



Shelby County Extension

906 6th St, Harlan, IA 51537

Phone: (712) 755-3104

Fax: (712) 755-7112

Email: xshelby@iastate.edu

Online: www.extension.iastate.edu/Shelby

Upcoming Events:

May 24th - First session of Summer Gardening Webinar Series

June 9th - Final FSQA Class for Youth Livestock Exhibitors

June 14th - Western Iowa No-Till Field Day in Shelby

What a difference a month makes! We had some great fieldwork days in early May, and I have seen corn emerging all over the county as I drive around lately. I know I got some of my garden planted during that time, but I had to wait a while for things to dry out before I could get the last of it in after our mid-month rainy spell, and I know many farmers and gardeners in the area were in the same boat! Hopefully everyone has been able to get back in the fields and gardens now to finish up what they started. Now all we need is some perfect growing weather...

Take care!

-Kate Olson, Program Coordinator

DID YOU KNOW??

Ag and Hort Update is also available online!! The current and past issues are archived on our county homepage: www.extension.iastate.edu/shelby. Online newsletters also contain active links to get you to websites and publications mentioned in the articles! Contact me to be added to our email list.

Ask the ISU Garden Expert

Get answers to all your yard and garden questions at www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu. For specific questions, call the Hortline at (515) 294-3108, or email hortline@iastate.edu, Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.

What is a good planting site for rhubarb?

Rhubarb performs best in well-drained, fertile soils that are high in organic matter. Heavy, clay soils often can be improved by incorporating organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted manure, into the upper 12 to 15 inches of soil. The planting site should also receive at least six to eight hours of direct sun each day. Avoid shady sites near trees and shrubs.

When can I start harvesting my newly planted rhubarb?

After planting rhubarb, it's best to wait two years (growing seasons) before harvesting any stalks. The two-year establishment period allows the plants to become strong and productive.

Rhubarb can be harvested over a four-week period in the third year. In the fourth and succeeding years, stalks can be harvested for eight to 10 weeks.

What is the correct way to harvest rhubarb?

Harvest rhubarb when the stalks are 10 to 15 inches long. Grasp the stalk near its base and pull up and slightly to one side. Immediately after harvesting the rhubarb, remove the leaf blades from the stalks with a sharp knife. Discard the foliage. The stalks can be placed in a plastic bag and stored in the refrigerator for two to four weeks.

When harvesting rhubarb, do not remove more than two-thirds of the fully developed stalks from any plant at any one time.

Are rhubarb leaves safe to put in the compost pile?

Although rhubarb leaves do contain poisonous oxalic acid, they can be placed in the compost pile. Oxalic acid, like other organic acids, is not readily absorbed by plant roots. Compost containing decomposed rhubarb leaves can be safely applied to the vegetable garden.

When should I stop harvesting rhubarb? Can I harvest rhubarb in August?

Gardeners should stop harvesting well established rhubarb plants in mid-June in Iowa. Continued harvest through the summer months weakens the rhubarb plants and reduces the yield and quality of next year's crop.

If the rhubarb plants are vigorous, pulling a few stalks and preparing a dish for a special occasion in summer shouldn't be a problem. Harvesting rhubarb in summer should be a one-time event, not a frequent practice. Continued harvest through the summer months weakens the rhubarb plants and reduces the yield and quality of next year's crop. In general, it's best to stop harvesting rhubarb in mid-June in Iowa.

There is an erroneous belief that rhubarb stalks are poisonous in summer. The stalks will likely be a little tougher than those harvested in spring, but they are not poisonous. Plant vigor is the reason that rhubarb should not be harvested in summer.

Why is my rhubarb flowering?

Flower development is natural for rhubarb and most other plants. Drought, extreme heat and infertile soils may encourage flowering. Age is another factor. Old plants tend to flower more than young ones. Regardless of the reason, flower stalks should be promptly pulled and discarded. Plants will be less productive if allowed to flower and set seeds.

Flower formation can be discouraged with good cultural practices. Water rhubarb plants every seven to 10 days during dry weather. Sprinkle ½ cup of an all-purpose garden fertilizer, such as 10-10-10,

around each plant in early spring. Control weeds by shallow hoeing, hand pulling or mulching.

What is the proper planting depth when planting hybrid tea roses?

