

Mahaska County
Iowa State University Extension
212 North I Street
Oskaloosa IA 52577
Phone: 641-673-5841 Fax: 641-673-0559
www.extension.iastate.edu/mahaska
Office Hours: Monday-Friday
8am –1 pm, 1:30 –4:30 pm



At the Garden Gate



November December 2011

Mahaska County Extension Horticulture Newsletter

Master Gardener Meeting

The Mahaska County Master Gardeners will meet on **Tuesday, November 1 at 6 pm**. Committee meetings will follow the business meeting.

Trash Can Composter Workshop

Thursday December 8, 7 pm

Come learn about a method of making “black gold” (compost) utilizing a minimum amount of space.



The Mahaska County Master Gardeners will teach how to convert plastic trash cans into garden composters. Participants who wish to make a composter should bring a larger plastic trash can with lid. If you have a cordless drill and 1/4” (or larger) bit please bring them also.

This workshop is free and open to the public. Observers are welcome also. Additional composting resources will be available.

Training to be held for New 4-H Judges

Iowa State University Extension & Outreach will be holding training for adults interested in becoming a conference judge for youth with 4-H exhibits at county fair.

This training will cover positive youth development, how to evaluate, educate and encourage during conference judging and 4-H exhibit expectations and guidelines. This training will be delivered by Iowa

(Continued on page 2)

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.

(Continued from page 1)

State University Extension Youth Program Specialists, current 4-H Judges and youth.

4-H Conference judging is done during county fairs for non-livestock 4-H exhibits. As a judge you are able to select your area(s) of expertise and how far you are willing to travel. Through conference judging you are able to hear directly from the 4-H'er how they completed their goal, lessons learned, future plans, as well as offer positive constructive feedback. Exhibits judged at the county fair are selected to represent the county at the Iowa State Fair.

Project areas include: Creative Art (Music, Photography & Visual Art), Agriculture & Natural Resources (Crop Production, Environment & Sustainability, Horticulture, Outdoor Adventures, Safety & Education in Shooting Sports), Family & Consumer Science (Child Development, Clothing, Consumer Management, Food & Nutrition, Health, Home Improvement, Sewing & Needle Art), Personal Development (Citizenship, Communication, Leadership, & Self-determined), and Science & Engineering (Mechanics, Woodworking, & other Science, Engineering & Technology).

Training for new 4-H Judges will be held Saturday, November 19 from 9 am to noon at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds Activity Building, 2606 E. Burlington Ave, Fairfield.

Please register by November 4 by contacting the Jefferson County Extension Office at 641-472-4166. Cost for the training is \$20, payable at the door. After attending the training and submitting a Judges Preference Form, your name will be entered in the statewide 4-H Judge's Database for county contacts.

For more information on judge's training contact Youth Program Specialist Kati Peiffer by phone 641/233-7238 or email KPeiffer@iastate.edu. For information on the 4-H Program in Mahaska county please contact Amy VerMeer-Brainard by calling 641-673-5841 or email vermeera@iastate.edu.

Upcoming Events

- November 1** *Master Gardener Business Meeting 6 pm*
committee meetings will follow
- November 24 & 25** *MCEO closed for Holiday*
- November 28** *Lil Gardeners Clover Kids 5:30 –6:30 pm*
Junior Gardeners 4-H 7 pm
- December 8** *Trash Can Composter Workshop 7 pm*
- December 23 & 26** *MCEO closed for Holiday*
- December 27 & 29** *4-H Try-It Days 9 am—3 pm*
- January 1, 2012** *MCEO closed for Holiday*

If you want more information about any of the Mahaska County Extension horticulture events or have horticulture questions, please contact Suzette Striegel, Mahaska County Extension Horticulturist by calling 641-673-5841 or emailing striegel@iastate.edu.

2012 Garden Calendar is Available!

Enjoy public gardens of Iowa all year long with this beautiful calendar that shows off many of the state's natural treasures.

The Public Gardens of Iowa information is complete with locations, websites, and hours of operation, so you can plan excursions to these sources of civic pride and gardening know-how.

