



# THE NEW HORT THYMES

**CLEVELAND COUNTY  
EXTENSION**

Serving Cleveland County, Oklahoma with the most up to date gardening, lawn, landscaping, and horticulture information.



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## Garden Goals

### *January is a time for reflection and goal setting*

With the new year and the new decade finally here, we approach January as a time of reflection. How did things do in your garden this year? What were your successes? What could have gone better? It's helpful to keep notes throughout the year so that they can be reviewed before the new season.

January is also a time to look forward, establish goals, and make changes. Are there new vegetable varieties you want to try this year? Maybe consider a xeriscape for water conservation or a compost bin to combat waste this year. Or maybe you've just got an area of the yard that needs a total revamping. Writing down garden goals and listing out tasks can help keep yourself on track.

The Cleveland County Extension Horticulture Program is also reflecting on the past year and establishing goals for the next year. We are working on converting the newsletter to a more user-friendly format and we are planning new workshops for the upcoming year. If you have any suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

And just as a quick side note – be careful taking down lights off trees! You want to avoid breaking buds or tender branches.

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# Plants for Winter Interest

Winter landscapes in Oklahoma can seem uninteresting – perennials wither up and trees drop their leaves. For the vast majority of the season, we depend on color to define the beauty of our landscapes. With almost everything turning brown, it is during this time that we must shift our perspective. Other design elements, like line, form, and texture, take over the landscape. To increase the amount of winter interest in the garden, consider some of these plants.

For a plant with unusual form...

## Harry Lauder's Walking Stick

*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'

Also known as corkscrew hazel, this shrub has spiraling limbs that are especially eye-catching in the winter. Pale yellow catkins bloom in late winter, adding some brightness to the winter landscape. It grows slowly, reaching about 10 to 15 feet tall and wide. It can tolerate small amounts of shade, but prefers a full sun environment. This shrub is best used as a specimen plant. Place it somewhere central, where garden guests can enjoy its unusual form. This plant can also be used in containers, though it will require more water in this setting.



For a plant with showy bark...

## Chinese Fringetree

*Chionanthus retusus*

While Chinese Fringetree may be recognized for its prolific spring blooms, this tree shows off its bark after losing its leaves. Its exfoliating brown-gray bark adds a unique texture to the winter landscape. The tree is also relatively small, growing to about 10 to 20 feet tall and wide. This makes it a good option for smaller yards. Chinese Fringetree prefers well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. There will be more abundant flowering in full sun. It does not like prolonged periods without water, so consider irrigation during dry conditions.



For a plant with movement and sound...

## Switch Grass

*Panicum virgatum*

Switchgrass is an upright, native prairie grass that has many developed cultivars. Airy seed heads pick up on the wind, creating movement and a nice rustling sound in the garden. For a modern look, use repetition by planting in rows or grids. Switchgrass can also be used as a screen or a way to control erosion. It grows vigorously, so be sure to give it room to spread out. Popular cultivars include 'Cloud Nine', 'Dallas Blues', 'Northwind', 'Prairie Fire', and 'Shenandoah'. Select cultivars based on desired form, foliage color, and height.



# Considerations for Selecting Veggie Varieties

Colorful seed catalogs can be a comfort for gardeners during these colder months. New colors, better yields, more robust flavor...the descriptions can be enticing. The garden is only so big though. We can't squeeze everything into a small space and expect good results. Variety selections should be tailored to our garden goals. When overwhelmed by the seed catalog choices, these are some considerations to think about.

## Heat Tolerance

Selecting varieties with an increased level of heat tolerance can be helpful in Oklahoma. Winter can turn into summer quickly, completely passing spring. This can be damaging to cool season crops that are still in the garden. For example, if we select a heat tolerant variety of broccoli, it will be slower to bolt during these situations. Tomatoes also have specific temperature requirements for fruit set. Oklahoma in July and August tends to be too hot for prolific fruit set. Selecting heat tolerant varieties of tomatoes can help with this.



Imperial (F1) Broccoli has increased heat tolerance and is less prone to bolting in warm temperatures.

## Cold Tolerance

Varieties with increased heat tolerance tend to grow slowly in cold weather. Selecting varieties for cold tolerance is beneficial when trying to get plants in the garden early. For example, lettuce and peas are cool season vegetables, but neither are tolerant of frosts. Selecting lettuce varieties with cold tolerance can help if temperatures dip below what is expected. Cold tolerant varieties of vegetables are also good for fall gardening, as cold temperatures can come as early as October.

## Disease Resistance

If there are diseases routinely battled in the garden, looking for resistant varieties is crucial for success. This is the best defense against pathogens. Soil-borne diseases, like Fusarium wilt of tomato, can be especially difficult to control. Choosing resistant varieties are also a good option if trying to grow with a more organic approach. Remember though – resistant does not mean immune. Plants that undergo stress are more likely to be infected.



Fusarium wilt of tomato is a devastating soil-borne disease. It invades the vascular system and disrupts water flow through the plant.



The first symptom of Fusarium wilt is a yellowing of the lower leaves. This progresses up one side of the plant, creating a 'flagging' effect (seen above). Growing resistant varieties is the most effective means of control.

