



Ag & Hort Update



January – February 2009

Happy New Year! I am a little behind with the January newsletter so I will be combining January and February this month. I hope all is well so far in 2009 and I wish you much success in the upcoming year.

Kent Ganzer

Important Dates:

January 27 = Confinement Site Manure CIC Class, Shelby County Extension Office @ 1:30 p.m.

January 28-29 = Iowa Pork Congress, Des Moines

January 29 = Crop Advantage Series, Cass Co. Community Bldg., All Day

February 8-15 = Iowa Beef Expo, Des Moines

February 16 = Presidents' Day, Office Closed

February 18 = BRaNDs Software Training

February 19 = FSQA Training, Shelby County Extension Office, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

February 19 = Farm Business Succession Planning, MMC Auble Room, 6:00 p.m.

Confinement Site Manure Applicator's Training

Confinement site manure applicators are required to attend two hours of training annually to maintain their manure certification. Applicators choosing not to participate in the training can take a test once every three years.

There has been a steady increase in numbers of certified applicators the past several years; manure has become a valuable commodity. This certification applies to anyone that handles, transports and land-applies manure from a confinement site facility; facilities that have manure management plans in place must be certified – including the crop producer.

Producers who do not own any livestock but who haul manure from a confinement site facility with more than 500 animal units and land apply manure to their own fields must also be certified. Training for Harrison and Shelby Counties will take place Tuesday January 27 at the Shelby County Extension office at 1:30 p.m. For more information: www.agronext.iastate.edu/immag/mac.html

Crop Advantage Series

Growers can gain an advantage by attending this year's 2009 crop advantage series in Atlantic. Fungicides, aphids and crop yields are among the featured topics which are sponsored by Iowa State University Extension.

The 2009 crop advantage meeting will take place Thursday January 29 in Atlantic at the Cass County Community Building. The pre-registration fee is \$35.00 if received by January 22 or \$45 at the door. The program will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will run until 3:30 p.m. Lunch, refreshments and all learning materials are included. CCA credits will be available for an extra \$25.00. Topics include; fertilizer decisions, soybean aphids, changes in cost of production, fungicide trials and more. For more information and to register, please visit: www.cropadvantage.org

What types of containers are suitable for starting seeds indoors?

Various containers can be used to germinate and grow transplants. Gardeners can purchase flats, trays, pots, compressed peat pellets and other products. Previously used flats, trays and pots should be cleaned and disinfected before use. Wash the containers in soapy water, and then disinfect them in a solution of one part chlorine bleach and nine parts water. Cut-off milk cartons, plastic jugs, paper cups, plastic food boxes and other containers also can be used to start seeds. Holes should be punched in the bottom of milk cartons, jugs and similar containers to allow for drainage.

Can hollies be successfully grown in Iowa?

American holly (*Ilex opaca*) and English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) are prized for their glossy, green leaves and brightly colored fruit. Sprigs of both hollies are often used in wreaths, centerpieces and other Christmas decorations. Unfortunately, American and English hollies are not reliably hardy in Iowa. However, winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) and Meserve hybrid hollies (*Ilex x meserveae*) can be successfully grown in the state.

Hollies are dioecious. Dioecious plant species produce male and female flowers on separate plants. Only female holly plants produce the red, berry-like fruit. However, a male plant is required for pollination and fruit set.

While most hollies are evergreen, winterberry is deciduous (loses all of its leaves in the fall). Winterberry grows 6 to 10 feet tall. The fruit on female plants turn bright red in fall and persists into winter. (Birds eventually devour the fruit.) Excellent fruiting varieties include 'Sparkleberry,' 'Winter Red,' 'Afterglow' and 'Red Sprite.' 'Jim Dandy' is a good pollinator for 'Afterglow' and 'Red Sprite.' 'Southern Gentleman' pollinates 'Winter Red' and 'Sparkleberry.'

Meserve hybrid hollies are evergreens. 'Blue Prince,' 'Blue Princess,' 'Blue Boy' and 'Blue Girl' have dark, bluish green foliage and are often referred to as blue hollies. The female varieties have colorful red fruit. Other attractive Meserve hybrids include China Boy® and China Girl®. Meserve hollies are variable in height. Most varieties grow five to 10 feet tall. They are hardy to minus 20° F (USDA Hardiness Zone 5).

How can I obtain mail-order garden catalogs?

Hundreds of garden catalogs are available from companies throughout the United States. Some companies specialize in specific plants, such as perennials, bulbs, roses or fruits. Other companies offer a wide assortment of plant materials and garden accessories.

A beginning gardener may obtain catalogs by contacting the companies. Addresses and/or mailing cards can be found in the winter issues of many gardening magazines, such as Horticulture and Organic

Gardening. Catalogs can also be requested from the web site of the Mail order Gardening Association (www.mailordergardening.com) and other Internet sites. While many catalogs are free, some companies charge a small fee. If you have ordered from a company within the past one or two years, you will likely be sent a catalog automatically.

Colors in the Winter Landscape

In Iowa, the predominant colors of the home landscape in late fall and winter are white and various shades of gray and brown. An excellent way to brighten the drab winter landscape is to plant evergreens (pine, spruce, fir, etc.) and trees and shrubs that possess colorful fruit or bark.

