



Dig In!

Canyon County Extension Horticulture News for Master Gardener & Friends

Fall/Winter 2011 Volume IV Issue 2 www.uidaho.edu/extension/canyon

Growing together

Idaho Extension Horticulture & You

BY ARIEL AGENBROAD



Many gardeners, especially those with a passion for perennials, often talk a lot about “plant combinations.” Some are obsessed with finding a combination that

offers the biggest explosion of color or the longest consecutive bloom. Still others are interested in plant combinations that attract wildlife, mimic natural plant communities, or have complementary or contrasting foliage and flowers. And ask any gardener...even when they think they’ve found the perfect combination, they’ll be re-thinking, arranging, digging and dividing again next season!

As an Extension Educator, one of my biggest (and most interesting) challenges is developing programs, classes and outreach in the right “combination” for our gardening community.

This isn’t easy, as we have gardeners of all ages, interests and abilities in Canyon County, and each prefer to learn in their own way! What I try to do is create a number of options based on the input I receive and put together educational opportunities and resources to meet the needs. Then I continually evaluate, re-think, arrange, “dig and divide!”

So, this year, in addition to our signature courses like Idaho Master Gardener and Idaho Victory Garden Series, we’ll also be offering some exciting new inexpensive, evening or weekend workshops



This incredible fall color combo featuring Oakleaf Hydrangea and “Autumn Joy” Sedum was spotted recently at a local Treasure Valley nursery.

through the Nampa and Caldwell Parks and Recreation Departments, more opportunities for our Master Gardeners and Advanced Master Gardeners to receive ongoing, in depth training, and for those of you who are tech-savvy and on-the-go, we’ve started a brand new blog and Twitter account to keep you informed.

We’re also releasing several brand new gardening publications through our U-Idaho Extension publishing catalog. Visit www.uidaho.edu/extension and click on “Catalog.”

Explore the following pages, and I’m confident you’ll find a place in our Extension “garden” this coming year!

Extension Educator Ariel Agenbroad provides horticulture and small farms education and outreach for Canyon County and the surrounding region. Email her at ariel@uidaho.edu

Fall Lawn Care

Now is the time to tuck your turf in for the winter

STORY BY U-IDAHO HORTICULTURE FACULTY

There is a little nip in the air, indicating the approach of fall. This means its time to begin winter preparations for your yard and garden. In this process, the lawn sometimes gets ignored because it stops growing and seems to present few demands. However, the fall is a key time of the year in lawn growth and you can have a definite impact on how it looks next spring if you take time to complete a few simple tasks.

Cleaning up leaves is more than making the lawn look nice. If left on the ground during the winter, leaves become wet, mat down, and smother the grass during the winter. Grass does not completely stop growing, even in the dead of winter. As it grows, grass needs to breath and matted down leaves reduce air flow. Leaves also cause quite a bit of shading during the fall and early winter before snowfall when the grass is trying to store up energy. Just as chipmunks store food underground for the winter, grass uses sunlight to make food which it stores in its stems growing underground. If you have just a few leaves and a mulching mower, mulching the leaves and letting them filter into the grass is OK too, as long as they are not too thick.

Speaking of mowing, it is a good idea to mow your lawn well into October and even into November. These late mowings will not only help chop up any leaves you may have missed, but more importantly, will help prevent winter diseases. You may have heard the advice to lower the mowing height a notch or two on your last mowing. This can help alleviate disease, but be careful not to overdo it.

You are better off to leave the mowing height the same, but mow more often into late fall instead.

Fertilizing during late fall also is a good idea since the grass, as we mentioned before, is still growing underground, even though leaf growth has stopped. Since the underground part of grass is what allows it to make it through the cold winter and green up in the spring, a light late fall application is a good idea. Again, be careful not to overdo it, no more than a pound of nitrogen (N) per 1000 ft² is plenty.

If you have an automated irrigation system and have not touched the timer since the summer months, now is the time to do so. Grass uses much less water in the fall than it does during the heat of the summer, less than half as much. That means you should only be irrigating your lawn about every 10 days or so and applying about an inch of water when you do. Irrigate your lawn well into the end of October and even into the second week of November if possible. A final deep watering just before you blow your irrigation system out is a good idea. This will help prevent winter desiccation damage to your lawn especially if we have a winter without much snow cover.

What about controlling those troublesome perennial weeds like dandelions and white clover? If you have not already done so, fall is the best time to kill these perennial weeds. As with the grass, weeds are preparing for winter and sending food reserves underground and applying herbicide around the time of the first fall frosts will be most effective.

Lawns are generally care-free and it is sometimes easy to forget they need a little TLC. A little work to ensure winter survival will improve their appearance next year.

