

LITTLE BARLEY IN LAWNS

Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in late September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer. So, why are we talking about little barley now? Because now is the time to control it for next year. The best control for little barley is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions. Overseeding now can thicken up a fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation. However, if you do not plan to overseed, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of "Weed Impede" by Monterey Lawn and Garden, and it can be found as the Green Light product "Amaze". Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Hordeum* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide now and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.

Dividing Peonies

Peonies are a favorite perennial of gardeners because of their beauty and low maintenance. In Kansas, peonies provide a beautiful display of flowers each spring before Memorial Day. Though peonies can be left in place indefinitely, many gardeners wish to increase their plantings and use a process known as division to accomplish this. Keep in mind, however, that peonies often take about three years to return to full bloom and size after division. Fall is the traditional time to divide these plants. The first step in division is to remove the foliage. Peonies are essentially dormant by September 1 even though the foliage is still green. Then dig out the entire plant. Shake and wash off as much soil as possible so that the pink buds or "eyes" are visible. Peony roots are tough, and a sharp knife is needed to cut the roots into separate pieces. Make sure each division has three to four buds. Make sure the location chosen for planting receives at least a half-day of full sun. However, the more sun, the better. Space the plants so that there is at least 2 feet between dwarf types and 4 feet between the standard types. Follow the same rules for planting these divisions as you do for new plants. Make sure the pink buds are about 1 inch below the soil surface. If they are set more than 2 inches deep, flowering may be delayed or completely prevented. As you set the plants, firm soil often as it is added around the plant. If the soil is not firmed, it can settle and pull the plant down with it. Water in well after planting and water as necessary through the fall and winter to keep the soil moist. It is often a good idea to add mulch to the new planting to protect it from heaving. The alternate freezing and thawing that commonly occurs during Kansas winters can "heave" weakly rooted plants out of the ground. Add a mulch of straw, leaves, compost or other material after the soil freezes. Remember, it is not the cold that harms these plants but the alternate freezing and thawing of the soil.

Weird Squash

Occasionally we receive a call from someone who has a squash (or cucumber or melon) that just doesn't look like what was supposedly planted. They often wish to know if that fruit had cross-pollinated with another vegetable close by. In such cases, the gardener is assuming that cross-pollination will affect the fruit. Such is not the case. The characteristics of the fruit are determined by the mother plant and are not affected by cross-pollination. However, there will be a problem if seed is saved for the next year from a flower that was cross-pollinated. All bets are off on what you will get if that happens. So, how do we end up with this weird vegetable? Though it could be that the gardener had forgotten exactly what he planted, more likely is that the

seed he bought had been accidentally cross-pollinated before packaging. Another possibility is that the plant came from seed produced by fruit that had rotted in the garden the previous year. Regardless, don't worry about planting different cultivars of squash or cucumbers or melons close to one another. Though cross-pollination sometimes occurs, the fruit will not be affected.

Storing Apples

You can enjoy apples from January to June – with the right conditions. Some apple cultivars can be stored for longer periods than others. Some cultivars will stay in firm, crisp condition for about 6 to 8 months with good storage conditions. The approximate length of time cultivars will keep well under refrigerated conditions are as follows:

Wealthy: 60 days, Paulared: 90 days, Gala: 120 days, Jonathan: 120 days, Grimes Golden: 120 days, Golden Delicious: 150 days, Empire: 150 days, Delicious: 160 days, Braeburn: 180 days, Idared: 200 days, Rome Beauty: 220 days, Winesap: 220 days, Fuji: 240 days, Granny Smith: 240 days, Arkansas Black: 240 days

The condition of the apples and how they are stored will strongly influence the storage period.

Some guidelines to help assure good quality and maximum storage life of apples include:

- * Store only the best quality.
- * Pick as they are first maturing.
- * Avoid skin breaks, disease or insect damage, and bruises on individual fruit.
- * Store in a plastic bag to help retain moisture in the apples. The bag should have a few small holes for air exchange. The bags of apples may be stored in boxes to prevent bruising if they must be stacked or moved from time to time.
- * Refrigerate at about 35 degrees F. An extra refrigerator works well.
- * Sort about every 30 to 40 days to remove fruit that may be beginning to rot.