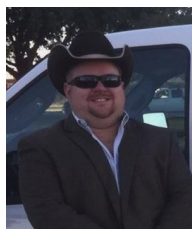


Winter Horticulture News Letter



November 2016

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



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Howdy!

The fall has finally arrived! Cooler temperatures and shorter days are setting in which means fall color and the beginning of dormancy for many of our perennial plants. While many of us are looking forward to the winter season as a time for less yardwork and more time indoors with friends and family, we've added a few things to add to your to-do list so that your gardens and landscapes are geared up for the next year once spring comes around.

This fall I've decided to adjust the timeliness of this newsletter to reflect the seasons. Instead of receiving 6 newsletters every other month, the newsletter will come out quarterly with articles and tips that are relevant to the upcoming season. As this is our winter newsletter, the spring newsletter will be coming in February.

On behalf of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office in Ward County, I'd like to wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas!

Caleb L. Eaton, CEA-Ag/NR

Christmas Tree Safety



As you deck the hall this holiday season, be fire smart. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can grow large very quickly.

PICKING THE TREE

- » Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

PLACING THE TREE

- » Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk.
- » Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- » Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- » Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

LIGHTING THE TREE

- » Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use.
- » Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- » Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- » Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

After Christmas

Get rid of the tree after Christmas or when it is dry. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with local community personnel to find a recycling program. Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and make them last longer.



Adapted by Caleb Eaton from National Fire Protection Assoc.
www.nfpa.org/education
Retrieved 11/17/15

PREPARING YOUR LANDSCAPE FOR WINTER

BY: C.L. Eaton, County Extension Agent – Ag/NR

Many folks look forward to the cooler weather of fall and winter as a time to stay inside and relax from the usual work around the house. While, winter is generally a less active time when it comes to landscape care, there are a few steps that should be taken to keep your landscape in good condition through the winter and make things a little easier on you in the spring.

Winter Lawn Care

Fall is the perfect time to start preparing your lawn for the winter dormancy. It is always a good idea to make a fall fertilizer application around mid-fall to give your lawn the nutrition it needs to stay alive during dormancy. Its always a good idea to do a soil test sometime earlier in the year to see what your lawns exact fertilizer needs are (for more information on soil tests, contact the County Extension Office).

Another good step to take to keep your lawn free of winter weeds is to apply a pre-emergent herbicide. These are usually a systemic herbicide in granule form that your water into your lawn and will prevent these weeds from germinating. This is especially a good idea if you have bare spots in your yard. When selecting a product, read the label and be wary of “weed and feed” type applications. Many of these may have 2,4-D and other herbicides that could harm your trees. As always, follow the label instructions to avoid damaging your plants or making an ineffective application.

Many folks out there believe that once your yard goes dormant, there is no longer any need to wa-ter...THIS IS NOT THE CASE. You should still try to water at least monthly (especially before a long hard freeze). Water to a depth of 6 inches to train your root system to go deeper for water. Of course, if we have rain or snow, there is no need to water until things have dried out again.

Winter Tree Care

Fall is a great time to apply or re-apply mulch. Soils around trees and shrubs can dry out over winter. In some cases, drying out causes considerable damage to the plants. Mulches conserve moisture. They also have many other wonderful qualities. For recently planted trees and shrubs mulch gives new roots more time to develop. Mulch also helps minimize the effect of tem-perature fluctuations that can heave plant crowns out of the ground. Mulch also prolongs plant dormancy in the spring and re-duces the chance of late spring frost injury to new leaves and flowers. This being said, you should avoid the “mulch volcano” and leave a little space around the trunk of the tree. This will help prevent insect damage, rot and other potential hazards.



FIGURE 1: Example of a “mulch volcano”

Cont. next page...

Mature deciduous trees will not need supplemental water after they've gone dormant (with the exception of young trees), but evergreens such as Pines and Live Oaks will need supplemental water due to the fact that they are still producing foliage. Water evergreens on warmer days (above 45 degrees) to help them along.

