Horticulture Tips
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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Department of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture
Oklahoma State University

GARDEN TIPS FOR NOVEMBER!

David Hillock, Senior Extension Specialist

Lawn & Turf

- Fertilize cool-season grasses like fescue with 1 pound nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
- Continue to mow fescue as needed at 2 inches and water during dry conditions.
- Control broadleaf winter weeds like dandelions. (HLA-6601)
- Keep falling leaves off fescue to avoid damage to the foliage.

Tree & Shrub

- Prune deciduous trees if in early part of winter. Prune only for structural and safety purposes.
- Wrap young, thin-barked trees with a commercial protective material to prevent winter sunscald.
- Apply dormant oil for scale infested trees and shrubs before temperatures fall below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Follow label directions.
- Continue to plant balled & burlap and containerized trees.
- Watch for arborvitae aphids, which tolerate cooler temperatures in evergreen shrubs.

Flowers

- Tulips can still be successfully planted through the middle of November.
- Leave foliage on asparagus, mums, and other perennials to help insulate crowns from harsh winter conditions.
- Bulbs like hyacinth, narcissus and tulip can be potted in containers for indoor forcing.

Miscellaneous

- Leftover garden seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer until the next planting season. Discard seeds over 3 years old.
- Gather and shred leaves. Add to compost, use as mulch or till into garden plots.
- Clean and store garden and landscape tools. Coat with a light application of oil to prevent rusting. Drain fuel tanks, irrigation lines, and hoses. Bring garden hoses indoors.

Fruits & Nuts

- Delay pruning fruit trees until next February or March before bud break.
- Harvest pecans and walnuts immediately to eliminate deterioration of the kernel.

Houseplant Care

David Hillock

With cooler temperatures of fall and winter fast approaching our gardening interest often turns from plants outside to plants indoors. Success with houseplants is governed by one's careful management of light, temperature, water, nutrients, and humidity, along with using the proper potting medium.

Light – Very few plants tolerate dark corners. Most houseplants require the light that would be found within four to eight feet of a bright south window. Some will tolerate a spot very near the window, while others will prefer less light some distance away. Too little light can result in tall, lanky, small-leafed plants. Too much light can cause leafburn on sensitive species like African violet. If the room is not naturally lit, artificial lights should be used.

Temperature – Most houseplants prosper in a temperature of 65°F to 75°F, but the humidity of the average home is too low to suit them. A plant prospers in relative humidity of about 50 to 60 percent, which is more than most people like. This can be helped by using a humidifier or by setting the pot on a tray of moist gravel or pebbles. Do not allow the water to touch the bottom of the pot, as the water would then be wicked into the potting medium and keep the plant too wet.

Watering – More houseplants succumb to improper watering than from any other single cause. In general, most houseplants need to be thoroughly watered and then allowed to nearly dry before the next irrigation. Use tepid water when watering houseplants. Enough water needs to be poured over the potting medium to allow water to drain freely through the drain hole at every watering. If water does not drain out the bottom, rewater until it drains freely. Never leave a houseplant standing in water, as this will cause the roots to rot.

Drainage – Drainage is an integral part of watering a plant. Do not include aggregates in the bottom since the aggregate actually slows water's movement through a pot. If a decorative, drainless pot is desired, it would be better to use a "pot within a pot" technique: pot the plant in a container with drain holes and then set that into the larger, decorative pot. Never allow excess water to collect in the outer pot.

Potting Medium – Consult your local garden center, greenhouse or florist for help selecting an appropriate potting medium. It is important that the potting medium has good water holding capacity yet is loose enough to promote good drainage and aeration.

Fertilizers – The easiest way to fertilize your houseplants is while watering. Select a houseplant fertilizer and dilute according to label directions. Houseplants can be fertilized at every watering with a very dilute rate or fertilized at a slightly higher rate once every third or fourth watering. Do not fertilize as often or as much in the winter, in dimly lit rooms or in potting mixes that contain soil.

For more information about growing and maintaining houseplants see OSU Extension Fact Sheet HLA-6411 - Houseplant Care.

Protecting Young Trees

David Hillock

Trunks of some newly planted trees, especially those with green trunks or smooth, thin bark, require protection from direct sunlight during all seasons. They are especially susceptible to sunscald (blistering and cracking of the bark) during winter months when leaves are absent. Protect the trunk with a commercial tree wrap such as a polyurethane spiral wrap or material such as burlap. The wrap should be applied in the fall but should be removed prior to trunk expansion each spring.

The most reported damage from trunk protective wraps is trunk girdling or constriction because the wrap was too tight or left on too long. Generally, a tree will only need to be wrapped the first season or two after planting.