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Winter Tree Inspection

Brave the cold to head off problems

STORY BY DR. STEVE LOVE, HORTICULTURE SPECIALIST

About this time of year, I begin to experience what I call "garden itch". I really want to get out and dig in the dirt and make something grow. Garden books tell us winter is the time to study garden catalogues, complete seed orders, and make plans for the next spring. While fun, these activities don't seem to satisfy my itch.



However, all is not lost. There is one important gardening activity that is best completed in the winter. It involves conducting a thorough tree inspection. This is especially effective for deciduous trees because they no longer have leaves to hide their problems. So, on a sunny winter day, put on your hat and boots and take a close look at your trees.

What to look for:

Although winter may not be the time you want to solve tree problems, it is the time to identify them. Here is a list of things you may want to look for.

Structural Problems: look for situations that can be early signs of weakness that may later lead to branch or tree failure. Many of these can be solved later on through judicious pruning. Specifically, look for branches with a poor attachment angle. Where they join the trunk, branches should be directed slightly upward at an angle of 45 to 60 degrees. If they are too horizontal, or too upright, they will become weak. Plan to remove such problem branches, if it can be done without destroying the structure of the tree. Also, look for cracks and splitting around branch

junctions. If you find such damage on large trees, you may need to access some professional help to determine the best action. On small trees, you can reshape the tree to relieve the pressure that is causing the problem and help the tree heal itself. The last thing to look for is something called included bark. This is a situation where the tree does not make normal wood on the top of the branch junction and instead produces bark in the joint. It can be recognized by the soft, corky tissue (it may create an open crevice or be closed) that is present on top and down into the branch union. This makes the branch very weak. It is often associated with a steep branch angle. Plan to remove these weak branches if feasible.

Architecture and Appearance: When the tree is bare, you can step back and look at its overall growth habit. Determine whether or not it has good balance and overall appearance. Decide if the crown needs to be raised, lowered, or cleaned (but never topped). Record a pruning plan that can be implemented in the spring to improve the tree's appearance and functionality.

Pests and Disease Problems: Although pests are typically not damaging during the winter, it is still a good time to look for problems that can be addressed during spring or summer. Some of the most destructive insect pests on trees are borers. Look for the small holes, the sawdust-like frass, or loosened bark that may indicate a problem is looming. Other types of insects such as aphids or beetles will overwinter as eggs on the trees and may become problematic next summer. Do some homework before the inspection and find out what to look for based on common problems for the tree species you are inspecting. Also, check for disease problems that appear as cankers on the bark. If you find such problems, study up on the solutions and prepare to deal with them when the season is right. That will give you one more scratch for the gardening itch.

A good winter tree inspection will identify problems you may not know you have. It will also give you time to come up with a good solution to one or more of the many issues that affect tree health. Winter may be a slow time for garden chores, but it does not need to be unproductive.

CALENDAR

October

21-22 4-H Junior Master Gardener New Teacher/Leader Training in Payette. Contact Tony McCammon at tonym@uidaho.edu.

26 Public Forum: "Opportunities and Impediments to Boise Urban Agriculture." Wright Community Church, 4821 W. Franklin Road, Boise, 7-9 pm. Free.



Don't forget to take your family and friends to a local Pumpkin Patch, Corn Maze and Fall Harvest Festival near you in Oct.!

www.agri.state.id.us/Categories/Marketing/

November

5 Rethinking Idaho Landscapes. Fall symposium hosted by the Idaho Botanical Garden and U-Idaho Extension. Boise Center on the Grove, 9 am-4 pm. Cost: \$40. Register at: www.idahobotanicalgarden.org

21-22 Annual Convention of the Idaho State Horticultural Society. Nampa Civic Center, 8:00 am—5:00 pm both days. Cost: \$25. Contact us for more info.

December

Happy Holidays from Extension!

January

18-20 Idaho Nursery and Landscape Association Hort EXPO. For professionals, students, amateurs! Boise Center on the Grove. More at www.inlagrow.org

Our 2012 Horticulture Classes

Get more info, register, or request applications by calling the office at 208-459-6003 or by sending an email to canyon@uidaho.edu

Canyon County Master Gardener volunteer development program will begin accepting applications in November 2011 for our 2012 team.

Future Master Gardener Volunteers must be available for 50+ hours of training and 30+ hours of hands on service.

Master Gardeners staff information booths at the Nampa and Caldwell Farmers' Markets, conduct Plant Clinics at the Extension Office, and contribute to the community in countless ways while increasing their own horticultural knowledge.

Preference will be given to residents of Canyon and Owyhee counties first, but all are welcome.

