

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Mills County Extension
61321 315th St; P.O. Box 430
Malvern, IA 51551
712-624-8616

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills>

Prepared by: Shirley D Miller, Mills County Master Gardener
Coordinator and Mills County Horticulture Program Assistant

March 2023



“Spring into Spring”

It is that time of year we all look forward to. Garden conferences, symposiums and seminars! That chance to go an event designed for garden enthusiast of all ages and abilities! What a great way to get new fresh ideas.

The Speakers subjects vary. Everything from new gardening plants to new ways to garden. Insects to birds. There are so many subjects to choose from. This is a chance to get research information. Listen to someone who has actually done the things they are speaking about. You can ask question, get printed educational material. Watch and learn from the demonstrations. Purchase items from the Garden themed vendors. Meet other Gardeners from your community.

Often you have to pre-register for these events. Registrations on-line have made it so easy to register and pay with a credit card. But you can still send registrations in by mail if you wish to pay by check.

To see if there are any educational events like these in your area, check the website of your county's ISU Extension and Outreach.

Here are the local Garden conferences in our area with links with more information and to register.

March 25th: Mills County: “Spring into Spring” garden symposium, Lakin Center, Malvern, IA
"Spring into Spring"

April 1st: West Pottawattamie: Spring Garden Conference, Arts Center on the Iowa Western Community College campus, Council Bluffs, IA
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/westpottawattamie/news/spring-garden-conference-april-1-2023>

April 1st: Cass County: Spring Garden Seminar, Cass County Community Center, Atlantic, IA
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/cass/cass-county-master-gardeners-host-spring-garden-seminar-april-1>



When and what to Prune

Flowers and Shrubs

Don't prune spring flowering shrubs at this time! If you have spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia, quince, lilac, azaleas, or others, don't prune them in the spring. Pruning in late winter and early spring can cut off flower buds. The best time to prune spring flowering shrubs is right after they bloom. Most of these shrubs bloom on old wood so if you want to prune you can remove 1/3 to 2/3 of the plant right after flowering. Then, let the plant recover and grow next year's branches and flowers.



Once Again, plants that bloom in early spring usually produce their flower buds the year before. The buds over winter on the previous year's growth and open in spring. If you prune these spring bloomers in fall or winter you'll remove the flower

buds and won't have flowers that year. The plants will recover, but you'll miss a year of blooms. Most of these plants don't need heavy pruning every year, just some selective thinning of branches to give them a nice shape.

Pruning myths

Many gardeners labor under the belief that they must prune regularly to keep their shrubs in good condition. Not true. Even in the case of shrubs where it is recommended once-yearly pruning, like panicle hydrangeas and roses, it's not imperative. It simply leads to a more compact plant with better blooming. Pruning common shrubs like lilacs, forsythia and burning bush into tight mounds is not only unnecessary but isn't that great for the plants, either. Many flowering shrubs will look their best when allowed to grow in their natural form or habit. Frequent shearing encourages lots of surface branching, possibly resulting in an unhealthy structure and reduced flowering. If you really want a tightly sheared look in your garden, choose a plant that is suited for that, like a boxwood.

Summer Flowering Shrubs

Shrubs blooming in the summer can be pruned in late winter or early spring. Many of these shrubs bloom on the current year's growth. Pruning them back in later winter encourages them to produce lots of new growth that summer and will result in more flowers. If the shrub has not started its spring growth yet, you still have time to do some early spring trimming. Don't be afraid to cut fast growing plants, such as buddleia or caryopteris, down to as little as 10-12" tall. The exception to all these rules, is hydrangeas.



Hydrangeas.

Hydrangeas alone account for at least half the pruning questions for gardeners. Some bloom on "old wood", while others bloom on "new wood". You'll need to identify what kind of hydrangea you have. *Hydrangea macrophylla* and *Hydrangea serrata*, the ones with big blue or pink flowers, and *Hydrangea quercifolia*, oakleaf hydrangeas,

all bloom on old wood. The little pruning they need should be done immediately after flowering.

Hydrangea paniculata, which have white, conical flowers, and *Hydrangea arborescens*, such as 'Annabelle', bloom on new wood. They'll produce better flowers if cut back in late fall or early spring.

Light Trimming of Shrubs Anytime.

