Horticulture 2011 Newsletter
No. 36      September 6, 2011

Video of the Week: Reseeding a Patch of Lawn

VEGETABLES

Asparagus and Rhubarb in the Autumn Season

Harvest is long past but now is the time asparagus and rhubarb plants build up needed reserves for the next year. Be sure to water during dry weather and keep plants weed free. Foliage should be left until all green is gone. It can then be removed or left for the winter to help collect snow. (WU)

FRUIT

Storing Apples

You can enjoy apples from January to June with the right conditions. Some apple cultivars can be stored for longer periods than others. Some cultivars will stay in firm and crisp for about 6 to 8 months with good storage. The approximate lengths of time cultivars will keep well under refrigeration are as follows:
The condition of the apples and how they are stored will strongly influence the storage period.

Some guidelines to help assure good quality and maximum storage life of apples include:
* Store only the best quality.
* Pick as they are first maturing.
* Avoid skin breaks, disease or insect damage, and bruises on individual fruit.
* Store in a plastic bag to help retain moisture in the apples. The bag should have a few small holes for air exchange. The bags of apples may be stored in boxes to prevent bruising if they must be stacked or moved from time to time.
* Refrigerate at about 35 degrees F. An extra refrigerator works well.
* Sort about every 30 to 40 days to remove fruit that may be beginning to rot. (WU)

**ORNAMENTALS**

**Tree ID**

If you need a simple tree identification key, consider the “What Tree is That?” from the Arbor Day Foundation. Even though it is a bit over 150 pages, the booklet is small enough to fit in your pocket, yet covers many of the trees found in Kansas. More information can be found at [http://www.arborday.org/trees/whatTree/](http://www.arborday.org/trees/whatTree/) (WU)
Leaching Houseplants

Everyone knows that someone stranded in the ocean should not drink the salt water. The salt content of that water will make a bad situation worse. What many people don’t realize is that this same principle can harm plants.

Fertilizers are salts. They must be salts in order for the plant roots to take them up.

Salt levels can build up over time and eventually may harm plant roots, leading to scorched leaves and unhealthy plants. Though this can happen under field conditions, especially in low rainfall areas, it is particularly critical with houseplants.

Houseplants have a certain soil volume that doesn’t change until a plant is repotted. Salt buildup can be a crucial concern especially if plants are fertilized heavily. Leaching an overabundance of salts can be an important practice to insure the health of our houseplants. Now is a good time to leach while the weather is warm enough that the operation can be done outside.

Leaching is not a complicated or difficult process. It consists of adding enough water to wash out excess salts. How much water is enough? Add the amount of water that would equal twice the volume of the pot. Water must be added slowly so that it doesn’t overflow the rim of the pot.

If salt has formed a crust on the surface of the potting mix, remove it but don’t take more than 1/4 inch of the underlying media. Replace the removed media with fresh potting mix. (WU)

Are Acorns Edible?

If you have an oak tree, you have probably noticed the acorns they produce. They usually don't last long once they drop because they are a favorite food of various wildlife species including squirrels and deer. But they are not as popular with people as some of our other native nuts such as walnut. Although all acorns are edible, some are better than others. Many are quite bitter due to high levels of tannin. The level of tannin in the acorn meat varies with the oak species. Some species have acorns that have naturally sweeter meats than others. Oak species can be split into two groups: white oaks and red oaks. White oaks usually have acorn meats with a lower tannin content than red oaks and are sweeter. Individual oak trees usually can
be placed in one of these two groups by looking at specific characteristics. White oaks tend to have leaves with rounded lobes rather than the bristly points normally found with red oaks. Also, red oaks typically have deeply ridged, dark-colored bark as opposed to the grayish-brown, scaly bark of white oaks. Examples of white oaks include bur, white, English, chinkapin, and post oak. Red oaks include pin, red, black and Shumard oak.

Although the white oaks tend to have sweeter acorn meats than the reds, all oaks may have to be treated to leach out some of the tannin. To do this, place shelled acorns in a saucepan and cover them with water. Bring the water to a boil. Change the water when it becomes yellow with tannin. Repeat until the water remains clear. After the tannins have been removed, drain the water and place the meats on a cookie sheet and dry slowly in the oven on low heat. Taste test to make sure the tannins have been removed and the nuts are sweet. (WU)

**Contributors:** Ward Upham, Extension Associate

---

To view Upcoming Events: [http://tinyurl.com/fswqe](http://tinyurl.com/fswqe)

**Horticulture 2011 E-mail Subscription**

For questions or further information contact: wupham@ksu.edu

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service