Horticulture Tips
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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
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GARDEN TIPS FOR JUNE!

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General Landscape

- Find someone to water plants in the house and garden while on vacation. Harvesting vegetables and mowing the lawn are a must and imply that someone is home.
- Mulch ornamentals, vegetables, and annuals to reduce soil crusting, and to regulate temperatures and moisture during hot summer months. Mulching will reduce about 70 percent of the summer yard maintenance.
- Remain alert for insect damage. Add spider mite to the list. Foliage of most plants becomes pale and speckled; juniper foliage turns a pale yellowish color. Shake a branch over white paper and watch for tiny specks that crawl. Watch for first generation fall webworm. (EPP-7306)

Turfgrass

- Fertilize warm-season grasses at 0.5 to 1 lb. N per 1,000 square feet. Do not fertilize fescue and other cool-season grasses during the summer.
- Dollar spot disease of lawns can first become visible in mid-May. Make certain fertilizer applications have been adequate before applying a fungicide. (EPP-7658)
- Seeding of warm-season grasses should be completed by the end of June (through July for improved varieties such as Monaco and Yukon) to reduce winterkill losses. (HLA-6419)
- Brown patch disease of cool-season grasses can be a problem. (HLA-6420)
- White grubs will soon be emerging as adult June Beetles. Watch for high populations that can indicate potential damage from later life cycle stages as grubs in the summer.

Trees and Shrubs

- Vigorous, unwanted limbs should be removed or shortened on new trees. Watch for forks in the main trunk and remove the least desirable trunk as soon as it is noticed. (HLA-6415)
- Pine needle disease treatments are needed again in mid-June.
- Remove tree wraps during the summer to avoid potential disease and insect buildup.
- Softwood cuttings from new growth of many shrubs will root if propagated in a moist shady spot.
- Protect trees from lawnmowers and weed eaters by mulching or using protective aerated covers.

Fruit and Nut

- Renovate overgrown strawberry beds after the last harvest. Start by setting your lawnmower to its highest setting and mow off the foliage. Next thin crowns 12 to 24 inches apart. Apply recommended fertilizer, preemergence herbicide if needed and keep watered. (HLA-6214)

Flowers

- Pinch back leggy annuals to encourage new growth. Fertilize and water appropriately.
- Feed established mums and other perennials.
- When picking fresh roses or removing faded ones, cut back to a leaflet facing the outside of the bush to encourage open growth and air circulation.
- Stake tall perennials before toppling winds arise.

Don't Bag It!

David Hillock

Now that the grass is growing like gangbusters, especially if you have been generous with the fertilizer and water, there is plenty of mowing to do. One way to save time and effort is don't catch the clippings.

Turfgrass clippings contain valuable nutrients, much of which you just applied, and will help the turf if recycled back into the soil. In fact, it may even reduce the amount of total fertilizer needed for the season.

Using a mulching mower or one with a mulching blade works best as they are designed to chop the grass clippings up into small pieces that easily decompose and return to the soil. However, you do not need a mulching mower or blade. A standard mower will work if you cut the turf frequently enough. If you choose to catch your grass clippings, at least toss them into the compost pile or use them as mulch in the landscape as long as they haven't recently been treated with herbicides. Avoid bagging them up and placing them at the curb to be hauled away as this puts an unnecessary strain on the local dumps and could cost you more money in the long run by increased waste handling fees.

Common Composting Questions and the Answers

David Hillock

How long does it take compost to form?
The time of completion will vary according to the type and amount of materials used, the climate, the size and type of bin or pile used, and the amount of aeration or turning of the pile. With the correct carbon to nitrogen ratio, water, and air, compost should be ready to use in 4 to 6 months. If the pile is turned more frequently, the compost should be ready more quickly. The smaller the individual pieces of material in the pile, the more surface area the microorganisms have to work on and the faster the materials will decompose. Shredding or chipping branches decreases the decomposition time.

When is the compost "done?"
Compost is ready when the temperature of the pile falls to ambient levels, the material is dark, crumbles easily, pieces are small and there is no odor.

How can the process be sped up?
Mixing frequently provides more air for the bacteria. Keep the material moist with soaking about once a week. Break the materials into smaller pieces.

What can be composted?
- Most yard waste such as grass clippings, leaves, twigs, excess vegetation
- Non-fat containing food scraps
- Twigs or chipped branches
- Coffee grounds, tea leaves

What cannot be composted?
- Large branches
- Fatty foods and grease, meats, dairy products, fish
- Bones
- Synthetic products such as plastics
- Diseased plants
- Weeds and vegetables that produce abundant seeds
- Pet or human waste

Why make compost?
- Recycle natural materials
- Reduce amount of chemical fertilizer used
- Reduce amount of material going to landfills
- Reduce landfill tipping fees for individuals or communities
- Prolong landfill life

What can compost be used for?
- Improve soil structure and texture
- Increase water-holding capacity of sandy soil
- Loosen clay soil and improve drainage
- Add nutrients to improve soil fertility
- Aid erosion control
- Potting soil
- Mulch around shrubs to retain moisture

Drip Irrigation System Great for Container Gardening
David Hillock

One of the great things about gardening is anyone can do it. Gardening doesn't require a great expanse of land. In fact, those with very little space can still have a successful gardening

experience. Container gardening is a great way to grow some flowers, or even vegetables. It's fun, easy, and rewarding.

