Horticulture 2012 Newsletter
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Video of the Week:  Planting Bulbs for Spring Color

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

ORNAMENTALS

Fall Colors of Trees

Part of the allure of fall foliage is color variation. There are many trees that turn red, purple, yellow, orange and brown. Specific plant pigments determine individual colors. Foliage derives its normal green color from chlorophyll, the substance that captures the energy of the sun. Other pigments produce
fall colors. Reds and purples are caused by anthocyanins, yellows by xanthophylls, and oranges by a combination of carotenes and xanthophylls. Browns are the result of tannins present in the leaf. Most of these substances are present throughout the growing season but are masked by the green color produced by chlorophyll. Anthocyanins are the exception and are produced after the chlorophyll is destroyed in the fall.

If you have ever seen pictures of New England in the fall, you have probably wondered why trees in Kansas usually do not color as well. This difference is partly because of the tree species prevalent in New England. Certain oaks and maples naturally produce good color. Coloring also is influenced by the weather.

Warm, sunny days and cool nights are ideal for good color. The sunny days encourage photosynthesis and, thus, sugar accumulation in the leaves. As fall progresses, each leaf develops an abscission layer at the base of the petiole, or leaf stem, that prevents these sugars from being transported down the trunk to the roots for storage. This high sugar content in the leaves produces more intense colors. Cloudy days and warm nights prevent some of the sugar accumulation in the leaves and results in less vibrant colors.

Weather during other parts of the growing season also can have an effect. Heavy rains in the early spring or hot, dry weather during the summer can both have a deleterious effect on fall color.

The length of time a tree maintains fall color also depends on weather. Reds, yellows and oranges are short-lived when trees undergo frosts and freezes. (WU)

Seasonal Joy

It’s fall! How many different ways can I say that? “It’s fall!” [relief]; “It’s fall!” [jubilation]; “It’s fall! [Praise the Lord!]

There’s something about the changing of every season that brings out the gardener, or at least the garden appreciator, in all of us. Spring brings new life with plants of every type peeking out: - forsythia, daffodils, lilacs. Summer is for planting new landscapes and vegetable gardens. Fall is for hayrides, pumpkin patches and bountiful displays of harvest. And winter? Winter is for planning next year’s garden (or garden visits) and enjoying holiday displays of evergreens.

Every season brings new joy, but fall is my favorite. How about you?

About a month ago, in a late evening burst of energy, I decided to rip out my spring/summer container gardens because they were getting tired and leggy. The next day my 2-year-old son Henry and I decided to pay a visit to a local nursery to buy some pansies. It seems that everyone has been late getting their pansies out this year. Maybe it was just too hot for too long and
they didn’t think we would be ready for it. In any case, they didn’t have any pansies but they did have some outstanding looking mums. Did you know mums come in almost every color imaginable? They are also perennials, meaning they will survive most winters and come back repeatedly. But they probably won’t ever look as good as that first year because shaping them into perfect balls takes a lot of maintenance during production. That is why I think they are better thought of as seasonal color like annuals.

I was looking at the mums, not really thinking about taking any home and boom, I got caught. The cultivar name of the plant I was looking at was ‘Spicy Cheryl’ (orange). How can you not take home a plant with your name on it? I took three and only later found out that one was labeled ‘Jolly Cheryl’ (red). Oh, well. I still like them a lot and they bring me seasonal joy.

What brings you seasonal joy in the fall? I’m betting it has something to do with orange/red/purple fall color on trees and shrubs, pumpkins, hay rides, the fair, crisp mornings, brisk evenings and beautiful sunsets.

Some years we didn’t have great fall color, though (usually a result of unfavorable environmental conditions: too dry, too hot, etc.). What are you going to do for a pop of seasonal joy? The pansies are finally in stock at local nurseries now. Go get some, and while you’re at it, add some mums, kale, and maybe some asters and an annual grass or late summer perennial. And goodness knows we have a surplus of dry corn stalks this year if you really want to go big with some decorations.