In addition to stunning and inspirational photographs, every page provides tips on what you should be doing in your garden during the month. Gardening resources, such as web sites and publications, are also listed. Cost is only \$6.



2012 Garden Calendar
celebrating
Public Gardens of Iowa

November Garden To Do List

- Thoroughly water newly planted evergreens before the ground freezes
- Plant a windowsill herb garden
- Winterize lawn mowers and clean garden tools
- Rotate houseplants to prevent one-sided growth
- Purchase 3 foot high fencing for rabbit protection
- Mulch strawberries with 3-5 inches of straw
- Fence young trees and shrubs to prevent rabbit damage
- Cover bottom portion of hybrid tea roses with soil
- Create a vegetable centerpiece for the Thanksgiving table
- Mulch newly planted perennials to prevent frost heaving
- Avoid wetting the leaves of African violets



December Garden To Do List

- Place poinsettias in a bright location away from drafts
- Purchase garden hand tools for stocking stuffers
- Hang pine cones and garden items on your Christmas tree
- Keep the Christmas tree stand full of water
- Carefully brush heavy snow on evergreens
- Enjoy your preserved garden produce during the holidays
- Share your homemade jams and jellies with friends and neighbors
- Mix sand and salt to de-ice driveways and sidewalks
- Purchase the 2012 ISU Extension garden calendar & purchase extra garden calendars to give as gifts
- Browse gardening books at bookstores
- Visit seed company website for planting ideas for next year's garden
- Have a neighbor check your houseplants when you're away from home

These items are from the 2011 ISU Extension Garden Calendar.

Lil' Gardeners Clover Kids Group and Junior Gardeners 4-H Club

will meet **Monday, November 28**. The theme is Winter Bird Feeding. We will be making bird feeders. *Please contact the office if you plan to attend. There is a supply list of recycled items to bring for making the birdfeeders*

Lil' Gardeners Clover Kids (for grades K-3) meets 5:30-6:30 pm and Junior Gardeners 4-H (for grades 4-12) meets at 7 pm.

Lil' Gardeners and Junior Gardeners are special interest 4-H clubs. If you are already a member of one 4-H club in Mahaska county, you do not pay an additional enrollment fee to join. If only joining one of these 4-H groups, you will need to pay the enrollment fee (\$15 for Lil' Gardeners and \$30 for Junior Gardeners). For more information, please contact Suzette Striegel at the Mahaska County Extension Office.



4-H Try It Days

Mahaska County 4-Hers will have an opportunity to try different exhibits of many project areas (including horticulture) this winter break (December 27 and 29). Please check the December 4-H newsletter for details.

Beekeeping Classes

Beekeeping classes will be held in Oskaloosa this winter. Classes will meet Thursday evenings **January 19-March 1, at 6:30 pm at the Mahaska County Extension office, 212 North I Street Oskaloosa.** Cost for the seven classes is \$30.



For more information, or to enroll call Craig Greene at 641-842-2112. Young people are encouraged to attend. This project is supported in part by Marion County Extension, Mahaska County Extension, and Back to Basics Bee Club.

Live Christmas Trees

For many individuals, planting a live Christmas tree into the landscape after the holidays has a special appeal. However, planting an evergreen in winter in Iowa is a difficult proposition. Our harsh, winter weather (extreme cold, rapidly fluctuating temperatures, and dry winds) is often too much for the tree to endure.



If you are considering a live tree for Christmas, proper preparation and care of the tree are essential. Transplanting success can be increased by following the steps outlined below.

