

WAPELLO COUNTY MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER
October 2020

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Wapello County Extension Office, 13011 120th Ave., Ottumwa, IA 52501
Phone: 641-682-5491

MEETING PLANS

The Extension is still closed to the public, but will accommodate small groups for meetings or programs. The conference room can have 6 or 8 with social distancing. Considering the limitations of meeting at the Extension, for the Monday, October 5 meeting we will do an “informal” gathering by taking a walking tour of the Main Street Ottumwa project downtown. Meet at 6:30 pm on Monday, October 5th in the parking lot behind Dr. Altfillisch’s office and Blessing Soup Kitchen and we will start our walking tour from there. Trees have been planted in the revamped section of Main and they are currently filling in the “islands” with plant material. We can easily socially distance and you can wear a mask, if desired. If it is pouring down rain, we can reschedule for another day.

Questions or comments: Carol’s email is cgeib47@gmail.com or phone 641-777-9503.

MEETING MINUTES

There was no meeting in September.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Balance: \$1151.94

NEWS FROM RUTH BROWN

Mary Kivlahan received a note from our former member, Ruth Brown, who moved to Missouri to be closer to family. She says that she took some of her hostas with her. In addition to taking care of her hostas, she takes care of the flowers around the entrance sign at her residence complex.

UPCOMING EVENTS

No known upcoming garden events.

There are lots of pumpkin patches to visit in the area, and a lot of them have mums for sale.

If you get bored, you can access many gardening videos on You Tube.

EDUCATIONAL FEATURE

Pruning Evergreen Shrubs

Late spring is an excellent time to prune evergreen shrubs in the landscape. Pruning just after the emergence of the spring growth will provide a basis for helping to shape the plant while retaining the natural look.

What equipment will I need?

Equipment needed for evergreen shrub pruning will include a pair of hand clippers and maybe loppers. No hedge trimmers are needed when pruning for a natural look.

Prune to retain a natural shape

Evergreen shrubs in the landscape look best when their natural shape is allowed to show. Pruning evergreens into little boxes, balls or rectangles is not pruning, but shrub mutilation. Only in formal hedges or landscapes should evergreens be pruned in a tight, sheared manner. Evergreens are often planted around the foundation of the home to hide the exposed concrete or to accent the doorway. In order for the shrubs to soften the foundation, they must hide it. Pruning these poor plants into children's building blocks does not soften the foundation, but marks it with a red flag, drawing attention.

What are the dangers of shearing?

Often an evergreen is sheared so close that the "dead zone" appears, leaving a gaping hole in the shrub. Never prune deeper into an evergreen than where green growth is showing. Evergreens do not renew as easily as deciduous shrubs. Once the dead area is uncovered you will be stuck with it for some time. By retaining the natural flow and branching structure of the plants, they blend together, hiding the exposed house foundation.

How to prune to retain the natural shape of an evergreen

Pruning for a natural-look is simple. It is easy to understand. The only drawback is that it will take a few minutes longer because pruning for a natural-look requires you to think, not just whack. Start by looking at the branching structure of the plant — how the limbs come out, what direction they point or grow. When you are done pruning you want to retain this look, but on a smaller scale.

Take hold of each overgrown limb and cut it back at a random point. Cut back to another branch pointing that is headed in the direction you would like for the plant to grow. Repeat this process on the entire plant until all overgrown branches have been shortened. Stop frequently to look at the overall plant to make sure that a natural shape is being retained.

What to do with shear-damaged shrubs

Plants that have been sheared countless times may need to be removed. Chances are they are overgrown for the area and a new, more vigorous plant would look better and help renew the landscape. If the shrubs are still healthy, it may take a couple of years for them heavily to fully recover from years of bad practices.

Pruning evergreens such as junipers, yews, euonymus, and holly this way will show off the natural beauty of the plant forms. Pines and spruces are not pruned in this manner, but that is a subject for another day. Pruning evergreens is simple to do and will result in a beautiful plant that looks great in the landscape.

Reference for above information:

<https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/agent-articles/trees-shrubs/prune-evergreens.html>

The web address below is about pruning all evergreens and lists information for specific evergreen trees and shrubs:

<https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice/horticulture-care/pruning-evergreens>

October Gardening Tasks

- Apply broadleaf herbicides to lawns

- Harvest apples
- Plant deciduous trees and shrubs
- Dig up glads, dahlias and cannas for winter storage
- Harvest seeds of annual flowers to save and replant next spring
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs before the ground freezes
- Plant garlic to harvest next summer (be sure to cover with mulch)
- Take cuttings of coleus and geraniums to grow indoors for winter
- Pot up tender herbs to grow indoors over winter
- Inspect houseplants for pests or disease and bring indoors before frost
- Harvest pumpkins, winter squash and gourds as vines die off

(from ISU bulletin **RG 105** *Garden Tips Guidelines to Seasonal Chores*)

MUSINGS OF THE MONTH

I've been working on getting the gardens cleaned up. The tomatoes and cucumbers were removed the middle of September. I have left the kale and hopefully, once the weather gets cold, will be able to harvest some kale that doesn't have cabbage worms on it. Dead plant material from the flower gardens are getting cleaned off, and I hope to thin out some of the unruly plants and move some iris and day lilies.

Basically the only flowers left blooming at my house are the purple asters and red zinnias, plus a few potted annuals. Packets of red zinnias are hard to find, so when I do come across them from time to time, I save lots of the seeds to replant. I love the mono-color look. I have found that packets of mixed colors only produce mixed colors the next time around, as you don't know with what color each flower was pollinated. The same is true with coneflowers. I was trying to establish a cluster of white coneflowers, but because the purple ones were close by, the new seedlings had a predominance of purple with only a few white.

Hopefully, we will be able to store the lawnmowers before long! It is nice going in to fall with a green lawn instead of brown.

Happy fall garden clean-up!

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