Modern roses, such as hybrid tea, grandiflora and floribunda roses, are propagated by budding. A single bud is removed from the desired variety and inserted onto a hardy rootstock. The bud union (the knob-like swelling at the base of the canes) is sensitive to extreme cold and rapid temperature changes in winter. Modern roses are essentially destroyed if all growth above the bud union is destroyed in winter. When planting hybrid tea, grandiflora and floribunda roses, the bud union should be positioned 2 to 3 inches below the soil surface to protect the bud union and lower portions of the canes from winter damage.

How often should I fertilize hybrid tea roses?

To encourage vigorous growth and abundant bloom, hybrid tea, floribunda and grandiflora roses should be fertilized two or three times a year. Fertilizer applications can be made in early spring (immediately after pruning), during the first bloom period and mid to late July. Do not fertilize after July 31. Later fertilization will produce succulent new growth that may not harden sufficiently before winter. An all-purpose garden fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, should produce excellent results. Sprinkle 1/4 cup of fertilizer around each plant per application.

How can I control blackspot on my roses?

Blackspot is a common fungal disease of roses. Symptoms of blackspot are circular black spots on the leaves. Infected leaves turn yellow and drop prematurely. Initially, symptoms develop on the lower leaves and gradually move upward. By late summer, severely infected plants may be nearly defoliated.

The blackspot fungus overwinters on fallen leaves and infected canes. Spores are splashed on to newly emerging foliage in spring. Blackspot development is favored by warm (75 F), wet weather. *(continued)*

Careful rose selection, cultural practices and fungicide treatments can be used to control blackspot on roses. Rose varieties differ widely in their susceptibility to blackspot. When purchasing roses, select rose varieties that are resistant to blackspot. When selecting a planting site, choose a site that receives full sun and provides good air movement. Full sun and good air movement promote drying of the rose foliage and discourage blackspot infections.

Reduce the amount of overwintering fungi by carefully cleaning up the leaf debris in fall. When watering roses, apply water directly to the ground around the plants. Do not wet the foliage. Fungicide applications must begin at the first sign of disease symptoms.

How often should I water my roses?

Modern roses, such as hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras, require watering during hot, dry weather. The frequency depends upon weather conditions and soil type. In most gardens, a thorough watering every seven to 10 days during dry weather is sufficient. If possible, apply the water directly to the soil around each plant. Overhead watering wets the foliage and increases disease problems. If overhead watering is unavoidable, morning is the best time to water roses. Morning applications allow the foliage to dry quickly. An excellent way to conserve soil moisture is by mulching. Possible mulches include wood chips, shredded bark, pine needles and cocoa bean hulls. Spread 2 to 4 inches of mulch around each rose or over the entire bed. Mulches also help to control weeds.

What is the proper way to deadhead roses?

Deadheading or the removal of faded flowers is done to encourage additional bloom on hybrid tea and other repeat-flowering roses. Hybrid tea roses usually have one or two 3-leaflet leaves immediately below the flower. Next (lower down on the stem) are two or more 5-leaflet leaves. The deadheading procedure is slightly different for newly planted and established roses. During their first growing season, it's usually recommended that

the spent flower be removed above the uppermost 3-leaflet leaf. Removal of a larger percentage of the rose's foliage reduces the plant's ability to manufacture food and slows growth. When deadheading established roses, the stem may be cut back to a 5-leaflet leaf. Retain at least two 5-leaflet leaves on each shoot. Use sharp tools (hand shears or knife) to remove faded flowers. Cut about 1/4 inch above an outward facing bud and leaflet with the cut made parallel to the angle of the leaflet.

Can blueberries be grown successfully in Iowa?

Blueberries can be grown successfully in Iowa. However, they do have special growing requirements. Blueberry plants require a sunny location and a well-drained soil high in organic matter. Avoid wet, poorly drained sites. Blueberries are susceptible to root rots in poorly drained soils.

Soil pH also is important. Blueberries require acid soils with a pH of 4.0 to 5.5. Since the pH of most Iowa soils is above this range, the soil pH must be lowered to successfully grow blueberries. Home gardeners can lower their soil pH by adding sphagnum peat moss to the soil. Sulfur also can be used to acidify the soil. Sulfur should be incorporated into the soil a year before planting, as it reacts slowly with the soil. Aluminum sulfate should not be used to acidify the soil, as large amounts of this material can be toxic to blueberry plants. When using sphagnum peat moss to acidify the soil, dig a wide, shallow hole. Set the plant at the same depth it grew in the nursery, then backfill with a 50:50 mixture of soil and moist peat (moisten dry peat before mixing with soil).

