Video of the Week:  Protecting Roses for Winter

UPCOMING EVENTS

Turf Conference

The 71st Annual Kansas Turf & Landscape Conference will be held in-person this year on December 1 & 2 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan. The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest products and supplies from local and national vendors.

The conference has been approved for commercial pesticide recertification hours:

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

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

You can register online at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-kansas-turf-landscape-conference-registration-16732858530

Register before November 22 to receive a discounted rate

REMINDERS

1. Remove annual flowers killed by frost.
2. Can still plant spring-flowering bulbs.

ORNAMENTALS

Water Landscape Plants Before Winter if Needed

Watering now is important if you missed recent rains and soils are dry. It is important to prevent moisture stress through the winter months.

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 turned upside down or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet.
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 during the winter months.

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. 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.

If we have a normal winter, watering once before spring should be adequate. However, if the winter is warm and dry, watering once a month may be needed. (Ward Upham)

**Natural Needle Drop on Spruce, Arborvitae and Pines**

We are seeing very noticeable natural needle drop on some evergreens such as arborvitae, pines and spruce. This is a process where 2- to 4-year-old interior needles turn yellow, then brown, and eventually drop off. Those who aren't familiar with this process often are concerned about the health of the tree. This is a natural phenomenon that occurs every year and does not hurt the tree. However, some years it is much more noticeable than others especially if trees have been under stress. In most summers, the stress is due to heat and drought but this may vary depending on the year.
Be sure to check that only the older, inner needles are affected. The needles on the tips of the branches should look fine. Also, there should be no spotting or banding on the needles that are turning yellow. If spotting or banding is noted, take a sample to your local county extension office for diagnosis. You can find the location of your local office at http://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/stateandareamaps.html (Ward Upham)

FLOWERS

Winterizing Roses

Though most shrub roses are hardy in Kansas, other types of roses can be more tender. For example, the hybrid teas have certain species in their ancestry that originated in the warm climate of southern China. These roses need protection to reliably survive Kansas winters. Mound soil or compost about 8 to 10 inches high around each plant. If using soil, bring it in from another part of the garden. Do not pull it from between plants because this can damage the rose roots or make them more susceptible to cold.

Mounding is normally finished by Thanksgiving. After the ground has frozen, add a 4-inch mulch of straw, leaves or hay for further protection. More soil may be spread on top of the mulch to keep it in place. Do not add the mulch before the ground freezes or mice may invade and feed on the roses over the winter. The purpose of these coverings is not only to moderate the cold, but also to prevent warm days during the winter or early spring from stimulating growth that is tender to returning cold weather. Excessively tall canes should be pruned to a height of 36 inches and tied together to prevent them from being whipped by strong winter winds. Wind can damage the crown of the plant or loosen the surrounding soil.

Next spring, remove coverings before new growth starts. If soil was used for mounding, remove from the area so that the level of soil stays constant from year to year. Compost can be spread out around the plant and used as a mulch. Wait until after the ground thaws, or the tops may begin growing before the roots can provide water. (Ward Upham)

Amaryllis Culture

Now is the time to start amaryllis if you wish to have them in bloom for Christmas. The amaryllis is a tender bulb that is ready to bloom when purchased. The genus name for this plant is Hippeastrum, which means "horse star," an appropriate name for a plant that produces massive blooms as much as 8 to 10 inches across. These plants can produce 3 to 4 blooms on a 1- to 2-foot stem. Often, a second flower stalk follows the first at about the time the flowers on the first stem fade. The leaves usually start to appear when the flowers begin to open.

Amaryllis bulbs can be huge – approaching the size of a grapefruit. The larger the bulb, the larger the flowers and the more expensive the bulb. Regardless of size, amaryllis likes tight quarters. Place in a pot only 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter than the bulb. About half of the bulb should
remain exposed. Hold the bulb so the roots hang down into the pot, and add potting mix. Firm the mix around the roots carefully so that they are not snapped off. Water thoroughly and place the plant in a warm, sunny location. Amaryllis likes day temperatures in the 70s and night temperatures in the 60s. The flower bud may start to appear right away or the plant may remain dormant for a period of time, but eventually all mature bulbs do bloom. Move the plant to a cooler location and out of direct sunlight when the flower buds begin to show color so the flowers last longer. Amaryllis can remain in bloom for about a month.

Flowers should be cut off after blooming to keep the plant from expending energy to form seeds. Place the plant back in a sunny location until it is warm enough to be placed outside. Sink the pot in the soil in an area that has dappled shade. The plant can be gradually moved to sunnier locations until it receives full sun for a half day. Continue to fertilize with a balanced houseplant fertilizer as you would a normal houseplant. Bring the pot in before first frost and place in a dark location. Withhold all water so the leaves have a chance to dry completely. Leaves can then be cut off close to the top of the bulb. Amaryllis can often be left in the same pot for several years but will eventually need repotting. Again, choose a pot that is only 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter than the bulb and repeat the process described above. Offsets are normally produced by amaryllis and can be given their own pots if desired. These small bulbs have a concave side when removed but develop a round shape when given their own space. They grow quickly and can be mature enough to flower in a couple of years. (Ward Upham)

FRUIT

Figs in Kansas?

Yes, we can grow figs in Kansas. Not well, but we can grow them.

Most fig trees are only hardy to 12 to 15 degrees F though some are hardy down to 0 to 5 degrees F. Therefore top growth often will not survive our winters. However, some varieties will resprout from the roots and produce a surprisingly large “shrub” by the fall. Since fruit is borne on new wood, Kansans can often enjoy a late harvest before cold weather shuts down growth.

Many figs are self-fruitful and will bear fruit without requiring a second variety. Others require cross-pollination and therefore you must have two different varieties in order to get fruit. Read the variety descriptions to determine whether you need two different varieties for fruiting.
Choose only the hardiest varieties. Chicago Hardy, Stella, Olympic and Peter's Honey Fig were all recommended by Matt Bunch with "The Giving Grove" out of Kansas City. Florea is recommended for cold climates by One Green World. I chose Chicago Hardy and Florea for my garden.

The flowers of figs are borne inside the fruit and therefore not visible. Therefore do not be concerned with the lack of visible flowers.

Chicago Hardy and Florea fruit turn purple at maturity though the color of mature fruit varies with variety. The fruit is quite mushy when ripe and will not keep well. If you produce more fruit than you can eat, consider drying as dried fruit can keep for six to eight months.

As mentioned earlier, figs bear late in the season. This year, both my Chicago Hardy and Florea produced their first ripe fruit on October 9 even though fruit was borne much earlier. Chicago Hardy was planted last spring and Florea planted this spring and so the age of the plants may have affected how quickly fruit became ripe. I am still having fruit mature but that will likely end soon. In some years, an early freeze might mean no fruit at all. However, I grow both peaches and apricots and am used to not having fruit every year.

If you have the space, I believe figs are worth trying. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**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. (Ward Upham)

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