

Fall Brings Garden Clean-up

For a healthy garden next spring, make garden clean-up a fall routine.

Diseased plant materials should be buried deeply in the soil or disposed of in the garbage. If you're managing a compost pile so temperatures reach 140 degrees, discard diseased plant materials rather than placing them in the compost pile.

Weeds with seed should also be disposed of in the trash.

Weed seeds can survive many years in the soil and if mixed into the garden soil will provide ample weeding opportunities in future years.

Fall is an excellent time to add organic matter to the soil. Spading in a layer of leaves, grass clippings and/or compost will help provide nutrients for next year and improve the soil texture as it freezes and thaws throughout the fall and winter. Spading keeps the soil rougher

so it can absorb snow and rain.

If you can't spade by hand, rototilling is an option, but don't over do it. Over-tilling can damage the soil structure making future cultivation more difficult.

Fall is the time to fertilize your lawn, but don't add granular fertilizer to the garden. Without plants growing and absorbing the nutrients, most of the nitrogen will leach away and be wasted. (DJ)

Use Energy More Efficiently, Cut Heating Costs

Nebraskans can expect to pay more to heat their homes this winter, but there are a few ways to cut heating costs and use energy more efficiently.

The easiest way to save energy is to lower the thermostat setting. Energy is reduced about 2.5 percent for each degree of decrease. Many people compensate for a cooler environment by dressing warmer or by adjusting to the new temperature. Another option is to turn down the thermostat at night or when nobody is home or use an automatic setback thermometer.

A cooler environment will be more comfortable if drafts are eliminated. If windows rattle in the wind or curtains flutter, the weather stripping around the windows probably needs to be replaced. If weather stripping can't be done during cold weather, stuff rope caulk in the cracks, which can be removed in the spring without damaging the woodwork. Plastic interior window kits may work well and will reduce condensation on the



windows, but read directions to avoid damaging the window trim. Closing blinds or drapes during the evening also increases comfort because it keeps heat from radiating to the outside, reduces convection currents and heat loss through conduction.

Hire a qualified heating professional to service the heating system so it operates as efficiently as possible. Between maintenance, be sure to check filters — dirty filters slow down the flow of heat as well as affect air quality and efficient operation. A furnace from the 1960's or earlier can waste up to 30 percent of energy, so consider replacing older models with a modern condensing furnace or other energy-efficient designs.

Adding insulation and replacing windows are two other options, but should be done after the previous steps have been taken. Insulation is relatively inexpensive and usually will save enough energy to pay back the cost in a few years. Single-pane leaking windows can be replaced with new ones that are energy efficient. Consider double-glazed windows with a low-E coating and an inert gas filling the space between the two layers of glass. (DJ)

SOURCE: Shirley Niemeyer, Ph.D., housing and environment specialist, NU/IANR; John Merrill, housing specialist, University of Wisconsin.

Corn Grain for Swine

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It's also important to watch for mycotoxin contamination, particularly zearalenone, vomitoxin and fumonisins. Aflatoxin is seldom a problem in Nebraska, but this year could be different. Drought causes plant stress which increases the risk of mycotoxin development in the grain. The signs of mycotoxin contamination in pigs include swollen vulvas in four- to six-week old gilts, feed refusal, reduced growth performance and respiratory problems.

Keep all mycotoxin-contaminated corn out of breeding herd and starter pig diets. Mycotoxin-contaminated grain may be fed to finishing pigs as long as the mycotoxin level in the diet does not exceed the following rates: 200 ppb aflatoxin, 3 ppm zearalenone, 1 ppm vomitoxin or 5 ppm fumonisins. Minimize

stress and boost dietary nutrient density to help pigs tolerate mycotoxins in the feed. The University of Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center will analyze corn for mycotoxins. More information is found in the NU NebGuide (G00-1408) "Grain Molds and Mycotoxins in Corn."