However, keeping the containers properly watered throughout the sweltering Oklahoma summer can be a bit of a challenge. During the hottest parts of the summer, they often dry out before you get home from work. When you go on vacation, you must find someone to water them for you.

A simple solution to this dilemma is using an inexpensive drip irrigation system and automatic control valve. These irrigation systems can be bought at many home improvement stores, garden centers and nurseries. Kits are available from some manufacturers that contain everything needed to install a drip system to your outdoor faucet, including tubing, stakes with adjustable emitters, backflow prevention device, t-connectors, and fasteners to secure the tubing. Purchase an automatic control valve that's programmable, which allows you to set the water to come on and off as needed and run as long as needed. This type of system also helps conserve water since the water is directed into the containers and there's little to no waste from overspray, which can happen with traditional sprinklers.

In addition to the drip irrigation kit, purchase a Y valve to hook up to the faucet. This allows you to attach the controller for the drip system, as well as a garden hose for other purposes.

For gardeners who have more space for planting in a traditional landscape, larger drip irrigation systems are available too.

These systems are very easy to install. In fact, the only tool needed is scissors or a sharp knife to cut the tubing to the proper lengths. Now you can set the system to come on and off while you are away on vacation, and you won't have to worry about whether your containers get watered. It's easy, inexpensive, and efficient. In the long run gardeners will save time and money. And as a bonus, your plants will be happy, too.

Nature Play

Casey Hentges, Associate Extension Specialist and Bailey Lockhart, Extension Assistant

Playing outside with an old spoon and making mud pies or having "sword" fights with sticks used to be the norm for kids. Now this is termed unstructured nature play and there has been a lot of research to identify its impact on early childhood development. In fact, nature play has shown to improve emotional and social resilience, facilitate gross motor skills and cognitive development such as imagination, as well as improve physical activity.

With all these benefits, it is concerning that we are seeing fewer children participating in nature play. Among the reasons of safety, time, and competing interests – access to nature is also why some are not being exposed.

Nature play environments can include anything with natural elements such as plants, rocks, mud, sand, or water. It can be as simple as a mud puddle to a water garden or a neighborhood stream.

Kids love to mix, pour, and pretend they are cooking, and out in nature, you don't have to worry about cleaning up the mess. Go to a secondhand store or garage sale to find old kitchenware that can be left outside for the kids to play with. Children are naturally drawn to water, which is why water tables have gotten so popular, but with a simple shallow tub and some cups, you can easily make your own. This is the perfect way to enjoy a summer day with your kids outside.

Kids are naturally attracted to picking up and throwing sticks and rocks, which is part of motor skill development. But if you want to keep the materials on the ground, sticks and rocks can also be great material to make nature art. Make a picture frame of sticks and then decorate the artwork with more sticks or stones.

While you might not have a dense forest or a lot of open space, it doesn't take much to create something special for children and most of these materials can be found in any yard or neighborhood. And for those that may live in an apartment, spaces such as parks and public gardens often offer areas to explore.

With nature play, the materials are free. There is no right or wrong way to do it and it promotes developmental learning. Best of all, it doesn't require batteries.

You can find more information on Oklahoma Gardening - https://youtu.be/3Ufp9OddXac

Insect Hotels: Good Bugs Check In and They Check Out

David Hillock

The week of June 19-25 is Pollinator Week, an annual celebration in support of pollinator health that was initiated and is managed by Pollinator Partnership. Pollinator week is a time to raise awareness for pollinators and spread the word about what we can do to protect them.

Less than 1% of all insect species on planet Earth are considered pests (i.e., those that compete with us for food and fiber or cause us harm). So, what about the other 99%? They either serve as an important food source for vertebrate predators or they benefit us directly.

A couple of these insect-derived benefits include pollination and natural pest control.
Every gardener and farmer appreciate these important ecological services as their crops, and livelihood, often depend on them. There are myriad strategies available to conserve these "good guys" in our landscapes, ranging from polycultural plantings of mixed crops to modified (reduced) pesticide use (see OCES publication E-1023: Conserving Beneficial Arthropods in Residential Landscapes). Here, I will focus on one conservation technique for home gardeners that integrate science and art: insect hotels.

Insect hotels are simple structures that provide shelter to a wide variety of beneficial arthropods, including bees, wasps, lady beetles, and spiders. These bug-friendly structures are often constructed from scraps of wood, brick, bamboo, plant pots, and other leftover landscaping/gardening materials. Gardeners can tap their creative energy and design insect hotels to be aesthetically pleasing and tailored to their landscape. Beneficial arthropods are attracted to

insect hotels because they require shelter for nesting or overwintering. Thus, the design of insect hotels should accommodate these requirements.

Native pollinators such as solitary bees and wasps require nesting sites that are often lacking in well-manicured lawns and landscapes. To attract these beneficials, insect hotels should have lots of nooks and crannies with deep recesses. These nesting sites can be created from stacked bamboo, old pots, masonry, and wood pieces drilled with holes of various diameters. Spiders, lady beetles, and other predators require hiding places and/or overwintering sites, which can be provided by adding straw, fallen leaves, pine cones, and sticks. There are a lot of fun and clever ideas on the internet when it comes to designing an insect hotel. Hopefully they will inspire you to repurpose old scraps, landscaping material, and yard waste lying around your home to construct your own insect hotel!

For more information about conserving native pollinators, including bumble bees, visit the University of Florida's "Native Buzz" project page (see references below). Also, information about specific nesting requirements and do-it-yourself bee boxes can be found by visiting the website of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (see references below).

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