

Free E-mail Horticulture Newsletter

HortUpdate is a FREE e-mail newsletter from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension which provides timely information to the lawn and landscape industry. This e-mail includes current lawn and landscape problems with control recommendations and a seasonal 'To Do' list.

To subscribe, go to <http://extensionhorticulture.unl.edu> and submit request.

Landscape Management Workshops, Sept. & Oct.

Whether the questions are about landscape design, tree care, turf or maintenance problems, the fall landscape management workshops across the state will answer them all. The workshops, geared toward grounds keepers, park employees, arborists, turf-care professionals, golf course managers and acreage owners will especially help those who care for large landscapes.

Workshop dates and locations are:

- Sept. 29 — Kearney, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Ockinga Conference Center.
- Oct. 5 — Mead, UNL Agricultural Research and Development Center, Christenson Building.
- Oct. 11 — Norfolk, Northeast Community College Lifelong Learning Center.

The workshops will begin

with 8 a.m. registration and start at 8:30 a.m. They conclude at 4 p.m.

Speakers include Roch Gaussoin, UNL turfgrass specialist, Kim Todd, UNL landscape horticulture specialist; Bob Henrickson and Justin Evertson from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, and Eric Berg from the Nebraska Forest Service.

Registration is \$75. Continuing education units are available for certified arborists, golf course professionals, turf-care professionals and park and recreation professionals. For more information or to register, contact Evertson at 472-5045 or go to <http://arbo-retum.unl.edu>

The workshops are sponsored by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, the Nebraska Forest and UNL Extension.

Mower Wounds Can Kill Trees

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

In Nebraska, trees have a tough time staying healthy. Drought, insects, disease and storm damage shorten the life of our beautiful trees. There is one other menace that is easy to prevent, lawn mower damage. Injury and infection started by lawn mower wounds can often be the most serious threat to tree health in the home landscape.

Most tree injuries occur when mower operators attempt to trim close to tree trunks. This can be prevented by removal of turf around trees and adding mulch or by hand trimming. Care must also be used to avoid harming trees with weed whip trimming machines. They can do a great deal of damage to the bark, particularly on young trees. The site of injury is usually the root buttress, since it flares out from the trunk and gets in the path of the mower. However, injury is also common on shallow roots and along the trunk



Photos by Vicki Jedicke, UNL Extension in Lancaster County

Mower damage on a tree is usually at the root buttress.

area. Although large wounds are more serious, repeat small wounds can also add up to trouble.

Wounds from lawn mowers are serious enough by themselves, but the wounded tree must also protect itself from pathogens that invade the wound. These microorganisms can often attack the injured bark and invade healthy tissue, greatly enlarging the affected area. Internal decay can result and then the loss of the tree.

The problem of lawn-mower injury is not a tree problem but a people problem. The solution is to educate lawnmower operators about how serious these wounds can become if they are not careful and run their mowers into the tree. A mulched area around the tree trunk can provide protection for your investment, a healthy tree.

Source: Texas A & M Extension

Turn Fall Yard Waste Into Valuable Compost

Leaves and other materials that clutter yards in the fall can be gathered and turned into high quality soil amendment for next year's garden. Plus, developing a compost pile helps the environment as well as the pocketbook.

Compost improves the structure and moisture retention capability of most garden soils. Ingredients in your compost pile can include leaves, grass clippings, straw and non-woody plant trimmings. Branches, logs and twigs larger than one-fourth inch in diameter can be included, but they must first be shredded or cut up into smaller pieces. Kitchen wastes such as vegetable scraps, coffee grounds and eggshells are other potential ingredients.

However, some organic materials that could cause a health threat or attract unwanted wildlife should be avoided. Such materials include pet feces, meat, bones, grease, whole eggs and dairy products.

Compost piles should be large enough to hold heat and small enough to admit air to the center. Generally, a pile must be at least 3 feet tall, 3 feet wide and 3 feet long to hold heat. Its height and width must be no more than 5 feet to allow air to the center of the pile.

Before building a compost pile, put 4 to 6 inches of chopped brush or other course material over the soil, which



Leaves, grass clippings and other yard "waste" (left) can be turned into valuable compost (right).

will allow air to circulate underneath the pile.

After creating a base layer, put on a layer of low carbon (green) organic material, such as grass clippings, 3 to 4 inches thick. Follow that with a 4- to 6-inch layer of high carbon (brown) organic material, such as leaves or garden waste. Both layers should be damp to the touch, so if necessary add water to each layer with a hose. The material should be damp enough that a drop or two of liquid is released from a handful of it when squeezed. Finish with a 1-inch layer of garden soil or finished compost, which will introduce the microorganisms needed to break down the organic matter.

Mix these layers, except for the base layer, before adding more material to the pile. This ensures quick and even composting of the organic matter. Repeat the layering process to create the desired size of compost pile.

The compost pile can then be left alone, termed a 'passive pile', or can be maintained by

turning or mixing the pile and adding water to keep the conditions prime for compost formation. Actively turned piles will break down plant debris and form finished compost much more quickly than a passive pile.

For active compost piles, rotate the compost about once a week using a pitchfork and be sure to incorporate new debris with the old. Excessive turning will cool the pile down and will take longer for compost to develop. Most plant disease organisms and weed seeds are destroyed during the composting process when temperatures in the center of the pile reach 140 to 150 degree Fahrenheit, which can be measured using a soil thermometer. However, in most compost piles it is impossible to mix efficiently enough to bring all wastes to the center. Consequently, incorporating large amounts of weeds with seeds or diseased plants into your compost pile may create problems.

Finished compost is dark brown, crumbly and earthy smelling. Small pieces of leaves or other ingredients may be visible. Stable compost can be blended into soil mixes and is suitable for most outdoor planting projects. While mixing ratios vary, 10 percent compost is considered the minimum, 30 percent optimum and 50 percent maximum.

Source: Sarah Browning, UNL Extension

Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

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

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.

Plant spring flowering bulbs.

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

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 overwintered eggs.

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

Make a note of any particularly productive or unsatisfactory varieties of vegetables that 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 overwintering 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 year's pest problem.

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 year's 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 degrees Fahrenheit 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.