Corn grown under drought conditions usually contains more crude protein than that grown under normal conditions. The drought-stricken corn protein content may be increased by 1 to 1.5 percentage units. However, don't use less supplemental protein in swine diets when using drought-stricken corn. As the protein content of corn increases, the lysine content (the most limiting amino acid in corn for swine) does not increase at the same rate. Pigs don't require protein in their diet, they require amino acids which are found in protein. If diets using higher

protein corn are formulated on a crude protein basis, they may be low in lysine resulting in reduced pig performance. Therefore, maintain the same level of supplemental protein in swine diets when using drought-stricken corn.

It's best to use lower test weight or lower quality corn in late finishing diets because older pigs utilize lower energy feedstuffs better than younger pigs. Consider blending lower quality and higher quality corn in finishing swine diets to reduce problems due to test weight and mycotoxins. Some producers may want to add a mycotoxin binder to diets to lessen the effects of mycotoxin consumption by pigs. (TD)

SOURCE: Duane Reese, Ph.D., swine specialist, NU/IANR

Urban Agriculture



Sales Tax on Tree Planting Services

Natural Resource Districts (NRD) that sell live plants (trees and shrubs) to individuals or businesses, are a retailer and are required to be licensed and collect and remit sales tax on the selling price of the plant material. This tax change is part of the Legislature's solution adopted during the last regular session to address the budget situation.

If the NRD sells and plants the trees, they were required Oct. 1, 2002 to collect sales tax on the total amount charged for the trees and the total amount charged for planting the trees. The charge for planting the trees is taxable regardless of whether the planting charge is separately itemized or separately

invoiced.

If the NRD sells the trees and pays a third party to plant the trees, the total amount charged for the trees and the charge for planting are taxable. If the NRD sells the trees and the new owner of the trees hires someone else to plant the trees, the person planting the trees is a retailer and required to be licensed and collect and remit sales tax on the charge for planting the trees.

If you have questions regarding procedures relating to collection and remitting the tax, you can contact Cliff Thomas, Nebraska Department Of Revenue, at 471-5676 or e-mail cthomas@rev.state.ne.us. (DJ)

Christmas Trees are Renewable Resources

Purchasing a live Christmas tree can raise concerns about cutting a beautiful, living tree. However, cutting the tree actually helps fulfill its destiny.

Dennis Adams, extension forester, says that most live Christmas trees are grown and cultured in plantations with the specific purpose of harvest at a certain size or age. It takes an average of seven years to grow a six to seven foot pine Christmas tree. When these trees are harvested, most growers replant with seedlings the following spring to begin the cycle again.

The replanting of Christmas trees makes them renewable resources. When a live Christmas tree is bought, a renewable resource is used rather than

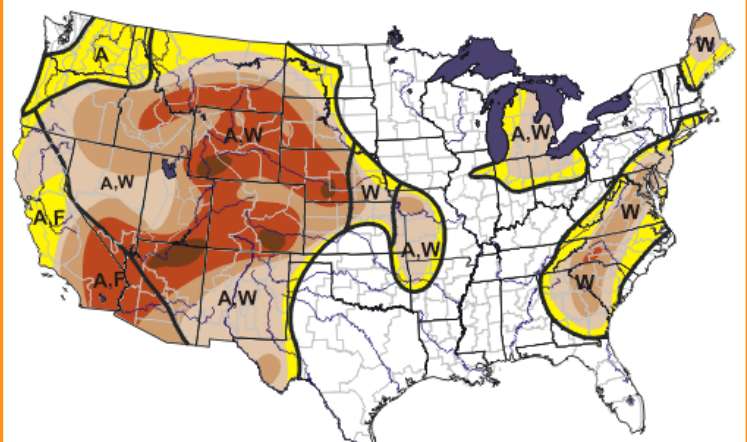


depleting the unrenovable resources used in manufacturing artificial Christmas trees.

Live Christmas trees also are beneficial because they help clean the air, control soil erosion and provide habitat for wildlife while they are growing. Live Christmas trees also may be a way of arousing an appreciation of the beauty and usefulness of trees in the minds of children. A keen appreciation of trees is an important step toward the will to plant and care for them. (DJ)

Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map

As of Oct. 29, Lancaster County is in Moderate Drought conditions.



For the most recent map, visit www.drought.unl.edu/dm