Colorful Fruit:

While crabapples (*Malus spp.*) are usually planted for their flowers, many varieties also possess attractive, persistent fruit. Crabapple varieties with red fruit include 'Adirondack,' 'David,' 'Donald Wyman,' Red Jewel™, and Sugar Tyme®. 'Indian Magic' and 'Professor Sprenger' have reddish orange fruit, while Harvest Gold® and Golden Raindrops® are yellow-fruited crabapple varieties.

Hawthorns (*Crataegus spp.*) are another group of small, flowering trees that possess attractive fruit. Hawthorns produce white flowers in spring. In fall, its small (1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter) fruit turn red and persist into winter. Two hawthorns noted for their excellent fruit displays are the Washington hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*) and 'Winter King' hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King').

The American cranberrybush viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum*) is an excellent shrub for screens, hedges and mixed shrub borders. The shrub grows eight to 12 feet tall and produces flat-topped clusters of white flowers in spring. Its fruit turn bright red in fall and persist into winter. 'Hahs' is a compact variety (grows approximately six to eight feet tall) that produces large, attractive fruit. 'Wentworth' grows 10 to 12 feet tall. Its fruit change from yellow-red to bright red in fall.

Most evergreen hollies are not reliably hardy in Iowa. However, several Meserve hybrid hollies (*Ilex x meserveae*) can be successfully grown in the state. 'Blue Prince,' 'Blue Princess,' 'Blue Boy,' 'Blue Girl,' China Boy® and China Girl® have dark, bluish green foliage and are hardy to -10 to -20 F (USDA Hardiness Zone 5). The female varieties produce attractive red fruit. (Hollies are dioecious. Dioecious plant species produce male and female flowers on separate plants. Only female plants produce fruit. However, a male plant is required for pollination and fruit set. Maximum fruit production can be obtained by planting several female plants and one or two males.)

The brightly colored fruit of many of the aforementioned trees and shrubs do not remain throughout the winter. Very cold temperatures in winter eventually cause many of the fruit to turn reddish brown or black. Hungry birds and squirrels may also devour the fruit. However, the fruit display in late fall and early winter can be spectacular.

Attractive Bark:

Selecting trees and shrubs with colorful bark is another way to add interest to the winter landscape.

A widely planted tree that possesses attractive, exfoliating bark is the river birch (*Betula nigra*). The exfoliating bark varies from salmon white to reddish brown. Often planted as a multi-stemmed specimen or "clump," the river birch may eventually reach a height of 40 to 50 feet.

Two small ornamental trees with exfoliating bark are the paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) and Amur chokecherry (*Prunus maackii*). The paperbark maple grows 20 to 30 feet tall, possesses cinnamon to reddish

brown exfoliating bark and is hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 8. The bark characteristics of the Amur chokecherry are highly variable. Bark color varies from brownish yellow to cinnamon brown. Some exhibit little or no bark exfoliation, while others exfoliate heavily. The Amur chokecherry grows 30 to 35 feet tall.

One of the most beautiful sights in winter is the bright red twigs of the redosier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) set against a backdrop of newly fallen snow. Native to Iowa, the redosier dogwood grows six to 10 feet tall. Several colorful varieties are available. 'Cardinal' has bright, cherry red stems. 'Alleman's Compact' is a compact (grows four to five feet tall), red-stemmed variety. 'Flaviramea' has yellow stems.

There are also several varieties of willow that possess colorful bark. The 'Flame' willow (*Salix* 'Flame') has reddish orange stems. The stems of the coral bark willow (*Salix alba* 'Britzensis') vary from yellow-orange to orange-red.

The redosier dogwood and willows should be pruned on a frequent basis as the young shoots possess the brightest colors. The 'Flame' and coral bark willows should be pruned annually. Cut plants back to near ground level in late winter. The redosier dogwood requires less pruning. In late winter, remove approximately one-third of the oldest stems near ground level.

When selecting trees and shrubs for the home landscape, we often choose plants that have attractive spring flowers or colorful fall foliage. However, don't forget to include some trees and shrubs that possess colorful fruit or bark in winter. *Information provided by Richard Jauron*

Farm Business Succession Planning – What to do when you don't own the farm (yet)

The Audubon, Crawford, Harrison, East Pottawattamie and Shelby County Farm Bureau Offices invite you to their planning meeting on Thursday February 19 at Myrtue Memorial Hospital's Auble Room starting at 6:00 p.m. This workshop will introduce business and estate succession concepts and provide insights for engaging a discussion on these topics with the ownership generation. Even though you may not currently own the land that you are farming, you need to know how a successful transfer of land and assets can work. We will introduce you to a number of planning tools and options that are available to build the best approach for your family's farming business.

Tentative Agenda:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 6:00 p.m. | Dinner |
| 6:45 p.m. | Farm Succession Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Business Planning and Buy-Sell Agreements* Estate Planning* Capital Gains Tax and Estate Tax Issues* Comparison of Wills and Trusts* And Much More |
| 9:00 p.m. | Adjourn |

This program is brought to you by Farm Bureau Financial Services