Planting Garlic

While it might be tempting to say the gardening season is ending there are still some gardening activities to be done. A staple of many cooking dishes is garlic which adds some amazing flavor to quite a few recipes. Garlic is one of those plants that needs to be planted in the fall to establish over winter and then harvest the following season. As we approach the end of October we are entering the prime time to plant garlic in the garden, especially as we start clearing warm season vegetables out after the growing season. Let’s learn about this tasty bulb.

Garlic is a relative of onions and chives that has been grown for centuries for both its culinary uses as well as its medicinal use. Each garlic will grow a bulb of several separate cloves. There are two different types of garlic that can be planted in the home garden. The first type is a soft neck garlic. This type of garlic has the longest storage life, forms bulbs with more cloves and they form a stalk that is easy to braid for storage. They do tend to have less flavor and be harder to peel, but their shelf life makes up for it. Inchelium Red and Silver White are two soft neck varieties that do well in Kansas. Both varieties will store for 9 to 12 months. Inchelium red has a spicier flavor right after it’s been harvested but mellows with time while Silver White has a mild flavor when harvested that gets more bite as it ages. The other type of garlic is called hard neck garlic. This type is more flavorful, is easier to peel, have larger bulbs with fewer cloves however it doesn’t last as long when stored. Music and Chesnok Red are two varieties of hard neck garlic that do well in Kansas. Music has very large bulbs with big cloves. Both varieties will last about 4 to 6 months in storage. Hard neck varieties are hardier and tolerate colder temperatures than soft neck varieties however in Kansas we can successfully grow both types of garlic due to our fairly mild winters.

Garlic is best planted in mid to late October and then will be harvested in July. Be sure to purchase your garlic from a reputable source. It’s best to avoid planting garlic you bought from the grocery store. Separate each clove from the garlic bulb, be sure when you plant to put the pointy side up about 6 inches apart in rows that are spaced about 12” apart. Plant the garlic approximately 2” deep in the soil then cover the cloves with soil and mulch in to protect them from our freeze/thaw cycle in the spring. Be sure to water things in well and continue to water them throughout the fall into the winter if there isn’t any precipitation. It is possible to over water and rot the cloves so avoid overwatering. Fertilize the area with a general-purpose fertilizer if a soil test indicates it’s necessary.

Garlic will start to root once it’s planted and start to send up a shoot even if nothing is visible above the ground. Once the ground freezes the garlic will sit over winter and then emerge in the spring when the temperatures warm up. Continue watering the garlic as needed throughout the growing season until it’s close to time to harvest it. Garlic bulbs are ready to harvest when the lower third of the leaves have turned brown and dried out which typically is mid-July through early August depending on the variety. Picking garlic too early will result in small bulbs but waiting too long will result in cloves leaning away from the bulbs.

Garlic is a relatively easy plant to grow, just be sure to remember where you planted it so you don’t till the plants up or plant something over the top of them in the spring. It’s also important to remember to water them some throughout the winter if we have a dry winter. I’m hoping for a better garlic harvest this season but I’ll take all the lessons I learned last year to help make this season better than last.
Winter Prep of Tools

As we hang up our gardening tools for the year it is important to take care of them so they will last for years. Good tools and equipment are expensive but a few minutes of work this fall can pay off big time for the future. As we put the garden to bed for the winter take a few minutes to do some work on your tools so you are ready for the next growing season.

Garden tools such as shovels, hoes and rakes often have wooden handles that will slowly deteriorate due to exposure to sunlight, moisture and other elements. This can easily lead to rough patches and splinters from our favorite tools. Keeping them stored inside when possible will slow this process however, over time the tools will still have some natural wear and tear. Take sometime this winter to check the handles for splinters, sand down rough areas, and then apply a protective coat (linseed oil, wood preservative, polyurethane, etc) to the handle to keep it protected. Don’t forget about the metal part of the tool, make sure it’s clean of dirt and debris and apply a light application of oil to prevent rust.

October is also an important time to service any watering systems you might have. Over my years in North Dakota I had several issues with mice chewing on my soaker hoses throughout the winter searching for water when it was scarce. Ever since I’ve always made sure to drain my soaker hoses in the winter and store them inside for the winter. It is also important to have your irrigation system drained or have a company blow the water out of the system to reduce the chances the system would break due to freezing water or friendly little furry creatures looking for water. When we water the yard or landscape for the last time this fall ensure your garden hose is drained and stored for the winter. This step should be done before a hard freeze to protect the hose and your faucet and store your hose in an area out of direct sunlight to prolong its life.

