

2004 "Great Plants" Plants of the Year

"Great Plants" is a joint effort of the Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.



Tree of the Year BUR OAK

(*Quercus macrocarpa*)

With its wide, welcoming limbs and cooling shade, the bur oak is a welcome site. The bur oak can get to be 60 to 70 feet high and 50 to 60 feet wide. Native to the Great Plains, it withstands drought, wind, extreme cold, the heavy soils of the Midwest and is easy to grow, if planted as a young tree. The large dark green leaves generally turn yellow to brown in the fall and the brown bark

becomes deeply ridged and furrowed with age. The acorns, enclosed by a heavily fringed cap, are an excellent source of food for wildlife. With its massive trunk and broad crown of branches, the bur oak is more suited to large areas and makes for an excellent, durable street tree. Hardy to zone 2.



Shrub of the Year: CLOVE CURRANT

(*Ribes odoratum*)

The clove or buffalo currant is a western Nebraska native shrub that is an excellent choice for the landscape, especially when early spring color is desired. In April, the plant is covered with clove-scented flowers. The arching stems,

usually surrounded by a mass of young suckering growth, form bright green tri-lobed leaves that turn orange in the fall. The selection 'Crandall' was selected in Kansas in the late 1800's for its excellent fruit quality and resistance to mildew. The fruits offer a sweet and spicy flavor and will literally pull down the stems. It should be planted in full sun to part shade in good garden soil and will grow 4 to 6 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide. Hardy to zone 4.



Perennial of the Year VARIEGATED SOLOMON'S SEAL

(*Polygonatum multiflorum*
"Variegatum")

This is an alternative to hosta for the shade garden and is probably the most handsome of

the *Polygonatum*s. Native to Europe and Siberia, the origin of its common name refers to King Solomon's use of the crushed root for healing. Shoots emerge in the spring, mostly watermelon red with traces of green, and the bright color holds until the stems are almost fully grown. Emerging leaves are boldly blotched and striped ivory-white and arrange themselves along the arching stems. The white flowers hang from the stems in May and attract bumble bees. It is easy to grow with a shady location and rich, organic soils. Once established (2 feet tall, 2 feet wide), it will tolerate dry shade and soon form full patches with stems arranged in the same direction. Hardy to zone 4.


Grass of the Year INDIANGRASS

(*Sorghastrum nutans*)

Indiangrass is one of the Great Plain's most beautiful native grasses. It is an attractive, upright, clumping, warm season grass that makes an excellent tall background or specimen plant.



Its foliage ranges from various shades of green to almost blue topped by silky-soft, golden seed heads in late summer to early autumn. In the fall, it becomes yellowish and then dries to an attractive burnt orange and remains showy through the winter. Reaching 5 to 7 feet tall, it makes a powerful late season statement in the landscape. Indiangrass grows readily in full sun on any well-drained soil, from dry sand to heavy clay, but prefers rich, deep soils. It can benefit from additional water in the summer in the arid west and can readily reseed itself in areas with adequate moisture. Some cultivars of Indiangrass include "Holt," "Bluebird" and "Sioux Blue." Hardy to zone 4. (MJF)



Garden Guide

Things to do this month

Snapdragons should be pinched back after blooming to promote a second flush of growth.

Cut back and fertilize delphinium and phlox to encourage a second flowering.

Many plants are easily propagated by layering. Verbenas, euonymus, English ivy and climbing roses are a few plants that will root if the stems are fastened down and covered with soil.

Cutting flowers is best done with sharp shears or a knife which will help avoid injury to the growing plant. A slanting cut will expose a larger absorbing surface to water and will prevent the base of the stem from resting on the bottom of the vase. It is best to carry a bucket of water to the garden for collecting flowers, rather than a cutting basket.

Divide and transplant bearded iris using the vigorous ends of the rhizomes. Discard the old center portion. Cut the leaves back to about six inches.

Tall flowers should be staked to prevent damage by wind. Use stakes which are large enough to support the plant but are not too conspicuous. Use soft twine or twist ties to secure.

A brown or grayish cast over a lawn can be caused by a dull or improperly adjusted mower blades that shred grass rather than cut it.

Store pesticides in a safe place in their original containers, away from children and pets. Use pesticides carefully in your garden. Read the labels and follow the directions. The warnings and precautions are for your protection.

