

Nebraska Wild Fruit and Nut Jam Oct. 2

A first-ever Nebraska Wild Fruit and Nut Jam will celebrate foods made with Nebraska-grown fruits and nuts. The food-focused event is Saturday, Oct. 2, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the University of Nebraska Kimmel Education and Research Center in Nebraska City.

Participants can spend a few relaxing hours or the day at the center learning about the many healthy products and dishes made from fruits and nuts and how to grow them in their backyard, acreage or farm.

The event will demonstrate the economic potential of locally-produced fruits and nuts, and a number of chefs and food-related businesses that use Nebraska-grown fruits and nuts in cuisines and products will be there.

Activities include: cooking demonstrations by skilled chefs; black walnut, pecan and chestnut producer booths; nut cracking and roasting demonstrations; fruit and nut product tasting and sales; baked goods made with fruits and nuts; specialty forest product displays and samples; Nebraska beekeepers and their products; UNL Dairy Store, featuring samples of fruit and nut ice creams; fresh roasted chestnut samples; Nebraska wine tasting; hazelnut product tasting; wood carvers and turners demonstrations and sales; children's activities; hazelnut coffee and musical entertainment.

Training and demonstrations include: tree planting, tree grafting, viticulture, edible landscaping, guided tours of the Kimmel vineyard and fruit orchards, Arbor Day Farm hazelnut tours, cooking with nuts and using woody stems in floral designs.

The celebration is open to the public and all ages are welcome. The Kimmel Orchard is located on Old Highway 75, a mile west of Nebraska City. The free event is sponsored by the Kimmel Education & Research Center, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education and the School of Natural Resources. (MJF)

Ten Rules for Planting Trees

Tree planting is an ancient art, but the methods have changed over time to reflect the latest and best arboricultural and forestry research. It is vitally important to remember where trees live in nature. In the natural forest there are no sidewalks, automatic sprinklers, streets, parking lots, tall buildings or other man made objects.

These guidelines are the most current practices recommended for proper tree planting. It is tough being a tree in Nebraska, but following these procedures will provide a planted tree the best means of surviving and growing to maturity.

1. Selection is important — Select the right tree for the right place. Many serious problems can be avoided by proper selection decisions.

2. Pre-planting care — Keep planting stock in shaded location and well-watered. Do not get rough with the planting ball or container. If you have to hold a plant over, make sure it is moist and shaded. When shipping trees it is important to have them covered to avoid heavy loss of water through transpiration. Keep in mind when trees are transplanted from the nursery 90 to 95 percent of the root system is left behind.

3. On site and prior to planting remove all wires,



Selecting the right tree for the right place can avoid problems such as this tree growing against a sidewalk.

labels, cords and anything else attached to the plant.

4. Hole size and shape have become a very important factor. Do not skimp on the width of the planting hole. Plant slightly above nursery level. Place the plant on solid ground — not fill dirt. Be careful of drainage. One sure way to check is to fill the hole with water and come back in 24 hours. If the water has not drained out, make alternate plans.

5. Remove ALL containers from the root ball prior to planting...even peat pots should not be left intact. Wire baskets and burlap should be rolled back

into the hole at least 12 inches below planting depth after the tree has been set into the hole. It is best if wire baskets can be removed completely.

6. Backfill with loosened soil. Research shows amendments are not necessary. When dealing with difficult sites some judgments may have to be made.

7. No need to fertilize at planting time. Remove only damaged or rubbing branches. Food production by the leaves is vitally important. Cutting back restricts leaf area and therefore food production.

8. Water the plant thoroughly then two to three times per week for the first season.

9. Mulch around the tree. This is important!! Natural composted mulch is best. Do not use plastic sheeting. Two to four inches of mulch is ideal. Critters will infest mulch levels any deeper. Mulch should cover the ground to the drip line if possible and should not be placed against the trunk.

10. Stake only when necessary. If the tree is staked, allow for some movement but take care not to injure the bark. Staking is useful more for protection against people. Remove stakes after one year.

Source: Nebraska Forest Service Community Forestry Program. (MJF)

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

Plant spring flowering bulbs.

Cut down stems and foliage of herbaceous perennials after two or three hard frosts and when leaves begin to brown.

Dig and bring in cannas, dahlias and gladiolus. Dry, clean and store in a cool location free from frost.

After several hard frosts add mulch to your perennial flower garden. A one-inch layer of straw or chopped leaves will help conserve soil moisture and protect the root system.

When deciding on new trees or shrubs to plant around your home, remember to select varieties that will fit the location when they are at their mature height. This will greatly reduce pruning and other maintenance in the future.

Pick bagworms from evergreen shrubs. This will eliminate the spring hatch from over-wintered eggs.

