

## Horticulture 2008 Newsletter No. 39 October 1, 2008

### UPCOMING EVENTS

The Friends of the KSU Gardens invite you to attend a Gardens Luncheon Series Event – Tasting Kansas Wines with Mimi Balderson on Thursday, October 23 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the KSU Gardens, 1500 Denison. The cost is \$35 per person and includes appetizers. RSVP by sending a check to: Anne Springer, KSU Gardens, 2021 Throckmorton Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506 by October 17. Space is limited.

### ORNAMENTALS

#### Sunscald on Thin-Barked Trees



Many young, smooth, thin-barked trees such as honey locusts, fruit trees, ashes, oaks, maples, lindens and willows are susceptible to sunscald and bark cracks. Sunscald normally develops on the south or southwest side of the tree during late winter. Sunny, warm winter days may heat the bark to relatively high temperatures. Research done in Georgia has shown that the southwest side of the trunk of a peach tree can be 40 degrees warmer than shaded bark. This warming action can cause a loss of cold hardiness of the bark tissue resulting in cells becoming active. These cells then become susceptible to lethal freezing when the temperature drops at night. The damaged bark tissue becomes sunken and discolored in late spring. Damaged bark will eventually crack and slough off. Trees will often recover but will need some TLC (especially watering during dry weather). Applying tree wrap from the ground to the start of the first branches can protect recently planted trees. This should be done in October to November. (WU)

## Questions on Ornamental Grasses



We are starting to receive questions on whether it is best to cut back ornamental grasses in the fall or spring. As a rule, ornamental grasses should not be cut back while green because they need time to move the energy found in the foliage into the roots. Even when browned by cold weather, most gardeners will leave the foliage until spring because of the interest it adds to winter landscapes. Early March is the preferred time to cut back these plants. However, dry foliage is extremely flammable and should be removed in the fall from areas where it is a fire hazard.

Another question we often receive is whether we can divide ornamental grasses in the fall. Spring is the preferred time because divisions done in the fall may not root well enough to survive the winter. (WU)

## Planting Trees in the Fall



We usually think of planting trees in the spring rather than the fall. But there may be advantages to fall planting. During the spring, soils are cold and may be so wet that low oxygen levels inhibit root growth. The warm and moist soils associated with fall encourage root growth. Fall root growth means the tree becomes established well before a spring-planted tree and is better able to withstand summer stresses. Certain trees do not produce significant root growth during the fall months and are better planted in the spring. These include

beechn, birch, redbud, magnolia, tulip poplar, willow oak, scarlet oak, black oak, willows and dogwood.

Fall-planted trees require some special care. Remember, that roots are actively growing even though the top is dormant. Make sure the soil stays moist but not soggy. This may require watering not only in the fall but also during the winter months if we experience warm spells that dry the soil. Mulch also is helpful because it minimizes moisture loss and slows the freezing of the soil so root growth continues as long as possible. Evergreens should be moved earlier in the fall than deciduous plants. They need at least six weeks before the ground freezes for the roots to become established, so it may be too late this year. (WU)

## VEGETABLES

### Keeping Your Pumpkin Longer



If you buy your pumpkins early, there are some tricks to make them last. Make sure the pumpkin wasn't harvested too early; before the rind developed a waxy layer to keep the pumpkin from drying out and shriveling. Pumpkins also keep better in cooler weather, and not the 80s and 90s that we have experienced recently.

Even mature pumpkins may be helped by a light application of spray wax or similar material. Several commercial sprays are available that have been specifically developed for preserving pumpkins.

These contain a wax to prevent drying and a surface disinfectant to discourage rots and molds. (WU)

## FLOWERS

### Fertilize Spring-Flowering Bulb Beds in October



If established bulb beds have been fertilized in the past, there is often plenty of phosphorus and potassium present in the soil. However, it is best to take a soil test to be sure. If the soil needs phosphorus and potassium, use a complete fertilizer (such as 10-10-10, 9-9-6, etc.) at the rate of 2.5 pounds per 100 square feet. This would equal 1 rounded teaspoon per square foot. If phosphorus and potassium are not needed, blood meal makes an excellent fertilizer. It should be applied at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet

or 1 teaspoon per square foot. Turf fertilizers such as a 27-3-3 or 30-3-3 can also be used but the rate would have to be cut to 1 pound per 100 square feet or 1 teaspoon per 2 square feet. (WU)

#### **Contributors:**

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To view Upcoming Events: <http://tinyurl.com/fswqe>

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