It's still okay to do light trimming anytime. We are often confronted with stray shoots & branches in late summer and worry about removing them. Go ahead and cut them back. The plant won't be damaged by removing a branch or two. In summary, don't worry! Your landscaping plants don't need as much pruning as you may think. The tricky part is determining when to trim a particular plant. Just remember the simple rule, prune summer bloomers in late winter and spring bloomers right after flowering. The exception is hydrangeas. Stray or broken branches can be trimmed back anytime. If you make a mistake, plants are very forgiving. You may miss a season of blooms, but the plant will recover for next year.



Oak Trees & Oak Wilt – When to trim

Many of us have trees that we need to prune for many different reasons. Obviously, we have no choice when it is storm damage. But trees with low branches in the way of moving safely or those rubbing against buildings, along driveways blocking views for safe entrance or exit, should be done right now!



The following is an Article by: Iowa Department of Natural Resources.(DNR)

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) suggests finishing pruning oak trees by the end of the second week in March to prevent the spread of oak wilt.

"The best way to prevent the spread of oak wilt is to not prune any oak tree between the start of November and the end of March," said Tivon Feeley, forest health program leader with the Iowa

DNR. "However, the warm weather conditions indicate that spring might be a bit early this year and for that reason, we recommend finishing your oak pruning by the end of the second week in March."

Oak wilt, caused by a fungus, has been present in Iowa for many years. Iowa's red, black, and pin oak are more susceptible to oak wilt, but it can also infect white and bur oak. Black, pin, or red oak usually die within the same summer they are infected. White oak and bur oak can often take a number of years before they succumb to this disease.



Oak wilt can spread from infected trees to healthy trees in two ways: a small beetle that carries spores of the fungus from a diseased tree to a healthy tree with an open wound during the growing season, and through root grafts connecting nearby oaks. For example, if a red oak is infected and there is another red oak within 50 to 100 feet, there is a good chance that the roots of these trees are grafted and the fungus can move from the diseased tree to the healthy tree.

Feeley says symptoms to look for on infected trees usually include leaves turning a bronzed brown along the outer margins of the leaves. These leaves can often still have some green on them as they fall from the tree. The defoliation tends to start at the top of the tree.

The best way to prevent the spread of oak wilt is to prevent any wounding to oak trees during the growing season. If a tree is wounded from storm damage or pruning is required during the growing season, treat the wounds immediately with a wound dressing such as acrylic paint. Do not purchase pruning paints/sealants. Those products slow the tree's ability to seal over the wound.

Learn more about oak wilt prevention and control at www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Forest-Health/Oak-Wilt



Bleeding Heart

The bleeding heart plant (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*) gets its common name from its puffy, heart-shaped pink flowers that dangle from long, arching stems. Beneath the heart shape is a protruding white petal that looks like a drop, hence the "bleeding" in bleeding heart. In fact, the bleeding heart flower's meaning is said to be about rejected love, as well as love and romance in general.



Bleeding hearts are shade-loving woodland plants that bloom in the cool of spring. After flowering for several weeks, the plants often will go dormant, disappearing for the rest of the summer if exposed to too much sun or heat. But the roots stay alive, and bleeding heart will come back every year, re-growing either in the fall or next spring. This sensitivity to heat makes establishing new plants more challenging in warmer zones than in colder areas. If it's in a cool shaded area, it will stay a nice green foliage for most of the summer. Bleeding heart plants range in size from around 1 to 3 feet high with a similar spread. The plant has a moderate growth rate, reaching its maximum size in around 60 days. Be mindful about where you plant it, as bleeding heart is toxic to people and pets.



Caring for Bleeding Heart: A bleeding heart plant will produce around 20 small flowers on its stems in the spring that stay in bloom for several weeks. As mentioned, its foliage usually depreciates and enters dormancy in the mid-summer heat. In addition, the flowers are delicate and require protection from strong winds. The best place to

plant a bleeding heart is in an area that has a windbreak as well as some sun protection. Once established, it's fairly easy to take care of a bleeding heart plant. It's not prone to pests and diseases, making it easy to care for. And it slightly drought tolerance, though it still prefers moist soil for the healthiest growth. Bleeding hearts will self-seed as long as the blooms remain on the plants. So bleeding hearts can live indefinitely in your garden. They do not tend to spread uncontrollably.

Light: Bleeding heart does best in partial shade but also can handle full shade. Direct sun can cause the plant to go dormant early, cutting its blooming period short.

Soil: Bleeding heart prefers humus-rich, moist, well-draining soil with lots of organic matter. A slightly acidic to neutral soil pH is best. Prior to planting, it's ideal to work a few inches of compost into the soil, especially if you don't have organically rich soil.