Raking and disposing of your leaves after they've fallen will usually ensure less headaches in the spring. Leaving excess organic matter on your lawn all winter opens your landscape up to disease, rot and insect damages. Plus, raking up the leaves looks neater! If you'd rather use those leaves for something else, they make a great addition to your compost pile.

Potted Plants & Ornamentals

For your perennial & biennial ornamentals in pots, the best thing to do is get them out of the weather before the first freeze. Greenhouses are great, but a garage or shed will do, just as long as they are somewhere dry that keeps a fairly constant temperature. Heat lamps and other heaters are a nice addition, but be sure you are being fire-wise.

For your plants that are stationary (planted in the soil or a box), try to protect them for the cold the best you can by wrapping them and covering them with a bucket.

Winter is a great time to kick back by the fire and enjoy time with friends and loved ones. If you'll take a few pre-emptive measures in your landscape this fall, you're guaranteed to have a peaceful winter and a leg up come springtime.

2016 Ward County Pecan Show



NEW DATE & PLACE



November 30th

WARD COUNTY ANNEX BUILDING, 3600 S. Stockton

PECAN DIVISION RULES

An exhibitor can enter only *ONE SAMPLE* of any *ONE* named variety, but may enter as many varieties as desired.
County Agent will classify if you are unsure of Variety.

45 nuts per entry

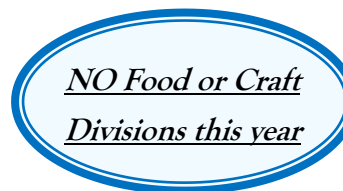
(Pecans are to be exhibited in natural state...no alterations)

Entries Due by 5 p.m., Tuesday, November 29th
At Ward County Extension Office, 3600 S. Stockton

ALL PECANS ENTRIES BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE SHOW

Awards Presentation 12:15 p.m.

*Pecans will be on display from
11 a.m. - 12 p.m.*



*NO Food or Craft
Divisions this year*

PRE-FREEZE

- Patio tropicals that need to spend the winter inside your home can be trimmed to help them fit in. Maintain their natural form as well as you can. Give them bright light indoors. Move tropicals in before temperature falls below 50°.
- Mow lawn until first killing freeze. Use each mowing to remove fallen leaves. Put leaves into the compost pile or use as a mulch in landscape.
- Prune lantana and salvia after freezing temperatures have frozen the top growth and over-plant the area with winter annuals such as pansies, Johnny-jump-ups and dianthus (pinks), larkspur or bluebonnets to bring color and shape to the bed during the cold winter and early spring months.
- Apply broadleaf weedkiller spray to get rid of young henbit, chickweed, dandelions and clover in turf areas. This application is best made near the end of November, before temperatures really drop. These products are less effective in winter when the weeds become more noticeable.
- Spring-flowering perennials must be divided before first frost, while you can still see their stalks. Reset them into well-prepared garden soil. Plant at the recommended spacing and give away or discard unneeded plants.

POST-FREEZE

- Transplant established trees and shrubs any time after the first hard freeze. Keep ball of soil intact around roots.
- Tulips and Dutch hyacinths that have received at least 45 days of “pre-cooling” at 45° F in the refrigerator can be planted after mid-December. Plant in close groupings for best show in spring.
- When pruning trees, remove damaged, diseased or dead branches first. Then remove crossed and rubbing branches. Do not “top” established trees as it ruins their natural form and predisposes them to many problems. January-February is the best time to prune trees.
- Improve appearance of perennial beds by cutting unattractive, blackened, wilted dead and dying stalks, seed heads and pulling emerging weeds. Wait until mid-February to trim all the dead tops back. This provides structure, wildlife cover and protection to the garden.
- Start seeds of spring annual flowers and vegetables in bright sunny window, greenhouse or cold frame. Schedule carefully to ensure seedlings will be ready at appropriate times.
- Have your soil tested during winter dormant season. Watch for accumulations of phosphorus, the middle number of the fertilizer analysis. Don’t be surprised if tests suggest all-nitrogen fertilizer for the growing season.

Courtesy of Permian Basin Master Gardeners