Which blueberry varieties perform well in Iowa?

Highbush and half-high blueberries can be successfully grown in Iowa. Highbush blueberries perform best in central and southern Iowa. Plants develop into 6- to 8-foot-tall shrubs. Suggested varieties for gardeners in central and southern Iowa include 'Patriot,' 'Blueray,' 'Bluejay,' 'Bluecrop,' 'Rubel,' 'Jersey' and 'Elliott.'

Half-high blueberries possess greater cold hardiness and are the best choice for gardeners in northern

Iowa. Plants are relatively small (varieties commonly grow 2 to 3 feet tall) and produce small to medium-size berries. Suggested varieties are 'Northblue,' 'Northcountry,' 'Northsky' and 'St. Cloud.' Plant two or three blueberry varieties to ensure good pollination and maximum fruit set.

I just planted some blueberries. When can I expect them to produce a crop?

Blueberry plants should not be allowed to bear fruit the first two years after planting. Any blossoms that form should be removed. Removal of the flowers maximizes vegetative growth and increases yields in later years. Blueberry plants should come into full production by the fifth or sixth year. Gardeners can expect to harvest five to 10 pounds of fruit per plant from mature highbush blueberries. Half-high blueberries generally produce two to three pounds per plant.

Should blueberry plants be fertilized?

Established blueberry plants can be fertilized with an acid-producing fertilizer, such as ammonium sulfate, in early spring. Apply one-half to one pound of ammonium sulfate per 100 square feet of garden area. Ammonium sulfate supplies nitrogen to the plants and also helps to maintain soil acidity.

Should blueberry plants be watered during dry weather?

Blueberries have shallow, fibrous root systems. Plants quickly become stressed during hot, dry weather. To help retain moisture and control weeds, apply 2 to 4 inches of mulch around blueberry plants. Sawdust, wood chips, pine needles and shredded leaves are excellent mulching materials. During dry weather, water plants every seven to 10 days.

Do blueberries have insect and disease problems?

Phytophthora root rot can be a serious problem in poorly drained sites. Phytophthora root rot can be avoided by planting blueberries in well-drained soils. Outside of root rots, blueberries generally have few insect and disease problems in Iowa.

Birds can be a problem as they may devour much of the crop. While scare devices may be helpful, netting is the most effective way to protect the fruit from birds. Netting should be placed over the plants when the fruit begin to turn color. Hang the netting over some type of support structure with the bottom edges of the netting buried or anchored to the ground.

2011 Farmland Rental Rates Increase Sharply

Current Iowa cash rent rates quickly responded to the fall 2010 increase in corn and soybean prices caused by tight grain supplies and increased demand worldwide, according to William Edwards, Iowa State University Extension economist. As those involved with the Iowa farmland rental market know, rental rates were pushed significantly higher by the favorable corn and soybean prices in 2007 and early 2008. That was followed by lower prices in late 2008 and 2009, which took much of the steam out of the land market. Cash rent for farmland in 2010 saw significant increases.

Results of the [2011 cash rental rate survey for Iowa](#), conducted by Edwards and his staff, estimate that the average cash rent for corn and soybean land in the state for 2011 is \$214 per acre, an increase of \$30 per acre or 16 percent from a year earlier. "This is the largest one-year increase since the statewide survey was started in 1994," said Edwards. "Even more interesting was the range of typical rents reported."

The range represents the highest and lowest estimates for typical rents in each county submitted by survey respondents, not rents for individual farms. In most counties, the lower end of the range was about the same as in 2010, but the high end of the range was as much as \$50 to \$100 an acre above the previous year.

Average rents were higher in all nine crop reporting districts, with increases ranging from \$23 per acre (12 percent) in east central Iowa to \$37 per acre (21 percent) in southwest Iowa. The average in Shelby County went from \$197 in 2010 to \$225 in the 2011 survey. "Individual farm rents that were set before

the Sept. 1, 2010 termination deadline probably changed very little,” Edwards said. “Rents that were negotiated later likely reflected the higher corn and soybean prices being offered then.”