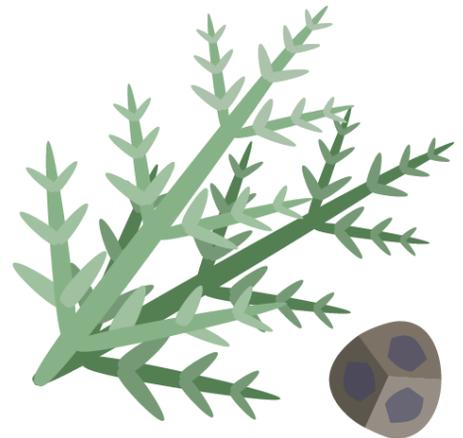


## January Plant of the Month: Arizona Cypress

Instead of evergreen trees, think ever gray-blue trees

Arizona cypress (*Cupressus arizonica*) is a pyramidal shaped conifer that can grow to about 40' tall and 15' wide. The evergreen foliage is blue-gray with a lacy texture. This color can add a nice contrast to other evergreen plants in the landscape. Foliage thins if grown in shade, so make sure to plant this tree in full sun. The bark is a smooth reddish. It is drought tolerant, requiring a minimum of 12 inches of water annually. Arizona cypress grows quickly, especially if planted in soil with high organic matter.

Arizona cypress has dense foliage, which makes it a good option for screens or windbreaks. As the name suggests, Arizona cypress is native to the southwestern United States. In it's native environment, it is found on dry, rocky mountain slopes and canyon walls.



**Conifer** /kənəfər/: a tree that bears cones and needle-like or scale-like leaves that are typically evergreen

## Garden Tips for January

- Keep all plants watered during dry conditions, even if dormant
- Thoroughly water plantings at least 24 hours before a hard-freeze, if the soil is dry
- Remove leaves from cool-season grasses or mow with a mulching mower; this mitigates disease pressure in the upcoming season
- Continue mowing cool-season (fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass) lawns
- Control broadleaf weeds in well-established lawns with a post-emergent herbicide
- Mulch perennials, rose bushes, strawberries, and bulbs, but wait until after several early freezes; otherwise pests will have a place to overwinter
- Gather up fallen leaves, these are a great spot for insects and diseases to overwinter
- Till bare garden plots to expose over-wintering pests to the cold environment
- Amend garden areas with compost
- Start planning for next year! Now is a great time to map out your vegetable gardens so you know exactly what seeds to order and where to start in the spring
- Visit your county extension office to obtain gardening fact sheets
- Clean supplies and check equipment for repairs
- Order gardening supplies for the upcoming season
- Make structural improvements to the garden and landscape
- Keep bird feeders full and break the ice in the bird baths

## Eat Seasonally

In-season produce is fresher, cheaper, more nutritious, and better for the environment. These are some of the seasonal crops for December:

Brussels Sprouts



Cabbage

Citrus



Collard Greens

Kale



Kohlrabi

Pomegranates



Sprouts

Sweet Potatoes



# Upcoming Events

## January 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> – 2020 Horticulture Industries Show Conference

Tulsa Tech Conference Center, 10800 N 140<sup>th</sup> E Ave, Owasso, OK 74055

The theme for the 2020 Horticulture Industries Show is “PROTECTED AG: Adapting to Challenging Environments”. You are invited to join with other specialty group growers, industry representatives, and educators as we explore the use of technology and advanced growing practices to manage production related risks. A new venue, a timely theme, and passionate folk can only mean one thing – a great experience for all!

For online registration, as well as class/breakout session schedule, please visit <https://www.hortindustriesshow.org/>.

## January 15<sup>th</sup> , 5:30pm to 7:00pm – Home Gardening 101

Pioneer Library System – Noble Public Library, 204 5<sup>th</sup> St, Noble, OK 73068

Have you ever wanted to start a vegetable garden but weren't sure how to get started? This class will cover how to convert areas of your yard into production gardens, how to improve the soil, how to build raised beds, and when to put the plants in the ground. Season-long tips for success will also be discussed so that the harvest can continue into the summer.

This class is free and no registration is required.

## January 25<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am to 11:00am – Backyard Greenhouses: Options, Their Maintenance, and Their Management

Cleveland County OSU Extension Office, Classroom “C”, 601 E. Robinson St., Norman, OK 73071

The Cleveland County Master Gardeners are excited to host Michael and Rosario Douglas for this greenhouse focused workshop. Greenhouses are an essential requirement to grow plants during the winter in Oklahoma. This talk describes an array of greenhouses available to individuals (non-commercial growers) and discusses strategies to grow plants within them. We discuss how to orient greenhouses, how to heat and cool them, how to water them, and planning for growth of your plants. Many examples will be shown, and we will candidly discuss problems we have experienced over the years. We strongly encouraged people to explore personal greenhouses – they can be immensely satisfying.

This class is free and no registration is required.

### About the editor...

Courtney DeKalb-Myers has been the Cleveland County horticulture educator since August 2018. Her position handles homeowner inquiries, master gardener advisement, and other horticulture education programming throughout the state. She is originally from Norman, Oklahoma and developed a passion for gardening at a young age. She went onto study horticulture at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater with an emphasis in entrepreneurship. After graduating from OSU, she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to attend NC State for graduate school. Her research was heavily focused on vegetable production, specifically processing tomatoes for a local salsa product. The emphasis on local products motivated her to move back to Oklahoma and she is so excited to now serve the town that raised her.

