

HORTICULTURE

NEWSLETTER



Nov. - Dec.

2019

Itea is Ideal

By Kathy Wimberly

Agent for Horticulture,

McCracken Co. Cooperative Extension

Fall color from shrubs catches the attention of leaf-peepers, too. Red is one color to stand out from the many golden leaves. Fall color is remarkable in western Kentucky from many native deciduous shrubs, particularly that of Itea.

It bears fall leaves of a truly beautiful red. As a way to achieve more red in the fall landscape, gardeners may look to Itea Virginica, Virginia Sweetspire, as a deciduous shrub to plant. This shrub is known for a cascade of white flowers in late spring.

A second benefit comes in the end of the growing season when leaves change to a brilliant clear red. Unlike the Euonymus Alatus, Burning Bush, which is invasive, this Itea behaves in the natural surroundings. If adding red as a fall color is on the gardener's check-list, look to this remarkable shrub.



Quick TIP

Sweetspire usually grows three to five feet tall, although it may be taller and leggier in moist or shaded areas. Plants have a denser, more attractive habit when grown in sunnier sites. The form is typically arching and spreading. Plants spread readily by suckering, especially in moist sites. Mass plantings are usually more attractive than individual plants.



Andy's Five Fall Must Do's for the Lawn Mower

By *Andy Rideout*

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1. Run the gas tank empty or add fuel stabilizer.

There are two ways mower owners can store their equipment: first, they can get rid of the gas completely by running the mower or draining the fuel. Second, they can add a fuel treatment and stabilizer. Gas begins to degrade and go stale only 30 days after pumping it and stale gas can cause varnish and gumming that clog the fuel system and carburetor jets. Plus, over 90 percent of fuel in the United States contains up to 10 percent ethanol, which attracts moisture and can cause corrosion. "We recommend mower owners get in the habit of treating their fuel every time they fill their red fuel can." And according to Briggs & Stratton, it's important to use a fuel treatment and stabilizer that does not contain additional alcohol.

2. Change the mower's oil.

Either in the fall before storage, or during a spring tune-up, it is important to change the oil to remove any dirt and debris that can prevent the oil from lubricating and cooling the engine.

3. Remove the battery if equipped.

On riding mowers, removing the battery during the winter season can help prevent potential damage from corrosion of the battery and battery terminals.

4. Clean the undercarriage and remove debris

After a full season of cutting, dirt and grass can build up on the blades and get stuck on the mower's undercarriage. Cleaning it now can help ensure a quality cut and can help keep the mower running smoothly for the next season.

5. Store your lawn mower in a clean, dry place

Leaving a mower outside can lead to damage caused by moisture. According to Briggs & Stratton's recently released poll, nearly 10



percent of homeowners leave their mower outside unprotected from the elements. Storing a lawn mower in a clean, dry place will ensure it is protected from the damaging weather elements.

Quick TIP

A dirty air filter keeps the engine from burning gas efficiently by restricting the air needed for combustion. If your mower has a paper filter, replace it with a new one, paper edges facing out. If it's an oil-soaked sponge filter, remove it, wash it out with soap and water, allow it to dry completely, and then add a bit of clean oil to it before putting it back. Clear the cooling fins of dirt and debris using a screwdriver or popsicle stick.

Fall Care

By Kathy Wimberly

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McCracken Co. Cooperative Extension

Fall is a time to give some care to woody plants. Most shrubs and trees do not need to be fertilized, if the lawn is fertilized. Also, if leaf litter (fallen leaves) is allowed to remain on the ground below the canopy, then there is a good chance that is a source of nutrients. But, if soil testing reveals a need for supplemental nutrients, then fall of the year is good for fertilizer application. If a fertilizer is spread on the soil, it is a good practice to water-in the fertilizer, if rainfall is not in the forecast. This helps protect tender roots of the woody plant from the salt of fertilizer.

Fall is an excellent time to plant/transplant shrubs and trees. Transplanting in the fall allows for a better chance of establishment before the heat of upcoming summer. Roots grow in the cool season and throughout the winter if planted in fertile, well-drained soil in the fall.

The gardener should know to follow recommended practices for planting. Give attention to trunk flair so that flair of the trunk is just-above the grade when seated. Be persistent and consistent with watering practices. A good soaking is needed once a week to aid the transplant's establishment. Recommended total of irrigation is equivalent to an inch of rainfall per week. In times of drought, possibly watering more frequently is required. It is up to the homeowner to observe the local rainfall for the transplant's first three to four years at the new site. Savvy gardeners know rainy days may not provide correct amounts of water for the newly-planted tree or shrub. It may be necessary to irrigate, in addition to the amount of rain, for the years following transplant.

Once the shrub or tree is established the gardener may have years of enjoyment of fall color.



Quick TIP

Evergreen broad-leaved shrubs and conifers are threatened by cold temperatures that can result in desiccation or browning of foliage. When temperatures are cold and the sun warms the leaves or needles, transpiration pulls water away. If the ground is frozen, the roots can't take up more water and the leaves dry out and turn brown (known as desiccation). Make sure the plants are well-watered in the late fall.

How Does Popcorn Pop?

By Amanda Sears
Horticulture Agent for
Madison Co. Cooperative Extension

Did you know that the average American eat 68 quarts of popcorn a year! Not only is popcorn a delicious snack, but is also nutritious since it is considered a whole grain. Of course, if you slather butter on it, the nutritional benefits may be negated.

