large for plots without grass than for those with either fescue or bluegrass; they were only 50% larger when compared to the bermudagrass plots.

2. Top growth weight: Redbuds showed a 300% weight advantage for plots with grasses controlled than those without. Pecans showed a significant 200% increase.

3. Leaf area and leaf weight: Leaf area was 200% larger in plots without grass competition, with a 300% increase in leaf weight.

We can conclude from this study that grasses must be controlled under a newly transplanted tree for the best possible growth. How far from the trunk should the grasses be controlled? Try a minimum of 3 feet. (WU)
MISCELLANEOUS

All-America Selection Winners for 2010

All-America Selections tests and introduces new flowers and vegetables each year that have done well in trials across North America. This year there was eight flower winners and one vegetable winner.

Descriptions and images below are taken directly from All-America Selection materials. For more detailed information including how to grow, see http://www.all-americaselections.org/Winners.asp

Echinacea purpurea ‘PowWow Wild Berry’, Flower Award Winner

This purple coneflower differs from all others for flower color, branching and plant size. Gardeners will love the deep rose-purple 3 to 4 inch flowers that retain color on the plant longer. Plants were tested across the United States and Canada. This first year flowering perennial (hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 3) has superior performance including a basal branching habit, resulting in more flowers per plant. Reaching a height of 20 to 24 inches in the full sun garden, this AAS Winner blooms continually without deadheading. ‘PowWow Wild Berry’ is an intermediate day-length flowering variety with most rapid and uniform flowering at 14 hours, flowering approximately 20 weeks after sowing. Therefore, seed should be sown before the end of January for the most prolific and uniform flowering in the first year. U.S. Utility Patent Applied For. Bred by PanAmerican Seed Co.

Gaillardia F1 ‘Mesa Yellow’, Flower Award Winner

‘Mesa Yellow’ is the first hybrid blanket flower with a controlled plant habit and prolific flowering. The 3-inch daisy like flowers and globe shaped seed heads offer a superior presentation of color that continues throughout the summer. Gardeners will be glad to know they can cut the blooms for casual bouquets. The flowers, when left on the plants, will attract butterflies. Judges noted the improved plant habit of ‘Mesa Yellow’ with mature plants reaching 20 to 22 inches in a full sun garden location. The neat, mounded plants are adaptable to smaller space gardens or any type of containers. When planted near the inside edge of the container, they will cascade down the container. They are relatively maintenance free. ‘Mesa Yellow’ plants proved to be wind and rain resistant, meaning the plants recover quickly from severe weather. ‘Mesa Yellow’ was bred by PanAmerican Seed Company and blooms two to three weeks earlier than comparisons.
Marigold F1 Hybrid African ‘Moonsong Deep Orange’, Flower Award Winner

AAS Judges noted the intense deep orange flower color that could not be captured by a picture or digital image. The fade-resistant orange flowers make others look more golden than orange. This unique color is one of three desirable, improved traits. The flower size from 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches and fully double blooms rank among the best of the class. Easy to grow in a 5 to 6 inch pot, plants will flower in about 70 days under short days or 84 days under long day growing conditions. ‘Moonsong Deep Orange’ plants are vigorous, tolerating stress such as heat or drought. In the full sun garden, the erect plants will reach about 12-15 inches tall. Over the summer, the old blooms will be covered with green foliage, which keeps the plants looking fresh throughout the growing season. Bred by Syngenta Flowers.

Snapdragon F1 ‘Twinny Peach’, Bedding Plant Award Winner

Who took the snap out of Snapdragon? ‘Twinny Peach’ the AAS Winner, is a snapdragon without the snap. Why? Because it is a double or butterfly flower form that does not have the jaws or joints to snap. The double flower form is the origin for the name ‘Twinny’ or twins. Another unique quality is the blend of peach tone colors. The soft shades of peach, yellow and light orange are distinct, and no other snapdragon offers this range of colors. Match ‘Twinny Peach’ with blue tones of Salvia farinacea or purple foliage plants and your garden will be a knockout. In the full sun garden, ‘Twinny Peach’ will produce abundant flower spikes, plenty to cut and place in vases for fresh indoor bouquets. Plants will continue to flower all season with little garden care. Like all snapdragons, ‘Twinny Peach’ is easy to grow and it exhibited heat tolerance in the AAS Trials. This new variety was bred by HEM Genetics.

