

# THE GRAPEVINE



**October 25th, 2021**

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## A plant for a place



Over the weekend I spent some time cleaning English Ivy out of a flower bed right next to my house. While I love English ivy in some locations, growing up under my siding and into the garage is not my idea of a good location for that particular plant. I prefer it growing under or up trees where it can provide a beautiful ground cover and some winter interest with its leaves. Around my landscape I have found that most of the issues I have had could have been solved if I had just picked the right plant for the right place. Here are a few things that I am going to consider when looking for a new plant for my new landscape (let's be honest it would be embarrassing to get called to my own house for issues).



As I look at my new beds one of my first thoughts is always space. While I don't mind pruning plants to keep them in a pleasant shape or to shrink them a bit, I don't want plants that are going to outgrow my beds. All too often I see trees or large shrubs planted within a couple feet of the house. While it might look pretty now, in just a couple years I would be pruning the shrub back every year (I will also admit that I'm a lazy gardener and while I love working in my flower beds I don't want them to consume all of my free time). As I'm looking for a new plant I'm going to check the tag to see how big it's supposed to get and then allow for extra room (plants don't read tags, they won't stop growing at 10' just because it says they should). Hopefully this step will allow me to have a beautiful landscape without a ton of pruning every year.

My second task is to watch the lighting in my back yard. While we just purchased the house, I can already get an idea of what areas will be full sun and what areas are going to be pretty shady. While I can overcome some issues (soil type, pH, fertility) with care and time, light is one issue that I can only do so much with. Be sure to plant sun loving plants in the sun and shade plants in the shade. It seems simple but I can't tell you how many people have asked why their plant is struggling even with great care and the problem has been it was in the wrong amount of light. My former English Ivy bed is on the North side of the house so while I would have loved to do an all native pollinator bed, my options are unfortunately going to be limited to something that will tolerate a shady location.

As I look at that bed next to the garage the area near it stays very wet due to the neighbor's irrigation system and poor drainage from the area. The drainage I can fix with just a bit of grading of the dirt, however the area will always stay a bit wet due to the irrigation system. For this bed and some of my others around the lawn I want to look for plants that will tolerate staying wet for periods of time simply because of the drainage. Over the last few weeks we've had some decent rains go through the area which has given me the opportunity to see how the water flows around the house and through the yard. This information has unfortunately changed my plans for beds because I don't want to drown some poor plant with wet roots.

My final concern as I look around my house is overhead obstructions. I have several power and cable lines in the area that will impact the height of the plants I could plant. While I would love to put in a new tree to take over when the current giant Silver Maple finally bites the dust, my location options are limited at this point between the lines and where I want to put a vegetable garden. Luckily this is a concern that I can address later because that beautiful maple tree should be here for years to come.

As I plan my new landscaping I'm going to take care to choose the right plant for the right place. To do otherwise could cost me money, time, and could also lead to some invasive plants in the home landscape. My next project is taking care of the Tree of Heaven that is growing in the flowerbed but that's an article for another time. Happy Growing!!





## **Fertilize cool season grass lawns**

Early November is an excellent time to fertilize your cool season lawns. Even though the leaf growth above the ground has slowed due to cool temperatures the plants are still making food via photosynthesis. A fertilizer application now can increase photosynthesis and help the grass store extra food to survive the winter. Apply one to one and a half pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. feet of lawn. In order for this to be affective use a form of nitrogen (urea or ammonium sulfate) that is readily available to the plant since the growing season is almost over. Most fertilizers sold in garden centers will work for this application but avoid any products that contain water in-soluble nitrogen (slow release). If there is no rain in the forecast water your fertilizer in well. Be sure to sweep up fertilizer that gets on the driveway or sidewalk to prevent it from being carried away in the next rain.

## **Mum Care**

As soon as your garden mums stop blooming for the year it's time to start trimming them back for the winter. There are two options or mind sets on pruning mums. Some people prefer to leave the tops on their mums all winter to help hold snow and to provide protection from the fluctuating soil temperatures. Other people prune their mums down to a couple inches to clean the beds up for the winter. Both options will work but if you do prune your mums back be sure to provide some mulch over the top to protect them over the winter.

## **Upcoming Events:**

### **Garden Hour- Wednesday, November 3rd: Winter Interest in the Landscape**

Many gardens can become dreary, drab, and colorless over the winter months, as they lose the excitement of summer. Beat this winter boredom in your garden through the texture, color, and movement of plants that will bring year round beauty to your landscape. Join Lynn Loughary, Wyandotte County Extension Horticulture Agent, as she shares a few of the must have plants that provide year-round interest in the landscape.

### **Turf Conference**

The 71st Annual Kansas Turf & Landscape Conference will be held in-person this year on December 1 & 2 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Manhattan. The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest products and supplies from local and national vendors.

### **Kansas Orchid Society Fall Show and Sale, November 6, 2021**