The intent of the Iowa State survey is to report typical rents in force, not the highest or lowest values heard through informal sources. Rental values were estimated by asking more than 3,000 people familiar with the land market what they thought were typical rates in their county for high, medium and low quality row crop land, as well as for oats, hay and pasture acres. The number of responses received this year was 1,567, an increase of 25 percent over last year. Of these, 33 percent came from farmers, 24 percent from landowners, 22 percent from professional farm managers, 14 percent from lenders and 7 percent from other professionals. The Cash Rental Rates for Iowa 2011 Survey is available online as a downloadable document; from the Ag Decision Maker website, www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c2-10.pdf, and from the ISU Extension online store, www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1851.pdf. Printed copies are also available in the Extension Office.

Western Iowa No-till (WIN) Field Day **Scheduled in June**

The 4th Annual Western Iowa No-till (WIN) Demonstration Field Day is planned for June 14 at the Carstens 1880 Farmstead just south of Shelby, Iowa. Registration and vendor displays will open at 8 a.m. on the 14th; with speakers beginning at 9 a.m. Topics at this year’s field day will include creating an effective weed management program for no-till, an overview of emerging technology in no-till equipment, planter settings and an update on grain marketing. Lunch will be provided free of charge to all in attendance, including steak sandwiches grilled by the East Pottawattamie County Cattlemen. Ernie Nelson, a no-till farmer from Merville, will deliver the keynote address after lunch. The afternoon will also include a special feature on precision agriculture equipment and data utilization, as well as a weather outlook from Elwynn Taylor.

Anyone with an interest in soil stewardship, from long-time no-till producers to those who are

interested in learning more about no-till, is encouraged to attend this daylong educational event. Over 200 ag producers and ag professionals attended the 2010 event, learning about residue management, crop rotation, fertilizer management and other considerations for a successful no-till program. In addition to the educational sessions at the 2011 WIN Field Day, there will be plenty of time for farmers to visit informational displays, vendor exhibits and network with other producers. CCA Credits will also be available for Certified Crop Advisors needing additional continuing education units this year.

There is no charge to attend this event, but pre-registration is required by June 9th. Registration can be completed by e-mailing csgorham@iastate.edu or by calling the Harrison County Extension Office at 888-644-2105. Registrations may also be faxed to 712-644-2100 or be mailed to: ISU Extension Harrison County, 304 East 7th St., Logan, IA 51546. The complete schedule and registration form are posted on the Web at www.extension.iastate.edu/harrison, or can be picked up at your local NRCS or ISU Extension Office in Harrison, Pottawattamie or Shelby County.

The field day is brought to you by NRCS, ISU Extension and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) in Harrison, Pottawattamie and Shelby Counties. Sponsors for the day include Farm Bureau, Iowa Corn Growers Association, Farmers & Merchants State Bank, Shelby County State Bank, Brokaw Supply Company, United Bank of Iowa, the Iowa Soybean Association, A&M Green Power, Titan Machinery, K & K Enterprises, The Farm Service Company, Heartland Technology Solutions, Sorensen Equipment Company and Heartland Ag.

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Hiring Professional Tree Services

In some tree damage situations, the homeowner can clean up fallen material and remove damaged branches on smaller trees. But in many cases, a tree care professional needs to be hired to manage the situation safely. According to Jesse Randall, ISU Extension forester, examples of situations where a tree care professional should be consulted include: the tree needing repair is near utility lines, the repair work requires climbing, removal of large branches is required or the tree is leaning on a structure or an adjacent tree.

"In cases of widespread tree damage it is not unusual for individuals calling themselves 'tree specialists' to start showing up throughout the area looking for work. Owning a truck and a chainsaw does not automatically qualify someone as a tree care professional," said Randall. "Most people in the tree care profession call themselves arborists."

Arborists are people who specialize in the management and care of individual trees, and their education and/or training is in the field of tree care. There are qualified arborists throughout the state, but Randall advises Iowans to protect themselves and their property by considering the following suggestions when dealing with storm damaged trees and hiring individuals or companies for tree care services.

When hiring tree removal:

1) Before anything is done, be sure any trees in question are on your property. If the tree is in the public right-of-way contact your local city officials to see who is responsible for managing trees in these locations.

