

Horticulture 2011 Newsletter No. 51 December 20, 2011

Video of the Week: [Do-It-Yourself Holiday Gift: Gifts with Flair](#)

Final Newsletter of the Season

This will be the last issue of Horticulture 2011. The first issue of Horticulture 2012 will be sent on January 10.

Your electronic subscriptions for the e-mail and WordPerfect versions of the newsletter will continue as is, so nothing will be necessary on your part to continue receiving it. Please give us feedback on the newsletter at wupham@ksu.edu. We also appreciate the suggestions, comments, and observations given throughout the year. Please tell anyone you know who might be interested in subscribing that they are encouraged and welcome to do so. On behalf of all of us at K-State we wish you a safe and relaxing holiday season and good gardening in 2012. (WU)

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

FLOWERS

Amaryllis Culture

The amaryllis is a tender bulb that is ready to bloom when purchased. The genus name for this plant is *Hippeastrum*, which means "horse star," an



appropriate name for a plant that produces massive blooms as much as 8 to 10 inches across. These plants can produce 3 to 4 blooms on a 1- to 2-foot stem. Often, a second flower stalk follows the first at about the time the flowers on the first stem fade. The leaves usually start to appear when the flowers begin to open.

Amaryllis bulbs can be huge – approaching the size of a grapefruit. The larger the bulb, the larger the flowers and the more expensive the bulb. Regardless of size, amaryllis likes tight quarters. Place in a pot only 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter than the bulb. About half of the bulb should remain exposed. Hold the bulb so the roots hang down into the pot, and add potting mix. Firm the mix around the roots carefully so that they are not snapped off. Water thoroughly and place the plant in a warm, sunny location. Amaryllis likes day temperatures in the 70s and night temperatures in the 60s. The flower bud may start to appear right away or the plant may remain dormant for a period of time, but eventually all mature bulbs do bloom. Move the plant to a cooler location and out of direct sunlight when the flower buds begin to show color so the flowers last longer. Amaryllis can remain in bloom for about a month.

Flowers should be cut off after blooming to keep the plant from expending energy to form seeds. Place the plant back in a sunny location until it is warm enough to be placed outside. Sink the pot in the soil in an area that has dappled shade. The plant can be gradually moved to sunnier locations until it receives full sun for a half day. Continue to fertilize with a balanced houseplant fertilizer as you would a normal houseplant. Bring the pot in before first frost and place in a dark location. Withhold all water so the leaves have a chance to dry completely. Leaves can then be cut off close to the top of the bulb. Amaryllis can often be left in the same pot for several years but will eventually need repotting. Again, choose a pot that is only 1 to 2 inches larger in diameter than the bulb and repeat the process described above. Offsets are normally produced by amaryllis and can be given their own pots if desired. These small bulbs have a concave side when removed but develop a round shape when given their own space. They grow quickly and can be mature enough to flower in a couple of years. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

What To Do With the Christmas Tree After Christmas



After the holidays, many municipalities allow old Christmas trees to be placed curbside. Trees are then collected and ground up for mulch or burned. If you miss the designated date, or your trash collector doesn't accept trees, there are several options to prolong the useful life of the tree. An old Christmas tree can be used to benefit birds, fish, and the landscape by placing it in a corner of your deck, and spreading some birdseed nearby, or tying it to a deciduous tree or post near a bird feeder. The birds benefit from having escape cover

nearby when hawks or cats threaten, and the dense boughs reduce the windchill on a cold night.

Sinking your Christmas tree in a pond is an easy way to improve fish habitat and fishing. The tree serves as little coral reef, in that the branches provide substrate for water plants to grow, and cover for minnows and other forms of small aquatic life. Larger fish are drawn by the shade and the presence of prey.

How do you sink a tree? Tie the base to a cinder block with a short, stout rope, and toss it in. Just be sure to get permission from the pond owner first! Using the little tree around the landscape requires clipping off all of the branches. Use the boughs to add extra insulation around semi-hardy perennials or to trees and shrubs that were recently planted. The leftover trunk may be used as a garden stake next spring. Or cut and let it dry for a few weeks, and you will have some easy lighting firewood. Just beware that most conifer species tend to spark and pop more than hardwoods, as resin pockets in the wood make tiny explosions. This can delight the youngsters, but for safety's sake keep an eye on the fire when burning Christmas tree logs! (CB)

FRUIT

Care of Gift Fruit Baskets



A holiday tradition is to give gifts of fruits and nuts (along with other products). Usually these are placed in an attractive basket, wrapped with cellophane covering, and brought (or shipped) to your house. It is important that the fruit contained inside is kept in cool conditions to maintain its quality for as long as possible. Thus, it is wise to disassemble the fruit basket as soon as you receive it and place the fruit in refrigerated storage. If all the products in the basket are tree fruits (such as apples, pears, oranges or grapefruit), you can place

the entire basket in a cool place- around 40 degrees F for best results. If the basket contains any bananas or other tropical fruits (with the exception of citrus) remove those fruits and store them separately. About 3-4 weeks is about as long as you can expect to store these fruits without some shriveling and loss of crispness. (WU)

Contributors: Charles Barden, Extension Forester, Ward Upham, Extension Associate

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

[Horticulture 2011 E-mail Subscription](#)

For questions or further information contact: wupham@ksu.edu

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service