An interesting sidenote about pansies - - The name pansy comes from the French word “pensee,” which means “thought” and was so named because the flower resembles a human face. In August it nods forward as if deep in thought. Also, among its many common names is Stepmother Flower. According to German and Scottish folktales, pansies were called stepmother because the large lower petal is the mother, the two large petals to either side of her are the well-dressed daughters, and the two small upper petals are poor stepdaughters. Scary tales were told to young children as older children plucked off corresponding petals. Not your average campfire story is it?

So the moral of the story is to get to a garden center for some seasonal joy! You might just find an unexpected nugget of happiness around the corner. (CRB)

**VEGETABLES**

**Last Tomatoes of the Season**

Cold nights are increasing in frequency with some areas already experiencing frost. If you have tomatoes, you may have some that are approaching maturity. Leave them on the vine until mature or until a frost is forecast. Tomatoes will ripen off the vine but must have reached a certain phase of maturity called the ‘mature green stage.’ These tomatoes are mature enough
harvest but not yet red. Look for full-sized tomatoes with a white, star-shaped zone at the bottom end of the fruit.

When harvesting fruit before a frost, separate tomatoes into three groups for storage: those that are mostly red, those that are just starting to turn, and those that are still green. Discard tomatoes with defects such as rots or breaks in the skin. Place the tomatoes on cardboard trays or cartons but use layers of newspaper to separate fruit if stacked. Occasionally a tomato may start to rot and leak juice. The newspaper will keep the juice from contacting nearby or underlying fruit. Store groups of tomatoes at as close to 55 degrees as possible until needed. (WU)

**Work Garden Soil in the Fall**

Fall is the preferred time to prepare garden soil for next spring’s vegetable garden. Spring is often wet making it difficult to work soil without forming clods that remain the rest of the season. Fall usually is drier allowing more time to work the soil when it is at the correct soil moisture content. Even if you work soil wet in the fall and form clods, the freezing and thawing that takes place in the winter will break them down, leaving a mellow soil the following spring.

Insects often hide in garden debris. If that debris is worked into the soil, insects will be less likely to survive the winter. Diseases are also less likely to overwinter if old plants are worked under. Also, garden debris will increase the organic matter content of the soil. Working the debris into the soil is easier if you mow the old vegetable plants several times to reduce the size of the debris.

Fall is an excellent time to add organic matter. Not only are organic materials usually more available in the fall (leaves, rotten hay or silage, grass clippings) but fresher materials can be added in the fall than in the spring because there is more time for them to break down before planting. As a general rule, add 2 inches of organic material to the surface of the soil and till it in. Be careful not to over till. You should end up with particles the size of grape nuts or larger. If you work garden soil into the consistency of dust, you have destroyed the soil structure. (WU)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Amending Soils with Sand**

Sand is sometimes suggested as an amendment material for clay soils. However, there is good reason to be cautious about using sand. In order for sand to be effective in breaking up a clay soil, sand grains must touch one another so there are pore spaces between grains that can hold air and/or water. If the grains do not touch, the clay fills in all the voids between the sand particles leaving no room for pores. This is the same principle used to make concrete and the result is somewhat the same. You end up
making a bad situation worse.

So how much sand does it take for it to be effective? Normally, we consider about 80 percent sand to be sufficient. In most cases this makes the use of sand impractical. The addition of organic matter is a much better choice. (WU)

**Using Silt from a Pond**

Many people have cleaned out farm ponds this year as they were dry from the extreme drought. So what do you do with the silt? It can be used as fill, of course, but is it OK for growing plants? Pond silt has a couple of problems in regard to plant growth. The first is that all soil structure has been destroyed. In other words the soil has collapsed so that there are very few large pores to allow water to soak in quickly or for oxygen to penetrate deeply into the soil.

So how do we rebuild soil structure? We rebuild it by adding organic matter. Actually it is the gums and glues given off by microorganisms as they break down organic matter that gives soil better structure. If possible, add organic matter now if you wish to plant next spring. Sources of organic matter would include old rotten hay, rotted silage, leaf mold and peat moss. Add 2 inches of this material to the surface of the soil and mix it in.

The second problem with this soil is a lack of nutrients. Add a complete, balanced fertilizer to the soil and till it in before planting. Shoot for about 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. For example, add 7.5 pounds of a 13-13-13 per 1000 square feet. (WU)

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