Water: Bleeding heart likes a lightly moist soil. It doesn't tolerate soggy or dry soils very well. Water throughout the growing season when the top inch of soil has dried out, even during summer dormancy to keep the roots hydrated. But make sure the soil doesn't stay waterlogged, which can lead to root rot.

Temperature and Humidity: This plant's ideal temperature is between 55 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit, and it has good tolerance for high humidity. As the summer heat ramps up, you'll likely see the foliage yellowing. This is a perfectly normal sign of the plant going dormant to store its energy.

Fertilizer: Bleeding heart plants are not heavy feeders, so when to fertilize depends on the quality of your soil. If you have rich, organic soil amended every year, you likely won't have to feed at all. If you have poor soil, you can apply an all-purpose, slow-release fertilizer in the spring. Also, as a woodland plant, bleeding heart does well with a top dressing of leaf mold.

Colors and Blooms: There's a few variants of blooms and color, but the pink is the most common.



Melt In Your Mouth Italian Iced Orange Cookies

YIELD: Serves 14-16

PREP TIME: 5 mins

METHOD: Oven 375°

TOTAL TIME: 25

INGREDIENTS:

6 tablespoons butter, at room temperature
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 egg, at room temperature
 1/3 cup orange juice
 1 tablespoon orange zest
 1/8 teaspoon almond extract
 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 1/4 teaspoon salt

For the icing:

1/2 cup powdered sugar
 1 tablespoon fresh orange juice
 1 teaspoon orange zest
 1 tablespoon melted butter
 1 tablespoon softened cream cheese

DIRECTIONS:

Using electric mixer and bowl, cream butter and sugar. On medium-low speed, add egg; beating well. Next beat in orange juice, zest and almond extract, about 30 seconds.

In medium bowl, whisk flour, baking powder & salt. Slowly add to creamed ingredients. Mix until combined. Drop heaping tablespoon full of dough onto parchment paper lined baking sheet, about 2 inches apart. Bake for 10-13 minutes, until just barely golden brown on the edges. Allow to cool on baking sheet for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

For icing, mix powdered sugar, orange juice, zest, melted butter and softened cream cheese to a bowl. Dip the top of the cookies in the icing then place back on the wire rack to allow icing to harden. You can garnish with orange zest to add color.



Do You Remember When?

March was calving time! I couldn't wait to get home from school! By the time I changed out of my good school outfit and into my chore clothes, Dad was waiting in the pickup by the garage for me. I joyfully jumped into the pickup to ride down to the calving pasture. I got out to open the gate while Dad drove through, then back in the pickup, and off we went. Slowly we drove through the herd while Dad carefully looked them over. He would point out the calves that were born that morning so I could get a good look at them. Then Dad said, "There's one", and he would stop and get out. Our herd cows were all use to my Dad's gentle voice, and accepted him getting close and handling their baby calf. He knew each cow and their temperament, so I waited until he said "You can come on over here now". Dad always stayed between the Mama cow and me. Dad tagged each calf after checking them over to see if they needed any extra attention. Dad taught me the right way to hold down a calf, so that's what I did. Highlight of my day! There is no describing how the calf felt! So slick and soft, clean and precious. I have never found anything else that feels that way. When we were done, I helped the calf up and backed away so the Mama cow could come back to her baby. We would return to the pickup and watch to make sure the calf was feeding ok, then on to the next one.

The cattle were my Fathers favorite thing about farming. He loved life and caring for them in every way, from growing their food to feeding it to them. It was the circle of life. Reaping what you sow .To me, those days and my life was perfect! A true way of living that was passed down from one generation to the next!

So start thinking about what you want to sow in your garden and flowerbeds. Start gathering the supplies you are going to need. Get that map of the garden & flowerbeds out and plan for spring 2023!