Tie the wrap firmly, but not tightly. Polyurethane wraps expand without binding the trunk. Start at the ground and wrap up to the first branch slightly overlapping as you go. Do not attach wraps with wire, nylon rope, plastic ties, or electrical tape.

Plants prone to winter desiccation, such as broadleaf evergreens, when planted in open windy areas may require additional protection. Temporary protective barriers such as sheets of burlap, lathe fencing, bales of hay etc. can be constructed to provide protection from the drying winds. Unfortunately, antidesiccants generally do not relieve plant stress in Oklahoma in winter or summer.

Protect young trees and shrubs from animal damage. Polyurethane wrap, wire mesh collars or rodent repellent paint can be used. Holly, honeylocust, elm, and fruit trees are particularly susceptible. Remember snow will change the height of the bite.

For more information on protecting landscape plants during the winter see OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6404 - Winter Protection for Landscape Plants.

Deer Rut Tree Damage

Casey Hentges, Associate Extension Specialist
Bailey Singleton, Extension Assistant

Deer can cause many problems in the garden, but they can cause real damage on younger trees during rut. Rut is the mating season for deer which begins in the fall and continues through late winter. During the summer deer grow new antlers and as they head into mating season, they rub their antlers to get the velvet off them. They also rub on trees as sign of territory to other bucks.

Usually, they are looking for smaller trees that are about 1-3 inches in diameter. Vertical scratches are a tell-tale sign of deer damage. If the damage occurs all the way around the diameter of the tree, there is not much hope for the tree. This is because it disrupts the flow of water and nutrients through the vascular system which is just below the bark. If a tree is only

damaged on one side, there may be a chance the tree will be able to overcome the damage, however, it will be a setback for the tree.

Now just because you don't see any damage early in the fall, there is still concern later in the winter when the deer begin to rub to shed their antlers.

If you have a smaller tree you are trying to get established, while there is not a foolproof way to protect plants from deer, constructing a cage with some posts and chicken wire that has about a two foot radius from the tree in the center can be one of the best ways to deter deer from rubbing on the bark.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGjsJleDo9g

Pecan Harvest & Drying

Becky Carroll, Senior Extension Specialist

Pecan harvest has started for improved cultivar pecans, and it won't be long until native pecan harvest begins. It's important to remember that the earlier you harvest, the less crows, bluejays, and squirrels will be depredating. It has been shown that one crow or one squirrel can remove one pound of pecans a day. Depredation may be lessened with early harvest, but it may require a little more work.

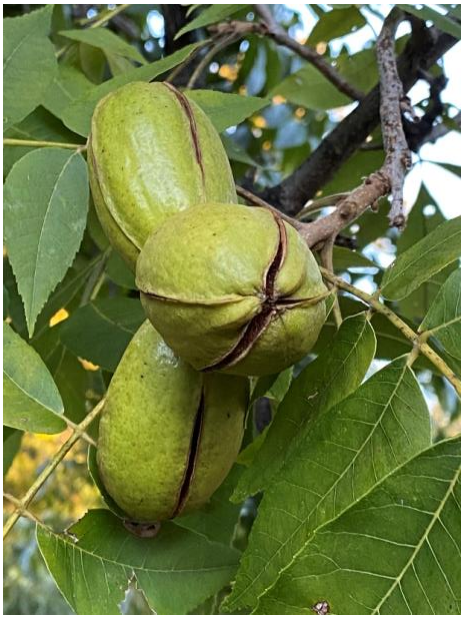
Shuck opening signals that the pecan is ripe and ready to be harvested. Pecans harvested while the shucks are green will need a few days of drying time because of high moisture content in the kernel. Pecans may have up to 15% moisture at this time. With high moisture, the nuts will taste green and will be rubbery, not crisp. Pecans harvested after the shucks have dried will have less moisture in the kernel, but they should always be tested to determine moisture content. How is an easy way to test without a moisture meter? Use the "snap" test. Take a kernel and break in half, if it snaps, it's a good moisture content, but if it bends, it's too wet. To dry them, spread the pecans out on a screen or in a mesh bag and use a fan to dry them out quicker. Commercial growers may use big trailers with air flowing through the pecans or super sacks with dryers. Proper moisture is important for kernel quality, easier processing, and good storage. Ideally that is would be around 4.5 to 5% moisture. If growers sell their pecans above 6%, their prices will be docked. Accumulators don't want to buy moisture that will eventually evaporate.