- Wednesday mornings, 9 am to 12 pm, January 11—May 2
(+ field trips to be scheduled)
- Canyon County Extension Office, 501 Main St., Caldwell, ID
- Class Materials, Lab & Tour Fees: \$115 per individual
(University of Idaho Academic credit or CEUs available for additional fees)
- Work in the Green Industry and want to sharpen your skills?
Contact us about our Professional Audit Master Gardener category

The Idaho Victory Garden Series was developed in 2008 exclusively in Canyon County to address the "growing" need for practical community education in home food production and preservation. The popular course has now had over 150 graduates! Perfect for the new gardener or urban homesteader, this course takes you from seed to table to pantry in six weeks. We provide expert education, hands on activities and demonstrations, and lots of resource materials for you to take home.

- Thursday evenings, 7-9 pm, Feb. 24-March 29
- Location: Trinity Lutheran Church, 8 S. Midland, Nampa
- Course Materials Fee: \$45 per first family member + \$5 for each additional family member

University of Idaho Extension Community Education

We have teamed up with the Nampa and Caldwell Parks and Recreation Departments to offer a new selection of inexpensive, convenient basic gardening classes. Watch your mailbox for dates, times and locations, or call us to find out!



Canyon County MASTER GARDENERS

The Idaho Master Gardener Program gives gardeners an opportunity not only to improve their horticultural knowledge and skills but also serve their communities. See what we've been up to in Canyon County!

Project Highlights

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Master Gardener Volunteers have taken an active role in promoting, creating, and supporting community gardens in the area. Dale and Sheila Anderson, Paulette Blaseg, Don Walker, and others have been key to the success of gardens in Canyon County.

EXTENSION OFFICE GARDEN

Our Xeric garden, created by volunteers in a neglected alley behind our office with plants donated by Edward's Greenhouse was only watered four times this entire season, and the plants look great! Come by and see!

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER

Curricula and training are available to parents, teachers, 4-H clubs and more. JMG aims to grow good kids by igniting a

passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening education. Bilingual materials, too. We have trained over a dozen new teacher/leaders this year! This summer, JMG facilitators and Master Gardener Volunteers in Canyon County presented library programs, 4-H day camps, an afterschool program at Farmway Village, Summer Migrant School, a Scavenger Hunt at the Canyon County Fair, and assisted with school gardens! We're reaching hundreds of kids and introducing them to bugs, botany and more! Trainings for new leaders are held two times per year.

FARMERS' MARKET BOOTHS

Master Gardener volunteers were found at the Caldwell and Nampa Farmers' Markets many weeks this summer, sharing info, answering questions, and engaging market goers with an array of educational posters, insects on display, earwig traps, pinecone weather stations and other fun diversions. Thanks to market managers Suzette and Kathy for inviting us to participate, and to Ron and Don for organizing our booths!



Southwest District Juvenile Detention Center Breaks New Garden Ground

Idaho Victory Garden Series graduate and detention center staffer Craig Olsen was instrumental in helping the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center's Pat Andersen School receive a \$2,000 grant from the Idaho State Department of Education for the purpose of starting a garden project.

Craig based the garden on MG Dale Anderson's Trinity Community Garden system of raised beds.

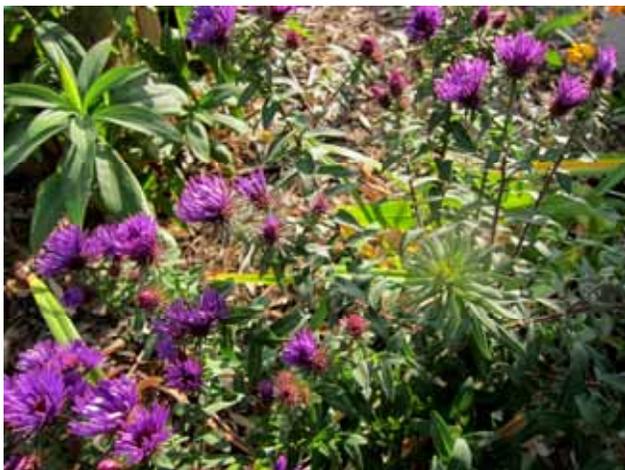
Juveniles have participated in all phases of the garden preparation so far, including using math to figure costs of materials, amounts of soil and fertilizer needed and have furnished most of the labor to get the garden operational.

The juveniles and local food pantries have enjoyed receiving the plentiful fruits of their labor!

What Grows in a Garden Without Water?

You might be surprised...

STORY BY ARIEL AGENBROAD



Hardy, fall-blooming perennial Asters are at their peak in October and early November.