Burning Bush or Winged Euonymus

As fall arrives, there is one bush that stands out from the others for its gorgeous fall color however, this fall beauty unfortunately also possesses a dark side. This shrub is a member of the bittersweet family and is native to northeastern Asia, Japan and central China. Burning bush was first introduced to the United States in the mid-1800’s and was extremely popular due to its brilliant red fall foliage, corky winged branches and orange-red fruits which helped provide year-round interest in the landscape. Burning bush is very adaptable, tolerating a range of sun conditions, a variety of different soil conditions along with handling the wide range of weather conditions that we experience in Kansas. The issue with burning bush is those orange-red seeds that provide winter interest will sprout and the plants take over the landscape bed, forested areas and anywhere the birds spread the seeds. This plant has been listed on the state noxious weed list in several states and has been known to come up from seed in Butler county. While I won’t say you have to pull these plants up, they do bear watching to make sure they aren’t spreading in your landscape.

Simple vs. Compound Leaves

We are continuing our plant identification series and this week we are talking about the different types of leaves that plants can have. A leaf by definition is any usually flattened green outgrowth from the stem of a vascular plant. Leaves always come off of the stem and should have an auxiliary bud at the base of the leaf. While leaves can come in a variety of shapes, colors and textures there are two main types of leaves you will see, simple leaves or compound leaves. A simple leaf is one that may have lobes or be divided but doesn’t have distinct leaflets. A compound leaf is one that the leaf is separated into distinct leaflets, each with its own small petiole. When in doubt, look for the auxiliary bud at the base of the leaf. The bud will always be at the base of the leaf but not at the base of a leaflet. There are three different types of compound leaves,
pinnately compound (middle leaf), bi-pinnately compound (left leaf) or palmately compound (right leaf). Of the compound leaf options, pinnately compound is the most common one you will find in the wild. After you have figured out what type of leaf arrangement your plant has, you can then use the type of leaf to help determine what plant you have. (leaflet-leaf like part of a compound leaf, lacks an auxiliary bud at the base)

Reminders-
- Plant garlic if you haven’t
- Clean off dead annuals after a killing frost
- Test your soil to beat the rush of spring testing

Apple Doughless Donuts
INGREDIENTS
- 8 ounces of vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 ⅔ teaspoons honey, divided
- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- 2 apples, any variety
- Rainbow Sprinkles
- Granola
- Mini chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS
Divide the greek yogurt into two bowls. In one bowl, add half the honey and stir to combine. In the other bowl, add cocoa powder and the remaining honey and mix to combine. If needed, add a little water to help stir in the cocoa powder, set aside. Wash, core, and slice the apples into 1/8-1/4 inch slices. Spread 1 tablespoon of the yogurt mixture on the apple slices and decorate as desired. (Source: https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/recipes/apple-doughless-donuts)
Video of the week: Water Pine Trees Year Round

To keep pine trees healthy and provide many years of beauty and shade to your landscape, you'll need to water them during the winter. This segment demonstrates several easy ways to give your pine tree the correct amount of water. Watch the video here: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/water-pine-trees-year-around

Upcoming Events

- **November 1st at Noon - Plants Gone Wild! Controlling Invasive Plants**
  Given the opportunity, certain plants can take over your landscape, woodlands, and pastures. Join Lynn Loughary, Wyandotte County Extension Horticulture Agent, as she helps you to recognize which plants you need to keep a close eye on. Learn about a few of our most invasive plants, and management strategies for their control. Discover which weeds are also regulated by law, through Kansas’s noxious weeds program. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/

- **December 1st at 11 am - Winter Feeding of Birds**
  Feeding the birds is a popular activity with over 59 million people in the United States feeding birds for well over 100 years. Join us for this class to learn some tips about what food to feed, ways to attract more birds to your home and some trouble shooting tips on why you aren’t having birds at your feeders. This program is free at the Douglass Senior Center, 124 W 4th St, Douglass, KS 67039.

- **December 6th at Noon - Beekeeping Basics: How to Start Your own Colony**
  Beekeeping is both popular and important for many reasons. Whether it’s to produce your own local honey, supplement pollination of nearby plants, promote conservation, or even personal entertainment, there are many reasons to become a beekeeper. Join Ryan Engel, Golden Prairie District Horticulture Extension Agent, as he covers the equipment you will need, how to source your bees, and what it takes to establish a new colony. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/