Video of the Week:  
Cleaning Up Your Garden for the Fall

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kansas Turf Conference in conjunction with KNLA  
December 4, 5 & 6, 2018  
Kansas Expocentre, Topeka

Mark the date to attend the Kansas Turfgrass Conference in conjunction with KNLA on December 4, 5 & 6 in Topeka.

The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf, nursery and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest equipment and supplies from local and national vendors.

The conference has been approved for Commercial pesticide recertification hours:

- 1 Core hour
- 3A - 7 hrs
- 3B - 7 hrs

International Society of Arboriculture CEUs and GCSAA education points will also be available by attending the conference.

Download a copy of the program, get exhibitor information, or register online  
http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-conference.html

Great Plains Growers Conference  
January 10-12, 2019  
St. Joseph, MO  
https://www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org/

ORNAMENTALS

Water Landscape Plants Before Winter
Many parts of Kansas have seen some good rains, and even snow, this fall. However, if your area has been dry, watering now will be important to help alleviate moisture stress.

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 help ensure that the majority of roots have access to water. Regardless of the watering method used, soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep. Use a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. The tool will stop when it hits dry ground.

Although all perennial plants benefit from moist soils before winter, it is especially important for newly planted trees and shrubs due to limited root systems. Even trees and shrubs planted within the last 2 to 3 years are more sensitive to drought than a well-established plant. Evergreens are also more at risk because moisture is lost from the foliage through the winter.

Trees or shrubs planted within the last year can be watered inexpensively with a 5-gallon bucket. Drill a small hole (1/8") in the side of the bucket near the bottom. Fill the bucket and let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Once empty, move the bucket to the other side of the tree. Refill the bucket once more, and you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted two to three years ago will require more water.

A perforated soaker hose is a good way to water a newly established bed or foundation plantings. However, soaker hoses are notorious for non-uniform watering. In other words, you often receive too much water from one part of the hose and not enough from another. Hooking both the beginning and the end of the soaker hose to a Y-adapter helps equalize the pressure and therefore provide a more uniform watering. The specific parts you need are shown in the photo above and include the soaker hose, Y-adapter and female to female connector. It is also helpful if the Y-adapter has shut off valves so the volume of flow can be controlled. Too high a flow rate can allow water to run off rather than soak in.

On larger trees, the soaker hose can circle the trunk at a distance within the dripline of the tree but at least ½ the distance to the dripline. The dripline of the tree is outermost reach of the branches. On smaller trees, you may circle the tree several times so that only soil which has tree roots will be watered.

If using a soaker hose, note the time watering was started. Check frequently to determine the amount of time it takes for water to reach 12 inches. From then on, you can water “by the clock.” Use a kitchen oven timer so you remember to move the hose or shut off the faucet. If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of the tree to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.
Even if we have a warm, dry winter, watering once per month should be adequate. (Ward Upham)

**FRUIT**

**Winterizing Strawberry Plants**

Winter can be a difficult time for strawberries in Kansas. Plants need time to become adjusted to cold weather and will gradually become more cold resistant as fall progresses. Strawberry plants are able to withstand colder temperatures in the middle of the winter than in the fall before they have gone through much cold weather. For example, if temperatures suddenly plummet below 20 degrees F before the plants harden to the cold, they can be severely damaged. A drop to 15 degrees F may kill them. Hardened plants can withstand such temperatures with ease.

Normally, strawberries should be mulched for the winter around Thanksgiving. Mulching plants helps protect strawberries not only from low temperatures but also from heaving damage. Heaving damage occurs when the alternate freezing and thawing common in Kansas winters heave plants out of the ground where the roots are exposed and the plants die from lack of water.

Wheat straw makes good mulch if it is clean (free from weed seed and wheat kernels). The straw should be spread over the plants to a depth of 3 inches. Shake the slabs of straw apart so there are no large compressed chunks. This straw mulch not only helps protect the plants over winter but can also help avoid damage from late spring frosts by delaying blooming a few days in the spring. Mulch should be removed gradually in the spring as plants begin new growth. Remove enough so leaves can be seen.

Leaving some mulch in place keeps the berries off the ground and conserves moisture. Also, mulch left in the aisles helps protect pickers from muddy conditions. (Ward Upham)

**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 window panes. 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 drafty 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. (Ward Upham)

**Are Poinsettias Poisonous?**

At times, an old time rumor is resurrected that poinsettias are poisonous. This is NOT true. Though there may be an allergic reaction to the milky sap, there has never been a recorded case of poisoning. This rumor has been so persistent that members of the Society of American Florists have sought to dispel it by eating poinsettia leaves for the press.

In the 1985 AMA Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants, the poinsettia "has been found to produce either no effect (orally or topically) or occasional cases of vomiting. This plant does not contain the irritant diterpenes" which is the toxin in other members of the genus Euphorbia to which poinsettia belongs. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Ashes in the Garden**

You may have heard that using wood ashes on your garden can help make the soil more fertile. Though ashes do contain significant amounts of potash, they contain little phosphate and no nitrogen. Most Kansas soils are naturally high in potash and do not need more. Also, wood ashes will raise the pH of our soils, often a drawback in Kansas where soils tend toward high pH anyway. Therefore, wood ashes add little benefit, and may harm, many Kansas soils. In most cases it is best to get rid of them. (Ward Upham)

**Storing Power Equipment for the Winter**

Late fall or early winter is a good time to service power equipment such as mowers, tillers and garden tractors. Run the equipment out of gas or treat the existing gas with a stabilizer as untreated gas can deteriorate over time. If using a stabilizer, run the engine long enough for untreated gas in the carburetor bowl to be burned and replaced. This is also a good time to replace the oil (and filter, if present) since the engine is warm. Check and replace the spark plug if necessary. Some gardeners will also apply a light, sprayable oil into the cylinder through the spark plug hole. Check and clean air filters and replace
if necessary.

Many mowers and tillers will have a foam prefilter that can become filthy with use. If allowed to become too dirty, engines will run poorly or may not run at all. Sharpen blades, clean tines, tighten screws, replace broken parts and do all the other things needed to keep equipment in good shape. Though such maintenance takes some time and effort, it pays for itself by reducing frustration and lost time due to poorly performing equipment during a hectic spring. (Ward Upham)

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http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html

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