

THE GRAPEVINE

Larry Crouse, Extension Horticulture Agent

Caddo Sugar Maples

Sugar maples often have significant problems with our Kansas weather. Our hot, often dry summers and windy conditions can shorten the life of these trees. However, some sugar maples are better adapted to Kansas conditions than others. Our John C. Pair Horticulture Center has evaluated sugar maples for well over 20 years and has identified selections that are much better adapted to Kansas. Of particular interest are the Caddo sugar maples which originated from an isolated population in Caddo, County, Oklahoma. These are true sugar maples and are considered an ectotype and are more drought tolerant, better adapted to high pH soils and more resistant to leaf scorch and tatter than the norm. Just how resistant to scorch is impressive. The last three weeks of August in 2003 saw temperatures at our research station over 100 degrees each day with no rain for the month prior. All other sugar maples in the trial had severely scorched leaves. Not a single leaf of any of the caddo maples was scorched. Leaf water potential readings taken pre-dawn showed all other trees in the trial past the wilting point while the Caddo maples were barely stressed. Another interesting characteristic of caddo maples is that they tend to retain their leaves in the winter and therefore have been suggested as screens or for use in windbreaks. Dr. John Pair, the late director of the Horticulture Center, selected and released two Caddo maples over 10 years ago. Both these selections color early and have consistent good red fall color. Drought tolerance and resistance to leaf scorch and leaf tatter are exceptional. However, neither will do well in a heavy clay soil that is frequently saturated. These trees can be damaged or killed if planted in wet sites. The first selection, 'Autumn Splendor', has the traditional sugar maple growth pattern and needs plenty of room to mature. 'John Pair' is smaller and more compact and more likely to fit a residential landscape. This tree is also noted for a dense, uniform crown. If you are in the market for a sugar maple, consider these before making a final decision.

Forcing Paperwhite Bulbs

Paperwhites are a form of daffodil that do not require a chilling period in order to bloom. Therefore, they are very easy to force and bring in to bloom. Following are the steps needed.

- Use a 3 to 4-inch decorative container that does not have drainage holes. It should be transparent enough that you can see the water level in relation to the bulbs.
- Place 1 to 2 inches of washed gravel, marbles, glass beads or stones in the bottom of the container. We will call the material chosen as "media" for the remainder of the article.
- Place the bulbs on the media near one another. Add enough media to hold them in place.
- Add enough water that the bottom of the bulb is sitting in water. Do not submerge the bulb. Maintain the water at this level. It normally takes 4 to 8 weeks for the bulbs to bloom.

Unfortunately, paperwhites often become leggy and fall over. Growing in cooler temperatures (60 to 65 degrees) can help but there is another trick that can be useful and involves using a dilute solution of alcohol. No, this trick did not come from an unknown source on the Internet but Cornell University's Flower Bulb Research Program. They suggest the following to obtain a plant that is 1/3 shorter than normal. Flower size and longevity are not affected.

- Grow the bulbs until the green shoot is 1 to 2 inches above the top of the bulb.
- Pour off the water and replace it with a 4 to 6% alcohol solution.
- Use this solution instead of water for all future waterings.

There are two methods to add this solution. The first is to add the alcohol solution to what is already in the container. Add enough to bring it up to the proper level. The second will give shorter plants. In this second method, pour off all the old solution and replace it with the new each time additional solution is needed. So, how do we make the alcohol solution? An easy way is to use rubbing alcohol. Rubbing alcohol is usually 70% alcohol and should be mixed with 1 part alcohol with 10 or 11 parts water. Do not use beer or wine as the sugars present can interfere with normal growth, also it is a waste of good beer or wine. The researchers were not sure why this worked but suggested the alcohol made it more difficult for the plants to take up water. This water stress stunted growth but did not affect the flowers.

All-America Selection Winners for 2017

All-America Selections tests and introduces new flowers and vegetables each year that have done well in trials across North America. This year there were eight vegetable winners and eight flower winners that were national winners. Time and space keeps me from listing all of those here at this time, but one that I want to share with you that has me excited is a new okra.

Okra Candle Fire F1

2017 Edible – Vegetable Winner

A unique red okra with pods that are round, not ribbed, and a brighter red color than the reddish burgundy okras currently available. This high-performing AAS Winner received high marks for productivity, taste, texture and tenderness as well as the ornamental value of red pods on red stems. One judge noted that Candle Fire okra was quite maintenance free to grow, except for the frequent harvesting, which is a great thing! Candle Fire thrives in the heat and is disease resistant even in hot humid climates like the south where it's perfect for traditional fried okra. Suitable for both fruit producing and ornamental usage. Aged fruit can be used in flower arrangements. Dry seed can be used as coffee (without caffeine.)