Pecans that have "sticktights" or stuck shucks should be removed from the harvest. These pecans usually have some defect that prevented them from opening. Hickory shuckworm, pecan weevil, pecan scab, poor pollination, or even severe drought can keep shucks from opening. If shucks remain with harvested pecans, they will begin to mold and contaminate the entire load. Any pecans that have cracks in the shell should be removed as well.

When the pecans are dry, they can be processed or frozen in the shell. Don't delay proper storage techniques or quality will start to suffer within a few weeks at room temperature.

If left at room temperature, pecans will become rancid. Pecans have a high oil content. These heart healthy oils will begin to spoil in about 3 months. If properly handled, pecans can be stored for many years. Pecans should be stored in an airtight container in the freezer. They can absorb other flavors from the freezer and should be kept in freezer bags or containers. Unshelled pecans will hold their quality longer but shelled pecan kernels can be frozen successfully for 2-3 years.

Be sure to save a couple of pounds of your best varieties or natives to enter in the state pecan show. Details to enter are included in another article this month.



Shucks are split signaling harvest can begin but drying pecans will be needed.

Controlling Insects in and Around the Home

David Hillock

The first important step in the process of insect control is to identify the insect that is present so that the proper control procedure will be used. OSU county extension educators and pesticide dealers can help identify the pest for the homeowner, or the pest may be sent to the OSU Entomology & Plant Pathology Department for identification.

Sanitation and good housekeeping are possibly the most important aspects in controlling or preventing pests, but even well-kept homes sometimes become infested. The homeowner can usually control light infestations of pests in the house by carefully following directions on the pesticide container and by doing a thorough job of application.

Certain pests found outside may be eliminated before they enter the home. (For information on control of pests outdoors, refer to OSU Extension Fact Sheet EPP-7306). However, some insects live entirely within the home, where they must be controlled by applying spray, dust, bait or

aerosol pesticides to areas where they are most frequently found. If the infestation is severe and widespread, it is advisable to employ the services of a pest control firm, which has pesticides and application equipment not generally available to homeowners.

For more information on pesticides and their use in and around the home see OSU Extension Fact Sheet - EPP-7312 - Household Pest Control.

Safety Tips

- Read and follow all directions on the container label.
- Avoid repeated or prolonged contact of insecticides with the skin and prolonged inhalation of spray mist.
- Do not spray oil solutions near an open flame (pilot lights).
- Do not risk contaminating food by treating near food, dishes or cooking and eating utensils.
- Dispose of empty pesticide containers, and do not puncture or incinerate aerosol or pressurized spray cans.
- Store insecticides in the labeled original containers, in a dry place where they cannot contaminate foodstuffs and where children and pets do not have access to them.
- After using pesticides, always wash your hands and face and any other exposed body areas.
- For further information on handling, mixing, and applying pesticides, consult your area or state extension entomologists, visit your local county extension educator, and/or refer to OSU Extension Fact Sheet EPP-7450 for information on safe use of pesticides.

Prevention and Control Hints

Before applying insecticides for pest control, the homeowner can help ensure better control by doing the following:

1. Clean out areas that make good homes for the pests.
2. Clean up areas that collect grease, food scraps or other spillage which might provide a food source.
3. Eliminate excessive storage boxes from the attic and garage and clean up foliage or other hiding places from around the outside foundation of the house.
4. Seal up cracks and crevices around the home to keep insects looking for a place to hibernate over the winter from entering the home.
5. If grain or flour pests are present, locate the infested material. Go through all cereal boxes, flour, beans, dry pet food, and spice containers until the infestation source is located. Dispose of the infested material, then a light application of pesticide.
6. Carefully check newly purchased dried foods for insect infestations, and store foods in tightly sealed glass, plastic or metal containers rather than in sacks, bags or boxes.

NOTE on ultrasonic electronic or sound control devices: To date, these devices have not been proven to be effective or practical.

Start a Pecan Tree Thinning Plan Right Now

Becky Carroll, Senior Extension Specialist

One of the most limiting factors in native pecan production is overcrowding of the grove. Pecan trees need light, and lots of it! They need light to photosynthesize. Overcrowded trees reduce the

light that each tree receives. Reduced photosynthesis means fewer pecans. Growers should thin out their groves to get the needed sunshine to all parts of each limb and shoot. Increased light equals increased crop potential. With limited light and shading, the trees will begin to eliminate those limbs that are in the dark. Shedding those limbs reduces the crop load that the tree could produce. When severely crowded, pecan trees will only produce nuts on the very top of the canopy of the tree. It's difficult for most people to cut down big trees that are growing on the land.

