Horticulture 2010 Newsletter
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UPCOMING EVENTS

Grape Pruning Workshops

There will be a series of grape pruning workshops provided by the University of Missouri Extension Service at various locations across Missouri in mid February. The closest one to Kansas is at the Platte County Extension Office in Kansas City, Mo. on February 17. The other workshops in Missouri are at Rocheport, New Haven and Ste. Genevieve. These workshops are identical in content but held at various locations across Missouri. Hands-on pruning practice will be provided. The cost is $25 and the registration deadline is February 9. For details and a registration form see http://iccve.missouri.edu/events/grape-pruning-workshop.doc

Tailgate meetings will be held in April, June and July with more information as events near. A viticulture field day will take place June 8 with the location to be determined. Check the Institute for Continental Climate Viticulture and Enology website at http://iccve.missouri.edu/ for updates. (WU)

FRUIT

Blackberry, Raspberry and Strawberry Information for Commercial Growers

Gregg Eyestone, our Horticulture Agent in Riley County, pointed out a good source of information on the commercial production of blackberries, raspberries and strawberries. North Carolina State University has “Information Portals” for these crops including budgets, marketing, growing the crop, postharvest care and integrated pest management. Not all information will apply as they are in cold hardiness zones 7 and 8 and we are primarily 6. But
Miniature Roses

Miniature roses are dwarf versions of roses including the classic hybrid teas. Though they are much smaller (12 to 15 inches tall or less), they are surprisingly tough and can be planted outside where they will survive our Kansas winters if mulched. However, many gardeners like to grow the miniatures indoors where they can enjoy them during the drab winter months.

Miniature roses grown as houseplants have specific requirements. For long lasting flowers, air should be moist with a relative humidity of 50 to 60 percent preferred though 40 percent is adequate. Placing the pots on a tray that holds moist pebbles will help provide the humidity needed.

Like most plants, roses need a lot of light in order to flower. Though miniature roses will often do well in a south window, many people will supplement available light with fluorescent lamps. Timers can be used to automatically turn the lights on and off. Providing 14 hours of light per day will be plenty for roses to grow and flower. Lights are normally spaced 3 to 4 inches above the tops of the plants.

Probably the most serious pest of these plants indoors is spider mites. These mites are very small but can devastate miniature roses. They like dry, warm conditions. Maintaining adequate relative humidity levels and washing the plants once a week in tepid water will help prevent problems. If mites do develop, try using an insecticidal soap or horticultural oil (2 percent rate) for control. The horticultural oil will probably be more effective than the soap.

Miniature roses can be placed outdoors during the summer to take advantage of higher light levels. Do not place the plant in full sun immediately but gradually grant more light over a period of several weeks. Pots sunk in the ground will not need to be watered as often as those exposed. Turn the pot 180 degrees every couple of weeks to break off any roots that escape the pot and move into the underlying soil.

Miniature roses are not the easiest plants to grow as houseplants but can be well worth the effort required. (WU)
MISCELLANEOUS

Companion Planting; Does It Work?

Companion planting is a procedure that is sometimes recommended to naturally reduce pest problems by planting two types of plants close to one another. For example, planting catnip with cabbage is supposed to reduce worm damage on the cabbage. Controlled studies are needed to determine whether such a practice is effective. We now have results from two studies that give some insight into companion planting.

The University of California looked at the effect of planting cabbage with catnip, nasturtium, marigold, summer savory and basil. The cabbage-catnip plots had reduced cabbageworm eggs and larvae but the amount of worm injury was the same. Also, the average weight per cabbage head was reduced probably due to competition from the catnip for sunlight, water and nutrients. The other cabbage companion plantings also failed to show positive results.

The University of Georgia studied companion plantings of beans-margolds, cucumber-nasturtium, cabbage-thyme, eggplant-catnip, tomato-margold, and tomato-basil. None of these combinations prevented insect damage from the major garden insect pests.

What about cover crops of margolds and nematodes? Dutch researchers looked at the effectiveness of over 800 varieties of margolds on nematode populations. Note that this is not companion planting because two crops are not interplanted. It seems that nematodes are attracted to margold roots but are killed when they try to feed due to the release of ozone from the damaged root. But this only occurs on living margold roots. Once the margolds have been tilled in, there is no further benefit. Also, the full benefit is only achieved when the whole area is covered with margolds. In the Dutch test, cover crops of margolds reduced the numbers of the very common root-lesion nematode (Pratylenchus penetrans) enough in one growing season that other crops susceptible to that pest could be grown for two or three years without suffering. The French Marigold (Tagetes petula) proved to be the most effective, with the variety known as 'Single Gold' providing the greatest control (almost 99 percent). (WU)

Ashes in the Garden

You may have heard that using wood ashes on your garden can help make the soil more fertile. Though ashes do contain significant amounts of potash, they contain little phosphate and no nitrogen. Most Kansas soils are naturally high in potash and do not need more. Also, wood ashes will raise the pH of our soils, often a drawback in Kansas where soils tend toward high pH
anyway. In fact, wood ashes add little benefit and may harm many Kansas soils. In most cases it is best to get rid of them. But one possible use for ashes would be as an addition to compost. Compost is normally acidic, and the ashes would help neutralize the pH. (WU)

**Rabbit Resistant Flowers**

Rabbits can cause a great deal of damage to plants in Kansas. Though fencing is a very effective control, it may be too unattractive for some uses. In such cases, using plants that are less likely to be attractive to rabbits can be helpful. Note that these plants are resistant; not immune to attack. Young plants or those that are succulent due to overfertilization are more likely to be damaged. Also, the unavailability of other food sources can result in rabbits feeding on plants that are normally rejected. A list of flowers considered resistant to feeding damage by rabbits include artmesia, aster, bee balm, begonia, blanket flower, bleeding heart, candytuft, columbine coreopsis, crocus, daffodil, dahlia, daylily, ferns, gloriosa daisy, herbs (except basil), iris, lamb’s ears, pincushion flower, red hot poker, surprise lily, sweet violet, verbena and yarrow.

This information came from a University of Arizona publication titled “Deer and Rabbit Resistant Plants.” Other resistant plants including trees, shrubs, groundcovers and vines are also listed in this publication. You may access this publication at [http://tinyurl.com/y8sfgo2](http://tinyurl.com/y8sfgo2) (WU)

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