Certain pesticides have a waiting period of several days between the time of the last spray and harvest. Read and follow directions on all labels before applying to your vegetable crops. Wash all produce thoroughly before use.

Control mosquitoes by eliminating all sources of stagnant water.

A garden needs one inch of rain or water each week. Early morning is the best time to water. Evening watering is less desirable because plant leaves that remain wet through the night are more susceptible to fungus diseases. Mulch plants to reduce water losses and improve yields.

For fall harvest of lettuce, radish, carrots, beets, turnips, kale and spinach, sow seeds in late July to early August.

Continue to make successive plantings of crops like beans and sweet corn to provide a continuous harvest until fall. A small garden will produce a large quantity of vegetables if replanting is done throughout the summer.

Check the soil moisture of container grown vegetables and flowers daily. As the temperature rises, some plants may need water twice a day.

Continue attracting insect eating birds to the garden area by providing them with a fresh water source. (MJF)

Black Spot of Rose

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While the heat and humidity of summer chase us indoors to the sanctuary of air conditioning, many of our landscape roses are falling prey to a fungus that thrives in summer weather. This fungus, known as black spot, causes leaves to develop black spots, turn yellow and fall off. A severe case of this disease can leave your roses looking like bare twigs with only a few unsightly flowers.

The fungus *Diplocarpon rosae* causes black spot and it is considered the most serious disease affecting roses in the Midwest. It thrives in our moist summer climate and receives an added boost during rainy periods. The fungus attacks new leaves as they emerge, beginning at spring bud break, and continues throughout the growing season. Black spot affects the leaves most severely, but it can infect canes and flower parts as well. It is transferred by splashing water from infected to healthy plant parts, and the fungal spores can also be carried by wind.

The disease produces rounded black spots on leaves. These spots often have feathered edges, can be up to half an inch in diameter and frequently are surrounded by a yellow halo. If the infection becomes severe, spots may coalesce, forming large irregular patches on the leaves. As the infection progresses, spotted leaves will turn yellow and fall off. This leaf fall can occur with as few as one or two spots per leaf. Eventually you are left with an



unsightly plant, which may then flush its new leaves and drop them repeatedly after each new cycle of infection.

Black spot symptoms usually appear first in the lower leaves and spread upward throughout the plant. In addition to leaf symptoms, flower number and quality is reduced and raised purple bumps may appear on younger canes. These bumps eventually turn into blackened, blistered areas. Leaf damage has an immediate impact on plant health, and cane and leaf infections also enable the fungus to survive the winter and infect new leaves as they emerge the following spring.

If left untreated, black spot can wreak havoc on susceptible rose varieties. Losing leaves early makes a plant short on stored food as it enters winter. As a result, infected plants are much more susceptible to winter injury and death.

Because the fungus is a threat throughout the summer, chemical control of black spot can be quite demanding. Weekly sprays are sometimes recommended to protect highly susceptible varieties. Once black spot gains a strong hold on your rose plant, it can be tough to subdue. Unless you are committed to using a chemical sprayer

all summer, the best way to control black spot in your yard is to purchase resistant varieties of roses. Lists of rose varieties with strong resistance to black spot can be obtained on the Web.

Good cultural practices help to reduce the severity of black spot. First, try to keep foliage as dry as possible. Adequate plant spacing promotes good air circulation and rapid drying, as does planting in sunny spots. When watering, it's helpful to apply water only to the base of the plant. Avoid using overhead sprinklers that can leave the foliage drenched. If you must use a sprinkler, it's better to water early in the day rather than in late afternoon or evening, when water can linger on the foliage all night.

Proper sanitation can also help control the spread of black spot. Because the fungus can survive the winter on both fallen leaves and canes, it is important to clean up all diseased leaves and prune out any infected canes. Cleanup should be done regularly during the growing season and again at the season's end.

Can't live without that highly susceptible rose in your yard? For the rose enthusiasts willing to mount a full-scale attack on the black spot fungus, several fungicides are available to control the disease. Spraying should begin as soon as foliage emerges in the spring and continue throughout the summer. Plants need to be sprayed every 7-10 days in order to protect the new leaves as they emerge. As with any pesticide, check the label for application instructions and confirm it is labeled to control black spot of rose.