Horticulture 2013 Newsletter
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Video of the Week:  Oak Trees, A Good Choice for Years to Come

FLOWERS

Time to Plant Spring-flowering Bulbs

Late September through October is an excellent time to plant spring-flowering bulbs such as crocus, tulips, and daffodils. These plants need to develop roots in the fall and must meet a chilling requirement over the winter in order to bloom in the spring.

Choose a planting site that has full sun to partial shade. The ideal soil would be a sandy loam, but even poor soils can be used if organic material such as peat moss, compost, or aged bark is mixed in. For example, a heavy clay can be amended by mixing in one-third to one-half organic material. Soil pH should be between 6.0 and 7.0.

Bulbs need good aeration as well as good drainage for proper development. It is best if the bulbs are given 12 inches of prepared soil. If one-third organic material were added, this would require mixing 4 inches of organic material with 8 inches of soil. Incorporate about 3 pounds of a complete fertilizer such as a 5-10-5 per 100 square feet during preparation or fertilize according to soil test.

Planting depths vary depending on the size of the bulbs. For example, tulips and hyacinths are set about 6 inches deep, and daffodils are put 6 to 8 inches deep. Smaller bulbs are planted shallower. As a rule of thumb, bulbs are planted two to three times as deep as their width. Planting depth is the distance from the bottom of the bulb to the top of the soil. Large bulbs are normally spaced 4 to 6 inches apart, and small bulbs about 1 to 2 inches. Planting in clumps or irregular masses produces a better display than planting singly.

After placing the bulbs at the proper depth, replace half the soil and add water. This will settle the soil around the bulbs and provide good bulb/soil contact. Add the remaining soil and water again. Although there will be no top growth in the fall, the roots are developing, so soil needs to
be kept moist but not wet. Mulch can be added after the soil has frozen to prevent small bulbs from being heaved out of the soil by alternate freezing and thawing. (Ward Upham)

**Fertilize Spring-flowering Bulbs**

October is the month that existing beds of spring-flowering bulbs such as daffodils and tulips are fertilized. If bulbs have been fertilized in the past, there is often plenty of phosphorus and potassium in the soil. It is best to use a soil test to be certain. If the soil needs phosphorus and potassium, use a complete fertilizer (such as 10-10-10, 9-9-6, etc.) at the rate of 2.5 lbs. per 100 square feet. This would equal 1 rounded teaspoon per square foot. If phosphorus and potassium are not needed, blood meal makes an excellent fertilizer. It should be applied at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet or 1 teaspoon per square foot. Turf fertilizers such as a 27-3-3 or 30-3-3 can be used, but cut the rate by a third. (Ward Upham)

**TURFGRASS**

**Weeds in Lawns**

This has been a terrible year for lawns and weed control. The extreme wet conditions in some parts of the state have caused our weed preventers to run out of steam before they normally do, resulting in late infestations of crabgrass. Fortunately, crabgrass is a warm-season annual that will be killed with the first frost. It is not worth trying to kill crabgrass this late. Hopefully, we will have a more normal season next year allowing our weed preventers to work as they should.

Another weed encouraged by excess rain is yellow nutsedge. Nutsedge is not a grass but a sedge (hence the name) and most grass herbicides have no effect. Although it is late to try to control nutsedge now, you may wish to try halosulfuron-methyl (SedgeHammer) next year when the nutsedge reaches the 3 to 8 leaf stage of growth. Be sure to add the label-suggested non-ionic surfactant to the spray. (Ward Upham)
**ORNAMENTALS**

**Preventing Sunscald on Thin-Barked Trees**

Many young, smooth, thin-barked trees such as honey locusts, fruit trees, ashes, oaks, maples, lindens, and willows are susceptible to sunscald and bark cracks. Sunscald normally develops on the south or southwest side of the tree during late winter. Sunny, warm winter days may heat the bark to relatively high temperatures. Research done in Georgia has shown that the southwest side of the trunk of a peach tree can be 40 degrees warmer than shaded bark. This warming action can cause a loss of cold hardiness of the bark tissue resulting in cells becoming active. These cells then become susceptible to lethal freezing when the temperature drops at night. The damaged bark tissue becomes sunken and discolored in late spring. Damaged bark will eventually crack and slough off.

Trees often recover but need TLC — especially watering during dry weather. Applying a light colored tree wrap from the ground to the start of the first branches can protect recently planted trees. This should be done in October to November and removed the following March. Failure to remove the tree wrap in the spring can prove detrimental to the tree. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Harvesting and Curing Black Walnut**

Black walnuts are ready to be harvested when the hull can be dented with your thumb. You can also wait until the nuts start falling from the tree. Either way it is important to hull walnuts soon after harvest. If not removed, the hull will leach a stain through the nut and into the meat. The stain will not only discolor the meats but also give them an off flavor.

There are several ways to hull walnuts including running them through a corn sheller or pounding each nut through a hole in a board. The hole must be big enough for the nut but smaller than the hull. An easier way is to run over the nuts with a lawn tractor. This will break the hull but not crack the nut.

Note that walnut hulls contain a dye that will stain concrete, your hands or about anything else it touches. Wear gloves as the stain is almost impossible to remove. Wash hulled nuts by
spreading them out on the lawn or on a wire mesh and spraying them with water or placing them in a tub of water. If you place them in a tub, the good nuts should sink. Those that float are probably not well-filled with kernels. Next, dry the nuts by spreading them in layers no more than three deep in a cool, shady and dry place such as a garage or tool shed. Drying normally takes two weeks. (Ward Upham)

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