1. Choose a suitable planting site for the tree in fall. The site should provide adequate space for the tree to grow and develop.
2. Prepare the planting site in fall before the ground freezes. Remove the soil and place it in a location where it will not freeze. Fill the hole with straw.
3. Select a small, container-grown or balled and burlapped tree from a local nursery or garden center. A small tree has a much better chance of survival when planted outdoors. A small tree is also less expensive and easier to handle. (The size and weight of a large tree can make lugging the tree into the house and through doorways a real challenge.)
4. Store the tree in a cool garage, shed, or porch if it is purchased two or three weeks before Christmas. Make sure the soil is kept moist, but does not freeze.
5. Place the tree in a tub or large saucer when brought indoors to prevent damage to carpets or hardwood floors. Set the tree in a cool location within the home. Avoid sites near heat sources, such as a fireplace, registers, etc.
6. The tree should be kept indoors for only a short period. The shorter the tree's stay indoors, the better its chances of survival

(Continued on page 5)

ISU Extension (ISUE) Publications Of Interest

RG 205	Store Pesticide Wisely
RG 308	Growing Holiday Cacti
RG 311	Growing and Overwintering Tender Perennials
RG 316	Poinsettia Care
RG 320	Growing and Overwintering Geraniums
RG 328	Growing Amaryllis
RG 401	Ornamental Grasses with Winter Interest
CSI 3	<u>Suitable for Gift Giving</u> Weed Identification Field Guide (pocket size)
PM 212	Landscape Plants for the Midwest
PM 713	Indoor Plants
PM 1942	Annuals
PM 1913	Perennials for Shade
PM 1914	Perennials for Sun
PM 1943	Deciduous Shrubs
PM 1966	The Garden Guide to Midwest Annuals and Perennials
PM 2004	Home Landscape: Understanding the Basics of Landscape Design

These publications (as well as many others) are available to purchase or download at any county Extension office or at the ISUE online store. The online store has changed their website. The address is now <https://store.extension.iastate.edu>

(Continued from page 7)

prudently. Before applying salt, wait until the precipitation has ended and remove as much of the ice and snow as possible. Mix salt with an abrasive material. Fifty pounds of sand mixed with one pound of salt works effectively. Avoid piling salt-laden snow and ice around trees and shrubs. While the amount of salt applied to major roadways can not be controlled, steps can be taken to minimize damage. As soon as the ground thaws in early spring, heavily water areas where salt accumulates over winter. A thorough soaking should help flush the salt from the plant's root zone. If possible, alter the drainage pattern so winter run-off drains away from ornamental plants. When planting trees near major streets or highways, select salt tolerant tree species.

This article was prepared by Richard Jauron, Iowa State University, Department of Horticulture. It originally appeared in Horticulture and Home Pest News November 8, 2002.

Mulching for Winter Protection

Mulch for winter protection of perennials can be in the form of shredded leaves, straw, pine needles, etc. It is commonly thought covering perennial plants with mulch in the fall keeps them from freezing. While mulch does help to insulate the soil, the soil and the vegetation above the soil usually freeze.

However, there are benefits from mulching.

Foremost, mulch helps the soil temperature change to be gradual. Additionally mulch reduces the heaving of the plant crown caused by the freeze / thaw cycle.

Mulch also helps to maintain cool soil temperatures in the spring, or gradually warming up, thus preventing the damage that can occur to plants when they emerge before air temperatures are continually warm enough to sustain them. Usually April is a good time to remove mulch, but gardeners should be prepared to cover plants if a late freeze is predicted. Keep the removed mulch accessible for use if this occurs.

Mulch should be applied to perennials (especially the marginally hardy ones) in late fall when there is some frost on the ground and removed in the spring when soil temperatures have warmed and active growth on the plants is noticeable.

(Continued from page 4)

when planted outdoors. The maximum stay indoors should be 7 to 10 days. If the tree is kept indoors for a longer period, the tree's buds may break dormancy. When planted outdoors, the succulent new growth will be killed by cold temperatures.

7. Carefully decorate the tree with ornaments, garland, and lights (preferably the miniature types). Don't apply flocking or artificial snow to the tree.

8. Keep the soil moist throughout the tree's stay indoors. Check the soil daily and water as needed.

9. Shortly after Christmas, remove the tree from the house and place it in a cool location. (Don't place the tree directly outdoors. The sharply colder temperatures outdoors may injure the tree.) A short stay (several days) in a cool garage, shed, etc., allows the tree to become gradually acclimated to cooler temperatures. The soil should not be allowed to freeze during this period.

10. On a mild winter day, remove the straw from the planting area and plant the tree outdoors. Water well and mulch the area heavily to prevent the soil from freezing immediately.