How do we know if they are overcrowded? If limbs are touching, they are too crowded. Trees should have 10-15 feet between branch tips of neighbor trees. At high noon during the growing season, there should be no more than 50 percent shade on the orchard floor. If you don't need your sunglasses in the grove during the afternoon, it's probably too crowded. Herman Hinrichs, OSU pecan researcher in the 1950's determined that for maximum pecan production in Oklahoma, about 30 square feet of cross-sectional trunk area was optimum density for one acre. So, if you have 13- to 14-inch diameter trees, proper stocking rate is about 30 trees/acre; 23-inch trees – 10/acre; and 30-inch trees – about 6/acre. Measurements are taken at 4 foot above the ground. Take a look at OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6208 - Improving Native Pecan Groves to learn more.

Once we recognize that the grove is too crowded, now what? If you're just getting started or your grove has been neglected, remove anything that isn't a pecan tree. Brush and non-pecan trees can be removed first. Mulchers, bulldozers or backhoes can remove the overgrowth.

How can you decide which pecan trees should come out? There are some easy candidates that we know should be removed – those that are damaged or are in areas that we can't get to at harvest time. Maybe they are too close to the creek or drainage area and all the pecans they produce float down to the neighbors. Those with double trunks that are hard to shake or are too big to shake are good candidates to remove unless you have a shaker that can reach up into the canopy to shake individual limbs.

After the initial removal, start a system to determine which trees should come out in a few years. Each native tree is genetically different from one another. There can be major differences in trees in one orchard. Shell thickness, productivity, nut size, quality, ripening time, and disease susceptibility can be different from tree to tree.

Delegate someone in your harvest crew to mark trees that produce this year. Tree paint can be used to mark producing or non-producing trees for a few years to determine which trees are doing their part. A paint ring on years with a crop, or an X for each year without nuts (3 X's and you're out!), or some other system that works for you can be implemented to help with the selection process. Just be consistent and if marking one spot or x, make sure to mark the same side of the tree. The most productive tree may be in an area that looks like it should be removed if only looking at proximity to other trees. Without some form of rating their productiveness, you may take out the most fruitful tree that produces a huge crop each year and leave a tree that only contributes once a decade.

Nut size is also an important characteristic to consider. Remove those trees with small pecans that are too little to harvest or sell. Wholesalers may dock your prices if you bring in very small pecans.

Another very important consideration is disease and insect susceptibility. If you have a tree that has bunch disease, or has pecan scab frequently, those should be on the removal list. A tree that has phylloxera in the middle of non-affected trees could be removed.

Trees that harbor squirrels with holes in trunks or large limbs would be good candidates to be cut down. Anytime we can rid the grove of a squirrel den, we can improve our yields.

Removing those trees with few crops will not be missed and will make way for the productive trees to be able to have even better crops with increased light. They will respond quickly and fill in with new growth.

Pecan groves and orchards will need additional thinning as the trees continue to grow, expand, and crowd. It is a continual and often overlooked need.

Picture 1. Having a system to mark tree trunks with crop load information each season will help with determining which trees may be better candidates to remove. There is no “right” way to mark trees, just have a plan and be consistent each year.

Forcing Bulbs for the Holidays

David Hillock

We have been busy planting bulbs in the gardens, but we do not have to wait until spring to enjoy these blossoms. Many spring-flowering bulbs can be forced indoors for a colorful winter display. What better way to brighten up a winter day than with fresh flowers?

"Forcing" is the term used to describe the process that stimulates bulbs to bloom out of season. The easiest bulbs to force are Paperwhite Narcissus because they don't require chilling. Other

commonly forced bulbs include amaryllis, muscari and hyacinths. More challenging bulbs for forcing include colchicum and miniature iris. When selecting bulbs for forcing look for varieties that are specifically recommended for this purpose. Most bulbs require a chilling period or period of cold temperatures before they will bloom, but bulbs sold specifically for indoor forcing are pre-chilled, removing this step for the gardener.

Paperwhites are quick and easy to start and will bloom within four to six weeks. Start by selecting a container without any drainage holes. A clear glass vase can be used so you can see the roots of the bulbs growing, but many different types of containers can be used, if it is deep enough to hold about 3 inches of media.

When forcing bulbs, it is not necessary to use soil as the medium, though you may. It may be easier to use washed pea gravel or glass pebbles that can be purchased at craft stores. The stones or gravel will hold the bulbs in place as they grow. Fill the container with about 2 inches of growing medium. Then, place the paperwhite or other bulbs on top of the pebbles. For a nice display, set 7 or more bulbs close together so they almost touch. A large bunch of bulbs will be more dramatic. Set the bulbs so they are perfectly upright. Wiggle the bulbs down into the pebbles a little bit and then fill in around the bulbs with more pebbles. You do not want to completely bury the bulbs, instead, leave 1/2 to 1/3 of the bulb exposed.

