

## The Grapevine

### Putting the Garden to Bed

I had planned a different topic for this week but Mother Nature loves to throw a wrench into all of our plans with this potentially record-breaking cold snap for the next couple days. Unfortunately, our growing season is going to come to a rather sudden end this week but that doesn't mean our gardening season is truly over. Here are some things to get done before the hard freeze this week if you can.

With the upcoming cold nights, be sure to harvest any tomatoes, peppers and other warm season crops you have growing in your garden. I would even harvest the green tomatoes as they may continue to ripen on your counter if you harvest them before they freeze. You should also harvest any beans or potatoes that you might have planted. If you planted cole crops most of them should tolerate the temperatures that are forecasted Monday night however it would not hurt to cover them with frost blanket, a sheet or a regular blanket for Tuesday night with a low temperature forecasted of 24 degrees. Most of our cole crops can handle temperatures down to 24 degrees with the exception being cauliflower but it is better to be safe than sorry when dealing with cold weather..



Fall is an excellent time of the year to control weeds in your lawn. Next year's dandelions have germinated and right now, all weeds are moving nutrients into their roots to help them make it through the long winter which means broadleaf herbicides will also be taken to the roots. These young plants are small and easily controlled with herbicides such as 2,4-D or combination products (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Choose a day that is 50 degrees or higher as the better the weed is growing; the more weed killer will be moved from the leaves to the roots. Cold temperatures will slow this process but these products will still work at lower temperatures. The best way to prevent weeds in your lawn is to have a thick healthy stand of grass, but that is a conversation for a different time. It is impossible to control 100% of weeds in the lawn and that is OK!

As we prepare to mow the yard for what is hopefully one of the last times of the year it's time to think about preparing your lawn mower ready for its long winters break. Be sure to drain the gasoline from gas powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer to prevent the gas from becoming thick and gummy. Check your spark plug or replace it so you are ready to mow in the spring. If you have a riding lawn mower or one with a battery be sure to remove the battery and clean the terminals to prevent corrosion. Once you have serviced the engine, be sure to check the blades. Dull blades can damage the grass when you cut it and leave a "feathered" look to the ends of the grass blades. As you sharpen the blades check for damage, if you can't smooth it out, the blades need to be replaced. Grind or file the edge of the blade till it is about 1/32 inch as a razor-sharp edge can actually lead to a poor cut. Clean the blades and the underside of the mower to remove any matted grass.

If you seeded your yard this fall continue to water it to keep the seedlings growing and ensure they are more likely to survive the winter. If we continue to have rain, a mature lawn won't need much water but we do want to make sure the lawn goes into the winter with moist soil. On warm days continue to water the perennial beds and periodically water your trees and shrubs throughout the winter as needed. Be sure to remove all your hoses from hydrants and drain them prior to Monday night's cold temperatures. While it will warm back up in just a couple days, lows of 24 degrees could damage the hoses if water is left in them.

While not ideal the cold temperatures were going to arrive sometime. Unfortunately, these cold temperatures will mean our fall color on trees is probably over and the trees are going to shed their leaves rapidly after Tuesday. If you haven't already planned what to do with your leaves time is rapidly running out. If you intend to mulch the leaves and let them fall to the soil be sure you are mowing when there is just a thin layer of leaves on the grass otherwise you might kill any grass buried by the leaves. While our growing season is mostly over for the year there are still plenty of things to do this fall. Happy growing everyone!!

### **Insect of the Week-**

This week's insect of the week is the whitefly. As we moved houseplants inside this fall this tiny insect might have tried to hitch a ride. Whiteflies feed on a variety of vegetable and floral crops including poinsettias, geraniums, salvia, hibiscus, coleus, tomatoes, lettuce and others. Adult whiteflies are about 1/16" long with snow white wings and a yellow body. Whiteflies can complete their life cycle in 21-36 days depending on the temperatures. Damage from whiteflies is two-fold, they suck the juices out of the host leaves causing wilting and lack of vigor and they also excrete honeydew on which a fungus called sooty mold develops. This sooty mold covers the surface of the leaves and interferes with the plants photosynthetic processes. The easiest way to spot whiteflies is to brush up against plants and see the adults fly. Control can be difficult with the species in some areas becoming resistant to chemicals. There are several control measures that can be used including sticky traps, using a small handheld vacuum to suck up the adults and reduce the population (This is best done in the morning when they are cool and slow moving. You should freeze the vacuum bag for approximately 24 hours to kill the insects vacuumed up.) and chemical controls. If chemical control is warranted alternate the chemicals used as some adults may be resistant to one chemical but not others. Options for control include neem oil, insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, pyrethrin products, imidacloprid, malathion, or permethrin. Be sure to read the labels and make sure the products are listed for house plants and to control whitefly. The best control will be achieved with four or five applications at five to seven-day intervals. Be sure to spray the lower leaf surface and apply as soon as whiteflies are detected rather than waiting till populations become severe. If plants are heavily infested it's probably best to discard the plants and start over.



### **Reminders-**

- Dig sweet potatoes before the first frost. Sweet potatoes will not lose flavor or get woody if left in the ground however they can be damaged by frost and shorten their shelf life.
- Start bringing houseplants inside.
- Drain hoses and remove from hydrants for the next couple days.
- Wait to cut frost killed perennials, unless diseases were present, till spring to provide a home for beneficial insects overwinter.
- Once you are done with tools for the fall be sure to clean them and store properly so they are ready to use in the spring.
- Soil test your garden or flower bed spots.

### **Upcoming Events**

- **November 2, 2022: Wildlife Damage Prevention and Control in the Lawn and Garden**  
Have your prized vegetables and beautiful landscapes ever become an all-you-can-eat buffet for local wildlife? Learn how to identify the squirrels, rabbits, deer, gophers, or other wildlife that may be causing problems, and better understand how to prevent their damage. Join Dr. Ricketts, as he shares practical tips to prevent and control common wildlife damage issues. For more information or to register [click here](#).