Individuals should carefully consider the requirements and risks associated with a live Christmas tree. An evergreen can be successfully planted outdoors after the holidays. However, proper site preparation and good tree care are essential.

This article was prepared by Richard Jauron, Iowa State University, Department of Horticulture. It originally appeared in Horticulture and Home Pest News November 17, 2010.

Deicing Compounds and the Home Landscape

Snow and ice are headaches for motorists and pedestrians. To promote public safety, deicing compounds are used to melt ice and snow on sidewalks, driveways, and highways. While deicing materials are necessary for safe winter travel, they can damage automobiles, concrete surfaces, and landscape plants.

(Continued on page 6)

Most deicing materials are salts that melt ice by lowering the freezing point of water below 32 F. However, a few other materials can be used on icy and snowy surfaces. Advantages and disadvantages of several commonly used deicing agents are discussed below.

Deicing Compounds

Sodium chloride (NaCl) is commonly known as table salt or rock salt. It is the least expensive and most widely used deicing compound. Sodium chloride is most effective when temperatures are above 15 F. Unfortunately, NaCl is highly corrosive and can damage plants. High levels of sodium are also detrimental to soil structure.

Calcium chloride (CaCl₂) dissolves easily and acts quickly. It is also effective in extremely cold temperatures (-20 F) and leaves no visible residue when dry. Calcium chloride is highly corrosive to concrete and metals. It is slightly less damaging to plants than sodium chloride.

Potassium chloride (KCl) is a naturally occurring material used as a fertilizer (0-0-60) and deicing material. KCl is highly corrosive, but is less damaging to plants than sodium chloride.

Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) is a salt-free deicing compound made from dolomitic limestone and acetic acid. CMA is effective to 20 F. It causes little or no damage to landscape plants and is less corrosive than deicing salts. Unfortunately, CMA is quite expensive (as much as 20 to 30 times more expensive than sodium chloride) and is not widely available.

Abrasive materials, such as sand, cinders, and ash, don't melt ice and snow, but improve traction on slippery surfaces. While these materials are inexpensive and not harmful to plants, they are often tracked indoors and treated surfaces often need to be cleaned in spring.

Effects of Deicing Salts

Deicing salts (NaCl, CaCl₂, and KCl) can damage landscape plants when excessive amounts accumulate in the soil. The most serious damage typically occurs near major streets and highways

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

where salt from run-off accumulates in the nearby soil. Excessive use of salt by homeowners can also create problems. Trees, shrubs, perennials, and turfgrass are susceptible to salt damage. Additionally, spray from passing vehicles can damage roadside plants, particularly evergreens.

Salts affect plant growth in several ways. When high levels of salt are present in the soil, plants are unable to absorb sufficient water even though soil moisture is plentiful. Plants suffer a salt-induced water shortage termed "physiological drought." High levels of salt restrict the uptake of essential nutrients, such as magnesium, by the plant's roots. Excessive amounts of sodium and chloride ions in plant tissue are toxic to many plants. Soil structure is damaged by high levels of sodium. Salt deposited directly on plant foliage can cause dehydration of plant tissue.

The symptoms of salt injury to deciduous trees and shrubs include stunted growth, marginal leaf scorch, early fall coloration, and twig dieback. Accumulation of salt in the soil over several years may result in progressive decline and eventual death.

Salt damage to evergreens results in yellowing or browning of the needles and twig dieback. Evergreens near heavily salted roadways are often damaged by salt spray. Damage is most severe on the side of the plant nearest the highway.

The severity of damage depends on many factors. The more salt that is applied to icy and snowy surfaces, the greater the runoff into nearby soils. The degree of salt damage also depends on soil type, amount of rainfall, direction of run-off, and prevailing winds. The condition and type of plant material is also important. Healthy, vigorous plants are much more tolerant of salt than poorly growing specimens. White ash, Honeylocust, and Norway maple are salt tolerant, while sugar maple, hackberry, littleleaf linden, and white pine are highly sensitive.

Salt Injury Prevention

Homeowners can minimize salt damage by using deicing salts

(Continued on page 8)