New Publication on Landscape Design

A new 16-page publication on landscape design has just been released. Written by Dr. Emily Nolting, Dr. Cheryl Boyer and Dr. Greg Davis, this publication covers the basics for those looking to develop a landscape plan for their home. Subjects covered include elements of design; shrub and tree selection; themes and focal points; texture and form; line and rhythm; dimension; accents; and the landscape plan including graphics. You can find the publication online at: http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/hort2/MF2925.pdf

Developing a landscape plan is important, even if it is not possible to install the complete design at one time. In such cases, site preparation such as removal of unwanted plants, installation of irrigation lines, construction of berms and the addition of topsoil should be done first. If all the plants cannot be installed at the same time, trees should be planted before other plants as they take the longest to reach an effective size. Having a plan will help insure that your landscape is pleasant and functional rather than a hodgepodge of individual plants. (WU)

TURFGRASS

Weeds in Lawns

This has been a terrible year for lawns and weed control. The extreme wet conditions in some parts of the state have caused our weed preventers to run out of steam before they normally do, resulting in late infestations of crabgrass. Fortunately, crabgrass is a warm-season annual that will be killed with the first frost. Hopefully, we will have a more normal season next year allowing our weed preventers to work as they should.
Another weed encouraged by excess rain is yellow nutsedge. Nutsedge is not a grass but a sedge and most grass herbicides have no effect. Although it is late to try to control nutsedge now, you may wish to try halosulfuron-methyl (SedgeHammer) next year when the nutsedge reaches the 3 to 8 leaf stage of growth. Be sure to add the label-suggested non-ionic surfactant to the spray. (WU)

Lawn Seeding Deadline Nears

September is the best month to reseed cool-season lawns such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. However, you can get by with an early to mid-October planting for tall fescue. October 15 is generally considered the last day for safely planting or overseeding a tall fescue lawn in the fall. If you do attempt a late seeding, take special care not to allow plants to dry out.

Anything that slows growth will make it less likely that plants will mature enough to survive the winter. Seedings done after the cut-off date can be successful, but the success rate goes down the later the planting date. Late plantings that fail are usually not killed by cold temperatures but rather desiccation. The freezing and thawing of soils heave poorly rooted grass plants out of the ground, which then dry and die. Keeping plants watered will help maximize root growth before freezing weather arrives. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Planting Trees in the Fall

We usually think of planting trees in the spring rather than the fall. But there may be advantages to fall planting. During the spring, soils are cold and may be so wet that low oxygen levels inhibit root growth. The warm and moist soils associated with fall encourage root growth. Fall root growth means the tree becomes established well before a spring-planted tree and is better able to withstand summer stresses. Certain trees do not produce significant root growth during the fall and are better planted in the spring. These include beech, birch, redbud, magnolia, tulip poplar, willow oak, scarlet oak, black oak, willows and dogwood. Fall-planted trees require some special care. Remember, that roots are actively growing even though the top is dormant. Make sure the soil stays moist but not soggy. This may require watering not only in the fall but also during the winter months if we experience warm spells that dry the soil. Mulch also is helpful because it minimizes moisture loss and slows the cooling of the soil so root growth continues as long as possible. Evergreens should be moved earlier in the fall than deciduous plants. They need at least six weeks before the ground freezes for the roots to become established. (WU)
VEGETABLES

Harvesting Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes should be harvested no later than the first fall freeze because cold temperatures can damage the sensitive roots. However, you may want to harvest earlier if you prefer a smaller sweet potato. Test dig a hill to see if they are the size you want.

Sweet potatoes should be cured after being dug. The digging process often damages the tender skin and curing helps these small wounds heal. Place the roots in a warm, humid location for 5 to 10 days immediately after digging. A location with a temperature around 85 to 90 degrees is ideal. A space heater can be used to heat a small room or other area. Raise the humidity by placing moist towels in the room. The curing process not only heals wounds but also helps convert starches to sugars. This process improves the texture and flavor of the roots. Sweet potatoes should be stored above 55 degrees. Storage at temperatures below that injures the roots, shortens storage life and gives them an off flavor. (WU)

Garlic Planting Time

October is a good time to plant garlic (Allium sativum) if you want large quality cloves next summer. Apply 3 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet and mix into the soil before planting or fertilize according to soil test. Plant individual cloves point up and spaced 3 inches apart and 1 to 2 inches deep. The larger the clove planted, the larger the bulb at harvest. Water in well and mulch with straw to conserve soil warmth and encourage good establishment. Harvest will not occur until next summer when most of the foliage has browned.

Elephant garlic (Allium ampeloprasum) should also be planted now. It is a plant with a milder garlic flavor and is actually a closer relative to the leek than to true garlic. (WU)
FRUIT

Fruit Planting Preparation

If you plan to develop or add to your fruit garden next year, now is a good time to begin preparing the planting site. Grass areas should be tilled so grass does not compete with the fruit plants for soil moisture and nutrients. Have the soil analyzed for plant nutrients. Your local K-State Research and Extension agents have information to guide you in taking the soil sample. From that sample, the agent can provide recommendations on what and how much fertilizer to add to correct nutrient deficiencies. Organic materials such as compost, grass clippings, leaves, hay, straw or dried manure, can be tilled into the soil to help improve its condition. Time and weather conditions generally are more suitable in the fall than in the late winter and spring for preparing soil. If fruit plants can be set by early April, they will have developed a stronger root system to support plant growth than they would if planted later. (WU)

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Horticulture 2010  E-mail Subscription

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