Viola F1 ‘Endurio Sky Blue Martien’, Cool Season Award Winner

A burst of clear blue greets gardeners with ‘Endurio Sky Blue Martien.’ This unique spreading/mounding viola may look delicate, but delivers tough-as-nails performance in the garden. In mild southern regions it flowers throughout the winter, laughing off wind, rain, cold temperatures and passing snowfalls. In northern temperate climates, it dazzles
gardeners with two-season color – flowering well after first frost when planted in autumn and once again in spring after snow has melted and soil has warmed. It can also be planted in early spring, covering planters and landscapes with sky-blue blooms well into summer. Delicate 0.75-inch flowers cover plants in beautiful sky blue. Spreading/mounding plants grow to 6 inches tall and 10-12 inches wide, creating a bright spot in any garden. It is also perfectly suited to window boxes and hanging gardens, as well as balcony and patio planters. ‘Endurio Sky Blue’ was bred by Syngenta Flowers, Inc.

Zinnia ‘Double Zahara Cherry’, Bedding Plant Award Winner

This interspecific cross between zinnia species, results in dependable resistance to leaf spot and mildew diseases. Growers can easily produce ‘Double Zahara Cherry’ flowering plants for spring bedding plants without the fear of plant loss due to these two diseases. Recommended for 4-inch pots or larger, the handsome symmetrical dark green plants produce fully double 2 ½ inch blooms. The flowers remain attractive for impulse sales at retail stores. Early to bloom in about 8 - 10 weeks, ‘Double Zahara Cherry’ has fewer inputs and more reliability. Growing in a full-sun garden, this AAS Winner will mature at about 12 inches tall and wide. Heat tolerant in the garden, ‘Double Zahara Cherry’ can be perfectly matched with other sun loving annuals for container plantings. Bred by PanAmerican Seed Company.

Zinnia ‘Double Zahara Fire’, Bedding Plant Award Winner

Large 2 ½ inch, fully double flowers crown these disease resistant plants. ‘Double Zahara Fire’ has proven leaf spot and mildew resistance. This is linked to the ease of growing in the greenhouse for spring flowering plants and the length of flowering season. There is less risk of plant loss while growing these zinnias under cool, low light conditions. Gardeners can rely on ‘Double Zahara Fire’ for reliable, season long performance. Plants will continue to bloom from spring to the end of the growing season, with little garden maintenance. Mature plants will be about 14 inches tall and spread 12 inches. Similar to all zinnias, this AAS Winner will perform best in full sun and thrive on summer heat. ‘Double Zahara Fire’ was bred by PanAmerican Seed Company.
Zinnia ‘Zahara Starlight Rose’, Bedding Plant Award Winner

A stunning combination of new and old describes ‘Zahara Starlight Rose.’ Zinnias are old-fashioned flowers but these rose and white flowers are a new bicolor for this sun loving class of annuals. Other new traits are the proven resistances to leaf spot and mildew, which can devastate healthy plants and cause an early death. These superior qualities resulted in long lasting zinnia plants that provide generous color all season. ‘Zahara Starlight Rose’ is heat and drought tolerant, easy to grow in gardens. A perfect plant for the novice or experienced gardener because it is so undemanding with a maximum number of blooms. The mature plants are mid-sized, about 12 to 14 inches tall and wide, large enough to make a bold statement in containers or patio urns. Gardeners will be able to grow ‘Zahara Starlight Rose’ from seed or plants. This new zinnia was bred by PanAmerican Seed Co.

Watermelon F1 Hybrid ‘Shiny Boy’, Vegetable Award Winner

In a taste test against comparisons, 'Shiny Boy' won! Judges favored the sweet tropical flavor and crisp texture. A red fleshed melon with dark seeds; this globe-shaped melon weighed about 20 pounds, some larger. The hybrid plants are vigorous; vines can grow up to 12 feet. 'Shiny Boy' can be grown vertically so that a large yard for a vegetable garden is not needed. Judges noted a high yield and generally healthy plants, tolerant of severe weather. It is an art form to determine when melons are ripe for harvest but plan to check plants in about 75 days from transplanting for mature fruit. 'Shiny Boy' is earlier than other varieties. This AAS Winner can be grown successfully in any geographic region with warm summer growing conditions. It was bred by Known-You Seed Company.

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Horticulture 2010  E-mail Subscription
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