Video of the Week: Planting a Tree

UPCOMING EVENTS

K-State to host PLANET Student Career Days March 22-25

Kansas State University is hosting the 36th annual Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) Student Career Days (SCD) on the campus in Manhattan, KS, March 22 – 25, 2012. SCD is an annual three-day competition and networking event for students enrolled in interior and exterior horticulture programs at two- and four-year colleges and universities. This will be the first time for the event to be hosted in our region.

K-State’s Horticulture, Forestry, and Recreation Resources Department will welcome approximately 900 college students from 65 colleges and universities for this magnificent horticultural event that also features the world’s largest green industry career fair. The event brings together green industry leaders and professionals with top horticulture students. Each year, a different school hosts this event. This gives the participants a chance to see different parts of the country and increases the level of difficulty for some of the outdoor competitions. Student Career Days provides green industry companies with unparalleled opportunities to meet and recruit next-generation green industry superstars.

In 2011, 62 (two others were FFA schools, but they did compete) college teams, a total of 876 students, participated in 28 individual and team competitions, including tree climbing, paver/hardscape installation, wood construction, plant identification, sales presentation, exterior/interior design, irrigation troubleshooting, landscape construction and maintenance estimating, skid steer, personnel management, and small engine repair, just to name a few.

In order to help make this event possible requires approximately 250 volunteers. We are reaching out to our local and regional turf and landscape professionals to help make this year’s event successful. Volunteers will be needed in a variety of capacities, from directing students to their
various events to helping set up such competitive events as irrigation assembly, paver installation, and wood construction.

PLANET is an international association serving lawn care professionals, landscape management, design/build/installation professionals, irrigation and water management and interior plantscapers. PLANET SCD would not be possible without the support and sponsorship from numerous industry leaders.

To learn more about this event and to register on line as a volunteer, please use this website http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=1021 Please feel free to contact either Greg Davis, 785-532-1417, gdavis@ksu.edu or Cathie Lavis, 785-532-1433, clavis@ksu.edu.

Orchid Show

The Kansas Orchid Society is hosting the Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Association Show from April 27-29 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 400 W. Waterman, Wichita. Admission to the show and sales area is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Friday, April 27 and Saturday, April 28 and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 29. Hundreds of orchids of all types will be on display. Ten vendors from all over the U.S. and one from Ecuador will have plants and supplies for sale.

VEGETABLES

Pea Planting Time

If you are tired of winter and hunger for spring, try planting peas as soon as the soil dries and the soil temperature reaches 40 degrees. We have several types of peas we can plant in Kansas. Probably the most common is the shelling pea and the old standard in this group is Little Marvel. Though Little Marvel is still on our recommended list, we have a number of others that do well including Green Arrow, Knight, Maestro, Burpeeana, and Mr. Big. All of these are early maturing types that allow us to harvest a crop before the hot weather arrives and stops production. Snow peas are those commonly used in stir-fry that have a crisp edible pod. Recommended varieties include Dwarf Grey Sugar, Mammoth Melting Sugar, and Snow Green. Sugar snap peas resemble shelling peas but have a thick, fleshy pod and can be eaten fresh, steamed or cooked. Like snow peas, they are not shelled but eaten pod and all. We recommend Sugar Bon, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar Snap, and Sugar Sprint.
Peas should be planted shallow, about one-half inch deep, to encourage rapid germination and emergence. Seed in the row should be spaced 2 inches apart. Many people often plant two rows 6 to 8 inches apart so the floppy plants can support one another. For some older varieties, this may not be enough. They may need trellising to support the growing vines. Fencing may be needed to keep rabbits away. (WU)

**Time to Plant Potatoes Approaching**

St. Patrick’s Day is just around the corner, so it is time to get seed potatoes in the ground. Actually any time from mid- to late-March is fine for potato planting. Be sure to buy seed potatoes rather than using those bought for cooking. Seed potatoes are certified disease free and have plenty of starch to sprout as quickly as soil temperatures allow. Most seed potatoes can be cut into four pieces, though large potatoes may yield more, and small less. Each seed piece should be between 1.5 and 2 ounces to insure there is enough energy for germination. Each pound of potatoes should yield 8 to 10 seed pieces.

Cut the seed 2 to 3 days before planting so freshly cut surfaces have a chance to suberize, or toughen, and form a protective coating. Storing seed in a warm location during suberization will speed the process. Plant each seed piece about 1 to 2 inches deep and 8 to 12 inches apart in rows. Though it is important to plant potatoes in March, emergence is slow. It is often mid- to late-April before new plants poke their way through the soil. As the potatoes grow, pull soil up to the base of the plants. New potatoes are borne above the planted seed piece, and it is important to keep sunlight from hitting the new potatoes. Exposed potatoes will turn green and produce a poisonous substance called solanine. Keeping the potatoes covered will prevent this. (WU)

**FRUIT**

**Strawberry Planting and Mulch Removal**

New strawberry plantings should be set early in the growing season so that mother plants become established while the weather is still cool. The mother plants develop a strong root system during this cool period when soil temperatures are between 65 and 80 degrees F. The most appropriate planting time is mid- to late March in southern Kansas and late March to mid-April in the northern areas of the state.

Later in the season, runners and daughter plants develop. The earlier the mother plants are set,
the sooner the first daughter plant will be formed and take root. These first daughter plants will be the largest plants at the end of the growing season and will bear more berries per plant the following spring.

When planting is done later, the higher temperatures stress the mother plants resulting in reduced growth, weaker mother plants and delays in daughter plant formation. Fewer and smaller daughter plants produce fewer berries, resulting in a smaller crop.

Remove all flowers during the first year. New plants have limited energy reserves that need to go toward establishing the mother plants and making runners rather than making fruit. If fruit is allowed to develop the first year, the amount of fruit produced the second year is drastically reduced due to smaller, weaker daughter plants.

Research in Illinois has shown that the straw mulch should be removed from strawberry plants when the soil temperature is about 40 degrees F. Fruit production drops if the mulch remains as the soil temperature increases. There are likely to be freezing temperatures that will injure or kill blossoms, so keep the mulch between rows to conveniently recover the berries when freezing temperatures are predicted. (WU)

**TURFGRASS**

**Core Aeration of Cool-Season Lawns**

If you are planning to core-aerate your tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass lawn this spring, reserve a machine now so you can get the job done in March or early-April. Coring early in the spring gives cool-season lawns a chance to recover before crabgrass and other warm-season annual weeds start to germinate.

Core-aerating is one of the best things you can do for your lawn. It relieves compaction, hastens thatch decomposition, increases water infiltration and helps promote better root growth. Pay attention to the soil moisture level when coring. The soil should easily crumble when worked between the fingers. If it is too wet, the machine's tines will plug and it will merely punch holes in the wet soil, which increases compaction. If it is too dry, the tines will not be able to penetrate very deeply. (WU)

**FLOWERS**
Fertilizing Perennial Flowers

Most flowering perennials are not heavy feeders, and once established, may not need fertilizing every year. However, a soil test or visual symptoms will help determine plant needs. Weak plants with light green to yellowish foliage will probably benefit from a nitrogen-containing fertilizer. In the absence of a soil test, apply a 10-10-10 or similar fertilizer at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Fertilizer should be applied as growth begins in the spring. Perennials that tend to need more fertilizer than the average perennials include astilbe, chrysanthemum, delphinium, lupines, and summer phlox. A second application during summer may be helpful for these plants. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

I Dream of Spring Flowering Trees

There are a lot of great options to choose from in the world of spring-flowering trees. Crabapples, redbud, and ornamental pears immediately come to mind, but I’d like to divert your attention to two less known trees.

White fringetree (Chionanthus virginicus) and Japanese Tree Lilac (Syringa reticulata) are incredible bloomers in the spring. Nothing heralds the return of the spring season more gracefully than these two small trees. In fact, I distinctly remember relishing the slow shower of white petals from a fringetree on my walk to the office last spring. The experience lasted two or three weeks and I counted the days I had left to enjoy it. The individual flowers are a bit star-shaped and they flutter to the ground beautifully.

Japanese tree lilac has a similar display of creamy white flowers, though the arrangement is distinctively different from that of the fringetree. The flowers on a Japanese tree lilac are arranged in a very large panicle. A panicle is essentially a branched cluster of flowers and in this case the panicles are anywhere from 12 to 15 inches tall and wide. I think they look a bit like the tip of a painter’s brush (albeit a huge brush). There will be quite a few of these floral displays on each tree.
Both trees remain small (12 to 20 feet) and have fragrant flowers, though the pleasantness of the fragrance on the Japanese tree lilac is debatable. They flower best in full sun and require a moderate to minimal amount of water after establishment. Fringetree also has fleshy, blue/purple, egg-shaped fruit in August that are ornamental and good for attracting birds.

Cultivars of Japanese tree lilac you might find at the garden center include ‘Summer Snow’ (compact, rounded form) and ‘Ivory Silk’ which flowers heavily at a young age. This tree is the toughest of the lilacs and boasts disease resistance and pH adaptability.

As you plan your spring garden, look for white flowers at the nursery. I’m sure one of these plants will catch your eye! (CB)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Wild Garlic, Wild Onion and Star-of-Bethlehem**

Wild garlic (Allium vineale) and wild onion (Allium canadense) are two closely related plants that can become weed problems in home lawns and landscapes. Though wild garlic and wild onion look much alike, each has an odor that is characterized by its name – wild garlic smells like garlic and wild onion smells like onion. These plants are perennials that can also reproduce by seeds and aerial bulbils. Bulbils form at the top of the stem and are oval and smooth. Wild garlic also reproduces by underground bulb offsets, but wild onion does not. Both species produce a clump of plants that is unsightly in a lawn. Control recommendations are the same although we now have a couple of new additions to our arsenal.

Traditionally we have used 2,4-D or 2,4-D + MCPP + Dicamba (i.e., Trimec, Weed-Out, Weed-B-Gon). These products should be sprayed during March on a day that is at least 50 degrees. Newer products are Weed Free Zone and Speed Zone. Both are combination products that contain a formulation of Trimec plus carfentrazone. These are more active at temperatures near 50 degrees, which is lower than traditional products. A spreader-sticker added to the spray should help any of these products be more effective. At times, the spreader-sticker is already mixed into the weed killer; no additional amount is needed. These herbicides are also effective on dandelions.

Unfortunately, we have not had a good chemical control for star-of-Bethlehem in the past. That is now changing. A study from the University of Tennessee showed that Dismiss (sulfentrazone) gave excellent control of Star-of-Bethlehem with a single application. Other products with sulfentrazone such as Q-4 and Surge may need repeat applications. On the homeowner side, Spectracide Weed Stop 2X contains sulfentrazone but will require repeat applications.
Another second study from Virginia Tech showed 96% control of star-of-Bethlehem one month after treatment by using Quicksilver, a formulation of carfentrazone at the rate of 4 fl. oz per acre. Quicksilver is a commercial only product, and therefore is not available to homeowners. However, both Speed Zone and Weed Free Zone contain carfentrazone and may have activity. Remember to add a spreader-sticker. (WU)

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