Once you have the bulbs in place, add just enough water to the container to reach the base of the bulbs, but not touch the bulbs. Do not let the bulbs sit in water or they may rot. One of the reasons to use a glass container is that it is easy to see the level of the water. If you are using a solid container, just dig a small hole next to a bulb so you can see the water depth.

To start the rooting process, place your container in a cool room that gets low light or no light, such as a windowless room. Keep your container at low light levels until the roots begin to grow well and the shoots start showing - usually about 1-2 weeks. Keep an eye on the water level and refill as necessary to keep the level just below the bottom of the bulbs.

Once you have good root growth, move your bulbs into a warmer bright, sunny window and watch them grow! Once the bulbs begin to flower, move them out of direct sun so your blooms will last longer. Your home will be filled with beautiful flowers and the refreshing aroma of spring in the middle of winter. Plant batch after batch to keep flowers blooming all winter long. Paperwhite containers make beautiful centerpieces for the table during the holidays and are also great to give as holiday bouquets. Or force paperwhites with your children to create unique gifts for their teachers or grandparents.

Oklahoma State Pecan Show 2023

Becky Carroll

The 2023 pecan harvest is quickly approaching, shucks are splitting, orchard floors are being groomed, and equipment is being serviced. Many growers are reporting large crops this year. Don’t forget to set aside some of your best pecans to enter the Oklahoma State Pecan Show.

Entry numbers have been low for the last few years. Send in your samples to compete for Best in Show!

If you'd like to learn more about the Oklahoma State Pecan show and how to submit a winning sample, the Pecan Topics for November 2020 webinar has a presentation that you can view at - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qa17NtN0Ab8

If no county/area show is available, growers may enter pecans directly by sending samples to:
Cimarron Valley Research Station
Attn: Becky Carroll
10820 South Jardot
Perkins, OK 74059

Samples should arrive by January 26, 2024.

Samples should be entered in a **sealed** plastic or paper bag. Label the bag on the outside and place a label inside the bag. Information should include exhibitors name and address, county, and type of pecan entered. Be sure to follow the guidelines that are listed below before sending entries.

A few helpful hints: Take the time to select pecans that are all the same cultivar, or same size and shape natives – ***don't send mixed pecans***. Select uniform, clean, uncracked pecans. Presentation can make the difference between two very similar samples. Make sure to send 2 pounds of pecans in a labeled and sealed bag.

General Rules and Guidelines

- All entries must be grown in Oklahoma during the current season.
- Each entry shall consist of two pounds of nuts.
- Entries deemed unworthy by the judges will not compete for awards.
- Label each entry as to exhibitor's name, address and cultivar of nuts. If more than one native (seedling) pecan exhibit is made, identify the nuts from separate trees by numbers. Only one exhibit of each cultivar or native tree may be entered by one individual.
- Each entry will compete in one of the following 26 classes:

    1. Barton
    2. Burkett
    3. Cheyenne
    4. Choctaw
    5. Comanche
    6. Gratex
    7. Kanza

8. Kiowa
9. Lakota
10. Maramec
11. Mohawk
12. Nacono
13. Oconee
14. Pawnee
15. Peruque
16. Podsednik
17. Schley (eastern)
18. Shoshoni
19. Squirrels Delight
20. Stuart
21. Waco
22. Western
23. Wichita
24. Other Cultivars
25. Large Native (seedling) 60 nuts/lb or larger
26. Small Native (seedling) more than 60 nuts/lb

- Each grower is allowed to participate at one county show of his or her choice.
- Each grower is allowed to enter one entry in each show class with the exception of Class 24 (Other Cultivars), Class 25 (Large native) and Class 26 (Small native)
- Each grower may enter one entry from each native (seedling) tree.
- Entries should be shipped or mailed to arrive at the show at least one day prior to the deadline.
- County pecan shows will not be affected by these rules and procedures.
- Samples will be placed in cold storage and judged prior to the Oklahoma Pecan Growers Annual Meeting. At that time, the winning entries will be displayed with awards and recognitions. All entries will become the property of the OPGA.
- First, second, and third place winners in each class at the State Pecan Show will receive ribbons.
- State Pecan Show Special Awards – Plaques will be awarded for the largest pecan entry, the entry having the highest kernel percentage, the champion native, and the best entry of the show. The plaques are presented at the Awards Banquet during the annual meeting.
- If a qualifying show is not available, growers may submit entries in accordance with these guidelines directly to the State Show. Entries in the state show must be received by January 26, 2024.