

## Horticulture 2011 Newsletter

No. 49 December 5, 2011

Video of the Week: [Poinsettias with Holiday Sparkle](#)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Kansas Turfgrass Conference**

December 6, 7 and 8, 2011

Kansas Expo Centre, Topeka

<http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-conference.html>

#### **Great Plains Growers Conference** January 5, 6 and 7, 2012

St. Joseph, MO

<http://www.greatplainsgrowers.org/>

#### **Kansas Arborists Association Shade Tree Conference**

January 11–13, 2012

Ramada – Downtown Topeka, KS

<http://www.kansasarborist.com/shadetree.aspx>

#### **RetailWorks**

February 17, 2012

Capitol Plaza Hotel, Topeka, KS

### VEGETABLES

#### **Storing Potatoes in Cold Temperatures**

Potatoes stored below 40 degrees F will not sprout and will remain firm for long periods. However, such storage will often lead to starches being converted to sugars, which will give tubers an undesirable sweet taste. Placing potatoes at room temperature for 2 to 3 days will allow sugars to be converted back to starches and remove the objectionable taste. (WU)



## Poor Drainage in Garden Areas



Winter is often a good time to fix areas in the garden where water sits and does not drain properly. Such areas often harm plant roots due to poor oxygen levels in the soil. Consider adding good topsoil so water doesn't sit. Be sure to till or spade the area to mix the new topsoil and the underlying existing soil. Plant roots do not like to cross distinct barriers caused by one type of soil sitting on top of another.

Internal drainage can be improved by adding organic matter such as peat moss or compost. This can be done by adding a 2- to 4-inch layer of organic matter to the surface of the soil and tilling or spading in as deeply as possible. (WU)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Compost Pile Maintenance



Compost piles should be turned about once per month even during the winter months. This will insure the composting process continues and that all materials are equally composted. A compost pile is "turned" when uncomposted material is moved from the sides and tops of the pile to the center where it provides "fuel" for the microorganisms that break it down. Water may need to be added if the material you move to the center is dry. Check the moisture content by squeezing a fistful in your hand. It should feel

moist but no excess water should drip out. Compress the material as best you can as excess air can slow the composting process. (WU)

### Storing Power Equipment for the Winter

Late fall or early winter is a good time to service power equipment such as mowers, tillers and garden tractors. Run the equipment out of gas or treat the existing gas with a stabilizer as untreated gas can deteriorate over time. If using a stabilizer, run the engine long enough for untreated gas in the carburetor bowl to be burned and replaced.



This is also a good time to replace the oil (and filter, if present) since the engine is warm. Check and replace the spark plug if necessary. Some gardeners will also apply a light, sprayable oil into the cylinder through the spark plug hole. Check and clean air filters and replace if necessary. Many mowers and tillers will have a foam prefilter that can become filthy with use. If allowed to become too dirty, engines will run poorly or may not run at all. Sharpen blades, clean tines, tighten screws, replace broken parts and do all the other things needed to keep equipment in good shape. Though such maintenance takes some time and effort, it pays for itself by reducing frustration and lost time due to poorly performing equipment during a hectic spring. (WU)

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

[Horticulture 2011 E-mail Subscription](#)

For questions or further information contact: [wupham@ksu.edu](mailto:wupham@ksu.edu)

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