Video of the Week:  Composting: What to Add

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kansas Turfgrass Conference
December 4, 5 & 6, 2012  (Kansas Expocentre, Topeka)

This conference is an excellent way to learn about turf and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, place orders with and see all the latest and greatest equipment and supplies from local and national vendors. Sessions include Basic Turfgrass, Disease, Insect, Weed Management, Golf Turf Management, Trees/Flowers/Shrubs, Sports Turf Management, Irrigation workshop and much more.

The conference has been approved for commercial pesticide recertification credit as follows:

1 Core Hour
3A - 7.5 hours
3B - 8.5 hours

GCSAA education points and International Society of Arboriculture CEUs can also be earned by attending this conference.

To download a copy of the conference brochure, or to register online, go to http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-conference.html

Great Plains Growers Conference
January 10, 11 & 12, 2013 (St. Joseph, MO)
I almost got myself in a car accident the other day. Totally my fault, too. The fall color is so distracting for a plant nerd like me!

I mostly saw red maples (*Acer rubrum*), which I think are greatly overplanted for a tree that essentially has one season of interest, and ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) trees. The ash trees are just stunning when it comes to fall color. The outer leaves become dark purple and red, moving to orange further into the canopy and finishing off with a bright yellow in the center of the canopy. It’s a bit mesmerizing, which is not necessarily a good thing when you’re on the way to daycare drop-off (but good for teachable moments). I keep intending to stop and take a photograph, but instead I just drive really slowly and admire.

I admire while I still can. Have you heard of the Emerald Ash Borer? It is an introduced pest (as of June 2002) that is slowly making its way west across the continent. And it’s killing all kinds of ash trees (tiny insects bore under the bark, essentially cutting off all of the nutrients and water to the canopy—infested trees will die within 2 years). The whole thing is reminiscent of American elms dying of Dutch Elm Disease 50 years ago. As with Dutch Elm Disease, there are ways to help protect uninfested trees. See [http://www.emeraldashborer.info/files/Multistate_EAB_Insecticide_Fact_Sheet.pdf](http://www.emeraldashborer.info/files/Multistate_EAB_Insecticide_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

Fortunately, the government has been proactive and a significant amount of federal money has been spent trying to figure out how to deal with the infestation ([www.emeraldashborer.info](http://www.emeraldashborer.info)), but the bottom line is…it’s coming (horror flick anyone?). Thus far, only Wyandotte County in eastern Kansas has a proven population. There is no need to start preventative treatments until the insect has been confirmed in your area.

So, what should we plant instead? Luckily, we’ve got lots of great options for fall color in trees. I’ll list a few here—just know that there are plenty more. Another tree (besides ash) with great multicolor is sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). If you don’t want the spiky fruit balls, there is a fruitless cultivar available (‘Rotundiloba’). Purple/red trees include the new Frontier elm (*Ulums* x ‘Frontier’) and improved ornamental callery pears (*Pyrus calleryana* ‘Aristocrat’, ‘Trinity’). Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) has spectacular bright yellow fall color.

Trees with red fall color are many, but maples and oaks have the most options. Maples include Freeman (*Acer x fremanii*), Sugar (*Acer saccharum* var. caddo ‘John Pair’—population from Caddo County!), Paperbark (*Acer griseum*—has cinnamon colored exfoliating bark, too), Amur (*Acer tataricum* subsp. *ginnala*), Japanese (*Acer palmatum*) and the ubiquitous Red (*Acer rubrum*).
There are several oaks with red fall color that are definitely worth a place in your landscape: Buckley’s Oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), Crimson Spire Oak (*Quercus rubra* ‘Crimschmidt’), Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*—good option to replace pin oaks if you are having trouble with Iron chlorosis), and Texas Red Oak (*Quercus texana*).

One last red-leaved beauty for your list that you may not have heard of is Persian Parrotia (*Parrotia persica* ‘Ruby Vase’). Sounds exotic, doesn’t it? My bet is that your neighbors probably don’t have one, so if you want plant nerds like me to drive by really slow next year, you just might be able to stump them with a Persian Parrotia. (CRB)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Draining Hoses and Irrigation Lines**

Hoses and shallow irrigation lines may be damaged over the winter if water is not drained. If there is a main shut-off valve for the system, close it and then run through the zones to make sure any pressure has a chance to bleed off. Lawn irrigation systems usually have shallow lines. Though some lines may be self-draining, check to be sure there are no manual drains. If so, they should be opened. Be sure to map them so they can be closed next spring before the system is pressurized.