March UP COMMING EVENTS



- **March 17, 2023 – Early Bird**
Online Registration ends for the Mills County Master Gardener Spring into Spring garden symposium. Mail in or office registration ends March 24 at noon, \$30. All others and day of event will be \$35. For more information and to register: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/spring-spring-garden-symposium>
- **March 25, 2023 – Mills County Master Gardener**
"Spring into Spring" garden symposium, Malvern, IA. Walk-ins welcome.
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/spring-spring-garden-symposium>
- **April 1, 2023 – West Pottawatomie County Master Gardener**
Spring Garden Conference, Art Center, Iowa Western Community College, Council Bluffs, IA. For more information and to register: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/westpottawattami/news/spring-garden-conference-april-1-2023>
- **April 15, 2023 – Save the date – Master Gardener Class on Campus**
Save the date. Open to trainees and Interns from 2022 Master Gardener classes. There will be a \$50 fee. Any remaining spots will open to all Master Gardeners on March 25. All registrations are due April 5, 2023. For more information;
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/class-campus-ames>
- **June 17 – 22, 2023 – Save the Date - International Master Gardener Conference – Overland Park**
Convention Center, Overland Park, Kansas. Registration open. For more information, follow the link <https://imgc2023.com/>
- **Iowa Master Gardener You Tube –** Follow the link below. You will find many ISU educational gardening webinars and videos here for educational hours.
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoyB28Aj3qOovjpwkSiLBg>
- **Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page**
<https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- **Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page**
<https://www.facebook.com/iamastergardeners/>



March GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Start Gathering** all your gardening supplies, seeds, potting materials
- **Winter** is a good time to repot and divide some houseplants.
- **Map out** your garden plans. Figure up how many and which plants what you will need to buy. Make a list to take with you when shopping. Know what seeds you need, put them on the list too.
- **Check** your inventory of canning supplies. Start picking up what you need in advance.
- **Check** any flower bulbs and corms that you have stored. Look for and remove any that are rotting.
- **Prune shrubs** that flower on new wood.
- March can still be cold in the Midwest, regardless of what season the calendar says.
- Prune shrubs that flower on new wood.
- Trim back ornamental grass stalks to clear room for new growth.
- Spray fruit trees following guidelines for each type of tree.
- Remove protective burlap from evergreens.
- Start spring cleaning in flower beds.
- **Prune Clematis** - Group 3 (or Type C) clematis. These are the ones that bloom on new wood each year.
- **Trim Back** ornamental grass stalks to clear room for new growth.
- **Spray Fruit Trees** following guidelines for each type of tree.
- **Remove Protective** Burlap from evergreens and tender bushes.
- **Start Clean-up** of flower beds and garden areas.
- **Loosen Mulches** and check beds and prepare for new mulch to be put down.
- **Amaryllis bulbs** – if your blooms are done, cut the bloom stock off. Keep watering and caring for the plant until spring, when it's safe to put outside.
- **Start seeds** – Many garden seeds can be started around March 15th. Check the back of the package for seed starting dates.
- **Bird Waters & Feeders** – Put limited amounts of feed in your feeder every day to avoid waste. Only put in what they will eat is one day. This avoids waste and so helps keep raccoons and opossums away from feeders at night

Hort 3077	Early Spring Blooming Perennials
RG 319	When to Divide Perennials
PM 731	Harvesting and Storing Vegetables
PM 873	How to Construct a Cold Frame Or Hotbed
ENT 61	Gardening for Butterflies and Pollinators
PM 820	Garden Soil Management
RG 209	Organic Mulches
PM 2086	Growing Organic Vegetables in Iowa
RG 201	Integrated Pest Management
PM 874	Starting Garden Transplants at Home
PD 607	Suggested Vegetables Varieties for the home Garden
PM 819	Planting a Home Vegetable Garden
PM 534	Planting and Harvesting Times of Garden Vegetables
PM 870A	Small Plot Vegetable Gardening
PM 666	Weed Management in the Home Garden
PM 814	Where to put your Vegetable Garden
PM 870B	Container Vegetable Gardening
PM 994	Asparagus in the Home Garden
PM 1893	Cilantro
PM 1894	Garlic
HORT 3082	Growing and using Basil
HORT 3085	Onions
HORT 3084	Peppers
HORT 3086	Potatoes
PM 719	Rhubarb in the Home Garden
HORT 3089	Sweet Corn
PM 1895	Tomatillos
HORT 3091	Tomatoes
PD 54	Tomatoes Diseases and Disorders
HS 96	Growing Tomatoes in a Container
HORT 3068	Top 13 Vegetables to Donate to Food Pantries
PM 823	Watering the Home Garden – Trickle Irrigation

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>

ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883 Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)
Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext. <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/5481>

Resources for Horticulture information

Iowa State University Publication

RG 310	Caring for Roses in Iowa
SUL 15	Oak Wilt - Identification and Management
SUL 5	Pruning Trees: Shade, Flowering, and Conifer
PM 780	Pruning and Training Fruit Trees
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries

