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.

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Too Late to Spray Bagworms

Bagworms can cause a great deal of damage during the last few weeks of feeding and gardeners may be tempted to spray for them now. But late-August or September sprays are totally ineffective. Understanding the life cycle of this moth will explain why and can help tremendously in planning effective control measures.

Bagworms normally finish feeding and close up their bags in late-summer. After that, insecticides are ineffective because they cannot reach the pest. Egg hatch does not occur until the next spring, usually during the latter half of May. Insecticide sprays are more likely to be effective if applied when the bagworms are small. Even Bacillus thuringiensis (Dipel, Thuricide) can be effective on young bagworms. Other commonly used pesticides include Orthene, cyfluthrin, permethrin, malathion and Sevin. During most years, a spray about June 15 will give good control. Do not forget insecticides are not the only means of control. Hand picking and destroying the bags is effective any time of year the bags are large enough to be picked.

Source: Ward Upham, Kansas State Extension

Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Pot up chives, parsley and other herbs to extend the growing season in the house.

Pears should be picked at the hard ripe stage and allowed to finish ripening off the tree. The base color of yellow pears should change from green to yellow as the fruit approaches maturity.

Be sure to keep strawberry beds weed free. Every weed you pull now will help make weeding much easier next spring.

Do not wait for frost warnings to move your plants indoors. Temperatures of 45 degrees Fahrenheit or lower can damage many tropical house plants.

Collect okra seed pods, gourds, sumac seed heads, rose hips and other suitable materials for dried arrangements. Air dry these materials in a dark, cool location.

Fall is a good time for improving your garden soil. Add manure, compost and leaves to increase the organic matter content.

Plant peonies now, but make sure the crowns are buried only 1½–2 inches below ground level. Planting them deeper than two inches may keep them from blooming.

Root cuttings from annual bedding plants such as begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens. These plants can be overwintered in a sunny window and provide plants for next year's garden.

Before the first frost, dig up caladiums. Allow them to dry and store them in a dry place for the winter.

Perennial phlox can be divided about every third or fourth year. Divide big clumps of perennial phlox into thirds. Early fall or early spring are the best times to plant or transplant them.

Divide lily-of-the-valley.

Select accent plants for your landscape that will provide autumn colors. Trees with red fall color are flowering dogwood, red maple, sugar maple, Norway maple, red oak and scarlet oak. Shrubs with red fall foliage include sumac, viburnum, winged euonymus and barberry.

Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time. Plants will delay their dormancy process that has already begun in anticipation of winter in the months ahead. New growth can be injured by an early freeze.

Tree wound paints used after pruning are no longer recommended as they can slow healing and may promote decay.

If pesky seedlings of woody plants, such as elm, mulberry, hackberry or maple are found growing in your yard, remove them as soon as possible. If left too long, they will take over gardens and other landscape plantings.

Rake up leaves, twigs and fruit from crabapple trees and dispose of them in the trash to help control apple scab disease.

Water newly planted trees and shrubs to provide sufficient moisture and prevent winter damage. Add a two-inch layer of organic mulch such as shredded bark, around the base of plants to retain soil moisture and regulate soil temperature.

Wood ashes contain phosphorous, potassium and calcium. It can be placed on vegetable gardens and flower beds.

Save seeds from favorite flowers such as marigolds by allowing the flower heads to mature. Lay seeds on newspaper and turn them often to dry. Store the dry seeds in glass jars or envelopes in a cool, dry, dark place.

Storing Vegetables and Fruit

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

After a successful garden season, you may have vegetables and fruits you would like to store until you are ready to use them. Proper storage conditions are needed for fruits and vegetables that are not consumed immediately after harvest. The key to good storage is in controlling the temperature and relative humidity of the storage area. If not stored properly, they will rot and you will lose your produce.

Vegetables

Carrots: Trim carrot tops to one inch. Layer unwashed carrots in a container of moist sand. Carrots can be stored in a cool place, 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit for 4-5 months.

Onions: Store cured onions in a dry location at 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Potatoes: Cure fresh dug potatoes 1 to 2 weeks in a dark, dry location at 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Store cured potatoes in a dark location at 40 degrees Fahrenheit for 5 to 6 months.

Sweet potatoes: Cure fresh dug sweet potatoes at 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 days. Store cured sweet potatoes in a dry, dark location at 55 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit for 4 to 6 months.

Turnips: Trim turnip tops to one inch. Layer unwashed turnips in a container of moist sand. Turnips can be stored in a cool place, 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit for 4 to 5 months.

Winter squash: Cure vine-ripened winter squash for 10 days at 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit and high humidity. Store mature, cured winter squash in a dry location at 55 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 to 6 months. Acorn squash will keep well in a dry place at 45 degrees Fahrenheit for 35 to 40 days. Do not cure acorn squashes before storing them.

Fruit

For fruits such as apples, grapes and pears, store them in cool temperatures at 32 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit and moist conditions at 90 to 95 percent relative humidity. Other fruits should be canned or frozen after harvest.

Select containers for storage that have smooth inner surfaces. Baskets, melon crates or boxes are suitable. Line these containers with aluminum foil to help retain moisture.

Apples and pears will likely last through the fall and winter if stored properly. Apple varieties should be harvested firm and ripe to insure the longest storage possible.

Harvest pears when they are full sized but still green and hard. Pears ripen quickly at 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

Grapes will usually keep for one or two months. Grapes should be stored alone because they pick up odors from other fruits and vegetables.

Storing your vegetables and fruit properly will insure you have good quality produce to enjoy in the months ahead.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

UNL Extension NebGuide G95-1264 "Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables" available at the extension office or online at http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/horticulture/g1264.htm

Deep Watering in Fall Can Prevent Tree Death

Dennis Adams
UNL Forester

Symptoms of winter injury appear the following spring and summer, making some think a tree is suddenly dying when actually the damage was done several months before.

Drought conditions during the fall may mean serious injury to trees if it continues into winter. Trees should be thoroughly watered in the fall to help prevent winter drying injury. Fall watering may not be necessary when soil moisture is adequate, but when soil moisture is lacking, fall watering may be critical to help a tree survive the rigors of winter.

All trees lose water during normal metabolic processes. During the growing season when trees are in full foliage, large amounts of water are lost through their leaves. Even during winter months when the leaves are gone and photosynthetic processes have stopped, trees lose water to a lesser extent from exposed bark, twigs and buds.

However, sometimes the loss of moisture exceeds the amount of water the roots can absorb from dry, frozen soil. Tissue drying is the result of the tree being unable to replace lost water. Winter drying injury occurs most frequently during warm, dry, windy conditions. This especially is true of evergreen trees because they lose much more water through their foliage.

Damaged trees may exhibit only a few dead twigs or entire branches may die depending on severity of the injury. In very severe cases, the entire tree may die. The side of the tree facing the prevailing winds is most susceptible. Light brown, dry-appearing needles are typical of winter injury on evergreen trees. This type of injury usually is temporary, and most evergreens recover rapidly as the growing season progresses.

Usually large, well-established trees can tolerate temporary droughts without injury, but young trees are more susceptible to drought injury. They do not have the extensive root system to draw moisture from the soil and need supplemental water during dry conditions.

In some cases, relying on a lawn sprinkler is not enough. Trees should be deep watered to a depth of about two or three feet before the ground freezes. A watering basin two to three inches deep and three to four feet in diameter, constructed around the base of a young tree will hold water until it can percolate into the soil.

The loss of trees from winter drying is unnecessary and costly, not only in monetary terms, but in intangible values such as shade, protection and beauty. If drought conditions continue, deep watering trees this fall may mean the difference between live and dead trees next spring.