2) If your tree is immediately adjacent to power lines, contact your local utility for potential assistance with pruning of broken branches or removal of hazardous trees. Do not prune around utility lines. This work should be done by trained professionals only.

3) Beware of people knocking on your door offering to work on your tree. Most established arborists do not create new business by going door-to-door.

4) In some communities arborists must be licensed to work within city limits, so check with city hall to see if this is a requirement and for a possible list of licensed arborists. If you live outside of a community or there is no list available from city hall, check the yellow pages in the phone book for a listing of tree care professionals under the heading Tree Services or Tree Care. Also, check with friends or neighbors who have had work done by a reputable company or individual.

5) Make sure the individual or company has insurance for personal and property damage, and workers compensation. Ask for evidence of this insurance. In some cases communities have ordinances that specify insurance requirements for arborists; contact city hall for this information.

6) Ask for, and check, local references or past clients.

7) If time permits, obtain tree work estimates from several arborists. Make sure to get a written estimate listing all work to be done. Read through the details carefully, and be sure you understand what will be done. The cost of good tree care is not cheap. Most arborists have a heavy investment in equipment, labor, safety training and insurance; a bid for a job has to reflect many of those costs.

8) Before the work starts, obtain some type of written contract that specifies what will be done, how it will be accomplished, the costs, and the start and completion dates for the job.

9) Don't pay for the job until everything agreed upon is completed.

10) Finally, arborists will be very busy for weeks and possibly months helping concerned clients following a major storm, so be patient and prepared to wait to get your needed work completed. In most cases, tree services will try to get to you immediately if your tree is a danger to people or surrounding structures.

For more information on taking care of your damaged tree or trees, contact your local Iowa State University Extension office.

Online Air Quality Tool Can Help Livestock Producers Lower Emissions

Livestock producers now have access to a new tool that can help them lower air emissions and increase their air emissions knowledge. More than 20 university professionals and 15 partner agencies joined forces to create the [National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool](#) (NAQSAT), a method for determining where air-quality improvement opportunities exist on farms.

“NAQSAT was developed mainly for educational purposes, and using it is completely voluntary,” said Angela Rieck-Hinz, Iowa State University Extension specialist, who helped design the tool. “Though results may be more valuable when NAQSAT is used in cooperation with Extension educators, agency personnel or private consultants, it is completely Internet-based and can be done privately. It isn’t designed to provide emissions data and/or regulatory direction, but to help producers who are looking for guidance.”

Swine, dairy, beef, broiler chicken, laying hen and turkey farmers can use NAQSAT. It addresses eight management categories that relate to air emissions: animals and housing, feed and water, collection and transfer of manure, manure storage, land application, mortalities, on-farm records and public perception. Users of the tool are asked a series of questions under each category. Only questions that pertain to the operation currently being evaluated will be asked. Pop-up pictures assist the user in determining the relative rating to select when questions require a visual evaluation of the existing practices.

NAQSAT allows users to run different scenarios to compare proposed changes in management and/or emission mitigation practices. Different management techniques or new mitigation practices may result in trade-offs where the new practice reduces the emission of one constituent of concern while at the same time increasing the emission of another. Running multiple scenarios of NAQSAT identifies these trade-offs before producers invest large sums in control practices that

don’t fully meet their needs or goals. NAQSAT is available online at <http://naqsat.tamu.edu>. All sessions are strictly confidential and no farm identification is required to access the tool.

A partnership with the Livestock and Poultry Environmental (LPE) Learning Center is making it possible for beef and dairy producers to learn how to use the tool in a Web cast found at <http://bit.ly/NAQSATBeefDairy>. Swine and poultry producers may find a similar Web cast at www.extension.org/pages/NAQSAT_for_Swine_and_Poultry.

“Whether it is a large operation worried about greenhouse gas emissions or a small farm worried about public image and odor, NAQSAT provides valuable insight for farmers,” Rieck-Hinz said.

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grant program partially funded development of NAQSAT. In Iowa, funding was also provided by the Iowa Turkey Federation, the Iowa Pork Producers Association, Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Iowa State University Extension. For more information on the tool, contact Rieck-Hinz at amrieck@iastate.edu or 515-294-9590.

..and justice for all

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