Drain hoses by stretching them out and coiling them for storage. Water will drain as you pull the hose toward you for coiling. Store in a protected place. UV light can make hoses brittle over time. (WU)

**Keep Compost Pile Moist**

This is the time of year when there are lots of materials available to compost. Remember that the compost needs to be kept moist so that the bacteria and fungi can break down the raw materials. Use a sprinkler to soak through the pile to the center. Allow the pile to drain. The goal is for the pile to remain moist; not waterlogged. Edges will dry out the quickest and may need a light sprinkling from time to time.

If you are interested in composting but don’t know how it is done, see our video at [http://tinyurl.com/c8aw6lk](http://tinyurl.com/c8aw6lk) and/or our publication at [http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc1757.ashx](http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc1757.ashx) (WU)
Roasting Pumpkin Seeds

Now that Halloween is past you may be wondering what to do with the pumpkins that were used to decorate for the holiday. Consider roasting the seeds before freezing temperatures destroys the pumpkin fruit. Cut open the pumpkin and remove the seeds and stringy material. Seeds should be washed and dried and the “strings” discarded. Toss the seeds with a little oil before roasting. Flavor can be enhanced by adding a sprinkling of salt to the oiled seeds. Seeds can then be spread on a cookie sheet and roasted for about 25 minutes at 325 degrees F. Times may vary depending on the size and moisture content of the seed. Seeds are done when they turn a golden brown. If seeds are not eaten immediately, store in a zip closure bag in the refrigerator. (WU)

Stratification

Most woody plants produce seed that will not germinate immediately after harvest. Normally this is because of one of three reasons:
- Seed is immature and needs more time to develop;
- A mechanical barrier is keeping water from reaching the seed;
- A physiological block is inhibiting germination.

Immature seed needs time to complete development and does not require special treatment. The water barrier and/or physiological block require special treatments to prepare the seed for germination. One such treatment is stratification. Stratification is a process whereby seed is given the moisture and temperature conditions normally found in its natural environment. Seeds that are shed in early fall often require a warm, moist stratification period before the seed will germinate. Those that drop later in the fall may respond to cool, moist conditions. In Kansas, the most common stratification needed is the cool, moist type. The amount of time required for stratification varies with the plant species. For example, apple requires 75 days, red oak needs 30 to 45 days and sugar maple should have 60 to 90 days. All three of these species require cool, moist conditions. If unsure of the amount of time required for a specific species, 3 to 4 months usually is sufficient.

For cool stratification, temperatures just above freezing are best, with a range between 35 and 45 degrees considered ideal. Temperatures higher and lower than this are less effective. The minimum
temperature at which stratification occurs is reported to be 23 degrees, and the maximum is 62 degrees.

Stratification should be done in a medium that is moist but not soggy. If there is too little moisture, the seed coat does not take up the water needed. Too much reduces the amount of oxygen available to the seed. If peat moss is used, a ratio of 1 or 1 1/4 parts water to 1 part air-dried peat moss by weight is recommended. When wetting peat moss, use warm water, which is absorbed more quickly than cold.

Small amounts of seed can be stratified by placing the seed in moist peat moss inside a plastic bag and placing the bag in the refrigerator. Small seeds can be placed between two sheets of cheesecloth so they are not lost in the medium. Larger amounts of seed can be placed in a plastic container or wooden box. Place layers of seed between layers of moist sand or a mixture of sand and peat moss. Bury the container outside so the top is even with the soil surface, and cover with leaves or straw. Alternatively, the container may be placed in an unheated garage or root cellar. (WU)

**Winter Care of Houseplants**

During the short days of winter, houseplant growth slows, resulting in a need to change how we care for them. Although frequent watering may have been necessary during the long days of summer, the same amount now could cause problems. Excess water fills air spaces within the soil resulting in roots that receive less oxygen than they need. Water by touch, not by calendar. If the soil is dry an inch deep, it is time to water. Be sure to add enough so that some water flows out the bottom of the pot. This will help wash out excess salts that tend to accumulate within the potting soil.

Fertilization also should be reduced. Normally, it is best to apply half the amount of fertilizer for flowering houseplants and one-fourth the amount for foliage houseplants. Too much fertilizer results in plants that become leggy and weak. Location is another factor that should be considered this time of year. Since day length is so short, houseplants may be helped by being moved to areas of the room that receive more light, such as a south-or east-facing window. Avoid placing plants where drafts from doors or direct output from heating ducts may contact them. Relative humidity also tends to be low during the winter. If you do not have a humidifier, frequent misting of the plants or placing them on water-filled trays of pebbles can help raise the humidity. (WU)

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