Remove leaves from lawn to reduce lawn problems. Compost or shred and use them for mulch.

Fall is the time to control broadleaf weeds in the lawn, such as white clover, dandelion and ground ivy.

Make a note of any particularly productive or unsatisfactory varieties of vegetables you planted this year. Such information can be very useful when planning next year's garden.

Remove any diseased or insect infested plant material from your garden, it may harbor over-wintering stages of disease or insect pests. If you leave this plant material in your garden, you are leaving diseases and insects which will begin to reproduce again next spring and add to next years pest problem.

Cure pumpkins, butternut and hubbard squash at temperatures between 70 to 80° F for two or three weeks immediately after harvest. After curing, store them in a dry place at 55 to 60° F.

Use dried herbs to make fragrant wreaths and dried flower arrangements.

Clean up the orchard and small fruit plantings. Sanitation is essential for good maintenance. Dried fruits or mummies carry disease organisms through the winter to attack next years crop.

Nut trees are a fine addition to the home landscape. They may accent the house, provide shade in the summer and even become a food source.

Christmas cactus need special care now to get its beautiful flowers this December. Buds will form at 50 to 60° F or if the plant is exposed to at least 13 hours of complete darkness each night.

Fall is an excellent time for taking soil samples in your lawn and garden. Soil tests will measure the pH of the soil, organic matter content and the levels of some of the major elements required for plant growth, such as phosphorus and potassium. (MJF)

Direct Seeding Hardwood Tree Species

Direct seeding, planting seeds rather than seedlings, is becoming a widely accepted method of reforestation. The primary advantage of direct seeding is its lower cost. Another advantage is that it allows tree roots to develop naturally, without the disturbance caused by cutting roots and removing seedlings growing in a nursery. Anyone practicing care and patience will have satisfactory results with direct seeding.

The most common time for direct seeding is in the fall. Spring seeding is possible if seeds are stored in an appropriate manner. If you are new to direct seeding, you are encouraged to start with fall seeding and gain valuable experience before trying spring seeding. As soon as seeds begin to drop from trees, you can begin to direct seed the nuts. The relative flexibility of timing direct seeding is a major advantage of the practice. You can plant when you are not busy with other

farm or acreage operations or when the soil conditions are just right.

Seed can be obtained commercially or by collecting it on your own. If you buy seeds from a supplier, make sure the seeds are from a site as close to your land as possible. A rule of thumb is to only use seeds from within 150 miles of your property. Species like oaks and walnuts drop their seed in the fall and should be collected as soon as possible after the seed drops. If seeds are allowed to dry out (desiccate) the seed will not be viable. Care and diligence should be taken to ensure seeds are collected, temporarily stored and seeded in a timely manner. Allow the seed to breathe in collection containers. Burlap or mesh bags work well. Do not close the tops of the bags. Immediately after collection, immerse acorns in water for 24 hours to rehydrate the seeds. Do not pile walnuts as they will begin to "heat up" and destroy the seed. Store all seeds in a

cool dark place until planting.

As a rule of thumb, the seed should be placed in a hole or row approximately twice the diameter of the seed. Seeds can be planted by hand, with a tree planter, a nut seeder or broadcast. Each technique will work successfully if proper care is taken to ensure the seed is placed in an appropriate seed bed. Spacing requirements will be based on the desired mature stand that you want to obtain. Leave enough space between rows to accommodate application of herbicides or mowing. Seeds that have been broadcast seeded and disked in will limit the opportunity to control unwanted vegetation. However, many people prefer the aesthetic attributes of stands that have been broadcast seeded as they more closely resemble natural forest stands. Experience has shown that approximately 1 out of every 4 acorns planted will result in a tree growing after ten years. (DJ)

Storing Sweet Potatoes

Harvest sweet potatoes after a light frost kills the vines. Do not delay harvest after the vines die back, the tubers will not increase in size and may begin to rot. Do not wash the sweet potatoes after you dig them. Place them in a basket or slatted crate where there is good air movement.

Store sweet potatoes in a warm, dark place to cure.

Ideally the temperature should be 85 to 90° F with 85 to 90 percent humidity. The curing process helps to heal cuts and bruises. It also helps to change the starch in the root to sugar. This increases the sweetness of the potato. Sweet potatoes will take about 5 to 7 days to cure.

After they are cured, store the sweet potatoes in a cool place, preferably where the

temperature will be maintained at 60° F. If possible, choose a place with high humidity. The temperature should not be allowed to drop below 50° F because if the potatoes suffer cold damage, they will rot. Never store sweet potatoes in the refrigerator. If sweet potatoes are stored properly, they will keep for several months. (MJF)