Contrasting foliage shapes, textures and color create interest even when most flowers have faded.

Many Canyon County residents are fortunate to be part of local irrigation districts, and throughout the summer it can seem like our water supply is plentiful and unlimited. Even so, it just makes good sense to start thinking about how we can use less water and still have beautiful landscapes.

In the Xeric display garden, located behind our University of Idaho Extension Caldwell office, we have been testing a selection of perennial plants and bulbs that provide three seasons of interest with only **four** supplemental waterings this entire year! How is that possible? First, we amended the bed with lots of organic matter so that the soil supports deep rooting and holds onto moisture well.

Next, we choose plants known for their ability to withstand and even thrive in droughty conditions. We also planted the garden in the fall (of 2009), so we only had to water for a few weeks to establish the transplants before fall rains arrived. So what did we plant? Here is a list of our favorite performers so far:

Bulbs

Crocus

Daffodil

Muscari

Re-seeding Annuals

Alyssum

Calendula

Perennials

Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana*

Lamb's Ear, *Stachys*

Pineapple Mint, *Mentha*

Evening Primrose, *Oenothera*

Lavender, *Lavendula*

Italian Oregano, *Origanum*

Nazareth Sage, *Salvia*

Mixed Stonecrop, *Sedum*

Daylily, *Hemerocallis*

Rock Cress, *Compinkie Arabis*

Russian Sage, *Perovskia*

Aster

Cupid's Dart, *Catananche caerulea*

Pincushion Flower, *Centaurea*

Maiden Grass, *Miscanthus*

Special thanks to Susan Bell, Anju Lucas, Garnette Monnie, Bill Taylor, Dale Anderson, Debbie Delaney, Laverne Hanssen, the City of Caldwell, Rick Bowman, and the others who have helped to reclaim, establish and maintain our garden!

Greening Our Food

Cents & Sensibility for Sustainability

STORY BY ARIEL AGENBROAD

Organic. GMO. Locavore. Corn Sugar. Grass Fed. RBsT. Gluten Free. Cage Free. Fat Free. Good Fats. Bad Fats. Whole Grain... With so much (often conflicting) information about food coming at us from every direction, can we really simplify the process of making sustainable and healthy choices for ourselves, our families, and the planet?

Author Michael Pollan provided us with a very effective, simple mantra in his book *In Defense of Food*: “eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” This is good advice, but doesn’t always help me when I’m hungry and overwhelmed at my local WinCo.

And I know I’m not alone in this quandary. We all want to feed ourselves and our families’ nutritious, tasty, clean, healthy food. I think we’d like to reduce our impact on the environment, and many of us are on a budget, too, and sometimes these three things don’t seem to be possible together.



Believe it or not, cooking at home can actually save you time, money, and calories from fat! Who knew?

I know I have felt overwhelmed, confused, and helpless. But it doesn't have to be that way! Try focusing on these six simple themes, and start enjoying your food again!

You Are What You Eat

- On a budget? Label claims like “fresh,” “natural” and “hormone-free” can be misleading and don’t necessarily warrant a higher price. Scan labels for unnecessary sweeteners, fats and empty calories. Read smart and spend your money where it counts!

Buy “Naked” Food

- Choosing bulk grains, rice, beans and other dry goods when available is a low cost way to provide good nutrition for your family.
- Select fresh, minimally processed and packaged fruits and vegetables.

Re-discover Cooking

- Preparing meals and snacks at home from basic ingredients can save money, energy and calories.
- Home cooking is one of the best ways to enjoy local, seasonal foods at the peak of freshness.
- Children who participate in cooking at home may develop better eating habits and be more willing to try new foods.

Try Meatless Mondays

- Going meatless once a week can save you money and reduce your risk of preventable conditions like cardio-vascular disease and obesity.

Get to Know Your Famers

- Buying locally produced food helps conserve natural resources and reduces transportation costs.
- Keeping farms in our communities helps rebuild rural economic and social health.

Grow Your Own

- The average home vegetable garden can yield between \$400 to \$600 worth of produce each season.
- Short on space? Try growing fruits, berries and herbs in the landscape or containers... or join a Community Garden or yard share in your neighborhood.

Dig In!

University of Idaho Extension

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Keep up with us on a brand new blog: <http://growvandals.wordpress.com>

Short on time? Get alerts through Twitter, too! @GROW_vandals

The University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educational organization. We offer our programs to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or disability.



A Horticultural Symposium: RETHINKING IDAHO LANDSCAPES

Saturday, November 5, 2011
9:00 am – 3:30 pm
Boise Centre
850 W. Front St., Boise

PRESENTED BY:



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