Horticulture 2012 Newsletter
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Video of the Week:  Amaryllis for Winter Color

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kansas Turfgrass Conference
December 4, 5 & 6, 2012  (Kansas Expocentre, Topeka)
   Don’t forget to take advantage of the pre-registration rates and sign up for the Kansas Turf
Conference in Topeka on December 4-6.
   The conference has been approved for commercial pesticide recertification credit hours,
GCSAA education credits and International Society of Arboriculture CEUs.
   To download a copy of the conference brochure, or to register online, go to
http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-conference.html

ORNAMENTALS

Cladoptosis on Sawtooth Oak

Bob Neier, one of our horticulture agents in Sedgwick County, has
reported seeing cladoptosis on Sawtooth oak in the Wichita area.
Cladoptosis occurs when a tree sheds branches. This is very
similar to the shedding of leaves in that in both cases, an
abscission layer forms that allows the leaf or branch to drop
cleanly. There is no tearing as the leaf or branch breaks free. On
branches, the abscission scar resembles a socket and the attaching
part of the branch resembles a ball.

   Though sometimes due to shading or injury, in this case, the
trigger for branch shedding appears to be a reaction to drought. Be especially vigilant about
watering such trees before winter if the soil is dry. See the accompanying article on watering
landscape plants. (WU)
Water Landscape Plants

To protect perennial plants from winter damage, it is important that they go into winter with moist soil. Many areas of Kansas have been exceptionally dry this growing season. Couple that with the weather we had last year and the previous winter and many plants are under high levels of stress. Watering now will help alleviate at least some of that stress. If these plants do not go into the winter with moist soil, many may not survive. Others may appear to survive the winter and leaf out but then die suddenly when the weather turns hot in June.

Although all perennial plants benefit from watering when soils are dry in the fall, it is especially important for evergreens because moisture is easily lost from the foliage. Newly planted trees and shrubs also are more at risk due to limited root systems. Even trees and shrubs planted the last 2 to 3 years are more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant.

A good, deep watering with moisture reaching at least a foot down into the soil is much better than several light sprinklings that just wet the top portions of the soil. A deep watering will ensure that the majority of roots have access to water. Roots that actually absorb water are killed when the soil temperature reaches 28 degrees F. Those near the surface do not last long in our Kansas winters. We must rely on roots that are deeper, and provide moisture for them to absorb. Watering depth can be checked with a metal rod or wooden dowel. Either instrument will easily penetrate moist soil but will stop when dry soil is reached. (WU)

FLOWERS

Poinsettia Care

Modern poinsettia varieties stay attractive for a long time if given proper care. Place your poinsettia in a sunny window or the brightest area of the room, but don't let it touch cold windowpanes. The day temperature should be 65 to 75 degrees F. with 60 to 65 degrees at night. Temperatures above 75 degrees will shorten bloom life, and below 60 degrees may cause root rot. Move plants away from windows at night or draw drapes between them to avoid damage from the cold.

Poinsettias are somewhat finicky in regard to soil moisture. Avoid overwatering because poinsettias do not like "wet feet." On the other hand, if the plant is allowed to wilt, it will drop some leaves. So how do you maintain proper moisture? Examine the potting soil daily by sticking your finger about one-half inch deep into the soil. If it is dry to this depth, the plant needs water. When it becomes dry to the touch, water the plant with lukewarm water until some water runs out of the drainage hole, then discard the drainage water. (WU)
Garden Soil Preparation — It's Not Too Late

Autumn is an excellent time to add organic materials and till garden soils. Winter can still be a good time to take care of this chore as long as the soil isn’t frozen. It is far wiser to till now than to wait until spring when cold, wet conditions can limit your ability to work soils easily. Working soil when it is wet destroys soil structure and results in hard clods that are very slow to break down. On the other hand, dry soil may need to be watered so it can be more easily tilled. Be sure to wait several days after watering to let soil moisture levels moderate. You want the soil moist, not wet or dry, when tilling.

There is a limit to how much organic material such as leaves can be added in one application. Normally, a layer 2 inches deep is adequate with 5 to 6 inches being the maximum that can be added at one time. Shredding the material before application encourages faster and more complete decomposition due to increased surface area. Remember, soil preparation is an important key to a successful garden. (WU)

Horseradish

Horseradish is ready to dig after a hard freeze kills the foliage (usually November or December). The large roots can be harvested while smaller, pencil sized roots can be cut in 6-8 inch long sections as 'seed' or 'sets' for next year's crop which are then immediately re-planted. Another option is to leave the horseradish in the ground and dig as needed. If you choose the latter option, be sure to heavily mulch the area so that the ground doesn’t freeze.

To use horseradish, peel the large, fleshy roots and cut into sections. Use a blender or food processor to chop the roots along with a small amount of water and a couple of ice cubes. Vinegar or lemon juice is added to stop the process that produces the “bite” of horseradish. Add immediately after blending for a mild flavor or wait up to 3 minutes to give the horseradish more kick. Use 2 to 3 tablespoons of vinegar or lemon juice per cup of horseradish sauce along with ½ teaspoon of salt for flavor. Horseradish has an extremely strong odor and so you may wish to open the blender or food processor outdoors and to keep your face away from the container when opening. Store ground horseradish in a tightly sealed jar in a refrigerator until ready for use. (WU)
Monitor Indoor Plant Temperatures

Now would be a good time to check the location of foliage houseplants to be sure the plants don't get too cold this fall or winter. Plants next to windows or in entryways near outside doors are at the greatest risk. Plants sensitive to cold temperatures include Chinese evergreen (Algaonema), flamingo flower (Anthurium), croton (Codiaeum), false aralia (Dizygotheca), and ming and balfour aralia (Polyscias). Monitor and maintain temperatures above 65 degrees F for the false aralia and above 60 degrees for the rest of the list. Many other indoor plants prefer temperatures above 50 degrees. If needed, move plants away from the windows or door entrances to reduce cold temperature exposure. It may be necessary to move some plants from windowsills before shades or drapes are pulled, especially in the evening. (WU)

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To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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