

The Grapevine

Planting Spring Bulbs

Bulb season has arrived which I'm reminded of when I open a new plant catalog or walk through any of the local stores. Some of the first signs of spring such as tulips, daffodils, crocus and grape hyacinth need to be planted in the fall so they can grace us with their beauty in the future. These bulbs need time to grow roots and must spend a certain amount of time being "chilled" in order to bloom in the spring. The end of September into October is the best time to be planting bulbs so they meet these requirements.

Bulbs should be planted in a location that receives full sun to partial shade in order to do their best. Choose a spot that has good drainage as bulbs will rot if they stay wet for extended periods of time. Bulbs prefer loamy soils, however if you have a soil that is higher in clay or sand you can add additional organic material to the soil and the bulbs will do just fine. Be sure to incorporate fertilizer into the bed as you are planting, typically a complete fertilizer or one specifically for bulbs will work best. Each species of bulb will need a slightly different planting depth. A general rule of thumb is to plant bulbs 2-3 as deep as the bulbs are wide. For example, tulips and hyacinths should be planted about 6" deep while daffodils need plant 6-8" deep. Be sure to water the bulbs in thoroughly after they have been planted and water them regularly throughout the fall if there is no rainfall.

When planting bulbs use masses of one type or color rather than spreading them out randomly in a bed as small irregular plantings or masses provides a better display than planting bulbs individually. Even though there won't be any growth above the soil the bulbs are setting down roots that will help them thrive in the spring. Cover the area with mulch to reduce the amount of moisture lost and to provide insulation for the plants.



Fall Garden Care

Fall is an excellent time to get started on some of those gardening projects that are often hard to do in the spring. Once you pull your vegetables out of the garden for the year be sure to incorporate some organic material into the soil. It's common to add organic material in the spring however a fall application has several benefits. With the leaves that are falling from the trees we have a ready supply of organic material to add into the garden and the second benefit is the winter will give the organic material time to break down in the soil so the nutrients are ready for your garden to use next year.

It's also a great idea to till your garden or work it up in the fall or early winter as opposed to tilling in the spring. Most years fall weather is drier than early spring plus you aren't on a time crunch trying to get your garden ready before you plant vegetables in the spring. Soil that is worked up when it is dry or just slightly damp is easier to till and is less likely to have large clods which can easily happen when the soil is wet. If you decided to plant a cover crop be sure to wait to work the soil till the cover crop has been killed by a frost for the season to get the biggest impact on your soil health.

Another task that can easily happen in the fall is to do a soil test in your garden, lawn or flower beds as this allows you can add any necessary nutrients or soil amendments before you plant in the garden up in the spring. Typically, in the fall the soil lab is less busy so the results come back faster plus you aren't impatiently waiting for your results so you can get started planting.

Fall is an often-forgotten time of the gardening year as many of us are ready to be done with the work by the time late fall or early winter shows up but it can also be an extremely valuable time to get a head start on next year's garden. Hope you enjoyed the beautiful weather and received some rain this weekend. Happy Growing!!



Pollinator Plant of the Week-

This week's pollinator plant of the week is the aster. This fall beauty is a favorite of all types of insects and serves an important role in providing a food source for native pollinators until the first hard freeze of the season. There are several different types of asters that can be found in Kansas including the New England Aster, Aromatic aster, Heath aster and my favorite the silky aster. The New England aster is probably the most common species sold in the nursery trade that is a Kansas native and can commonly be found growing in prairies, meadows, along stream banks and in low valleys across the state. Asters range in height from 6" to 6' tall depending on the species and flower colors range from purple to pink to white and even yellow. Asters typically prefer full sun however there are several native species that will tolerate part shade. Most species prefer well drained soils however there are several that will tolerate damp soil conditions such as those that traditionally grow along stream banks or low meadows. These striking plants can be used in pollinator gardens, rock gardens, as tall border plants or even just as a specimen plant in the case of the New England aster.



Insect of the Week-

This week's insect of the week is the American Dagger Moth. This unique caterpillar was brought into my office this week for identification. The American Dagger Moth is a striking caterpillar with its bright yellow to white fuzzy hair and five long black "seta" or hair-like structures. This moth gets its name because the markings on its forewings resemble daggers, you need to have a good imagination to actually see the "daggers". The wings of the moth

are a light brown with faint black zig zags throughout the wings and faint white band with black spots. This insect is native to the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and can be found in Kansas although it is more common in the SE part of the United States. They can be found most commonly on elms, maples, ash, oaks, willows and any hardwood tree. The American Dagger moth is not typically a pest we need to control in trees and shrubs except on very rare occasions. Like many insects the hairs of this caterpillar can cause skin irritation, rashes and occasionally an allergic reaction so I would avoid picking the caterpillars up by hand and touching them.



Reminders-

- Water lawns and flower beds 1-2 times or approximately ½-1" of moisture every week.
- Harvest winter squash when skin is hard enough that it is not easily punctured with a thumbnail.
- Remove small tomatoes from vines to encourage development of more mature fruits.
- Plant garden chrysanthemums for fall color.
- Fertilize cool season lawns in September.

Upcoming Events

- **October 5, 2022: Improving Soil Health in the Landscape and Garden**

Is your landscape and garden soil healthy? Learn how to measure and improve your soil's health in the home landscape and garden. Dr. DeAnn Presley, Professor and Extension Specialist for Environmental Soil Science and Management, will explore ways to improve your soil, including cover crops and soil amendments. Learn how to build your soil's organic matter, and improve the growing potential of your soil. The KSRE Garden hour sessions are held via Zoom starting at noon. For more information or to register [click here](#).