So how does popcorn pop? Some Native American tribes believed that there were sprits that lived inside each kernel of popcorn. The spirits are content until someone heats the kernel. This made them angry, in fact, they got madder the hotter the kernel was heated. The kernels begin to shake with anger when the heat was too much to bear. At that point, the sprits would burst out of their homes and into the air as puffs of steam.

The scientific explanation is less creepy! Each hard kernel of popcorn has a small amount of water stored inside a sphere of soft starch. As the kernels are heated, the water expands as it turns to vapor. The pressure eventually breaks the hard outer surface as the starch inflates and basically turns the kernel inside out. For this to work well, the kernel has to be relatively small, and the hard outer shell of the kernel must be quite strong to resist the increasing pressure. This explains why popcorn has kernels that are smaller than most field corn.

Popcorn is grown here in Kentucky. In fact, you can grow it in your own garden! Many garden catalogs offer different varieties of popcorn. Varieties offer a broad range in kernel color, including blue and red. However, the popped corn will be white or pale yellow. For more information on growing popcorn, check out www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2000/7-21-2000/popcorn.html.



Air-popped popcorn has only 30 calories per cup; oil-popped popcorn has only 35 calories per cup. When lightly buttered, popcorn contains about 80 calories per cup. Popcorn is a whole grain, making it a good-for-you food. Popcorn contains fiber, providing roughage the body needs in the daily diet.

Quick
TIP

Winter Plants of Interest

By Julie Steber

Master Gardener
Boyle Co. Cooperative Extension

Winter is knocking on the door across Kentucky. For many gardeners this is a welcome time to sit back and relax. As the brilliant colors of summer gardens and fall foliage fade don't despair; all is not lost in the winter landscape. With proper planning and planting you can enjoy points of color, texture and contrast in your winter garden. Think of vertical plantings with interesting bark and branch structures as opposed to ground covers. It would be a shame to bury the landscape should we ever get another 23 inch snow fall. If you enjoy watching the birds, don't forget plants that provide a food source during the winter. Here are several plants to consider as you plan your winter landscape.



Bayberry, *Myrica pensylvanica* is a deciduous shrub prized for its showy silvery-gray colored berries in winter. The waxy coating on the berries has been used in candle and soap making. It is a tough plant that tolerates poor soil as it is a good nitrogen fixer. It can be grown in dry sandy to wet marshy areas. It is a good choice for planting along drives as it is tolerant of salty conditions. The foliage is very fragrant through summer and fall. It is a natural deer repellent. Plant both male and females to assure pollination and fruit. The shrub is semi-evergreen in the south and spreads to cluster.



Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana* is a deciduous shrub that grows 3-6 feet in height and spread. It has green foliage during summer with lavender, pink blooms from June to August. It produces cascades of glossy, iridescent magenta, purple berries that wrap the stem which birds will love. This plant tolerates clay soil and is pest free.



Mary Gillham Archive Project.



River or "black" Birch, *Betula nigra* provides year-round interest and grows well near water or low areas. It has bright yellow foliage in the fall. The dark colored bark stands out in winter and has a peeling texture. Mature heights can reach 40-70 feet and spread 35 feet attracting birds.



Hellebore, *Heleborus orientalis* also called the Lenton rose is an herbaceous perennial that forms clumps. It typically blooms from January to April providing pops of purple, pink, red, yellow and green color. The foliage is evergreen and may be scorched by extreme harsh winters. Be sure to plant in an area that you can enjoy viewing every day. Prefers part to full shade and are rabbit and deer resistant. They grow 12-15 inches tall.

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Quick
TIP

Window boxes, hanging baskets, winter-hardy containers: All are indispensable for winter landscaping. Miniature dwarf Alberta spruce and broadleaf evergreens, such as Japanese Andromeda, holly and rhododendron, are perfect for wintertime, but they all have to be watered during dry periods. Don't want to maintain plants, fill containers with evergreen boughs of different textures and colors and interesting twigs, anything with color in it.

Winter Plants of Interest *Cont.*

By Julie Steber

Master Gardener
Boyle Co. Cooperative Extension



Hollies: American Holly *Ilex opaca* is an evergreen that probably is one of the most common winter plants of interest used in Christmas decorating. Most holly has bright red berries, but some have fruit that is yellow, peach or orange colored. Use caution when selecting a species of holly as some may have a mature height of 70 feet tall. *



Hollies: Winterberry *Ilex verticillata* is deciduous holly shrub that will lose leaves in the fall allowing us to see the berries. It has a height and spread of 3-12 feet.

*Holly plants are male or female and require pollination to produce fruit. It is best to plant within the same species to assure the best pollination for fruit. Birds will love you.



Ornamental Grasses: Perennial grasses can add to the contrast and beauty of landscape year-round. Some maintenance is required to cut back the grass in spring. They provide movement in the yard and have interesting seed heads in the fall and winter. Plume grass or *Ravennae* Grass, *Erianthus ravennae*, Maiden Grass or *Eulalia* Grass, *Miscanthus sinensis* and *Crimson Fountain Grass*, *Pennisetum seaceum* are just a few that are well suited for Kentucky.



Red Twig (or Red Osier) Dogwood, *Cornus sericea* is a deciduous shrub that provides year round interest displaying white spring flowers, variegated leaves during the summer, berries in the fall, and showy red to burgundy bark and twigs in winter. Mature height and width can be up to 8 to 10 feet. It attracts birds and butterflies. It grows in wet locations with full sun to part shade.



Witherod Viburnum, *viburnum cassinodes* is a shrub that provides year-round interest with pretty fragrant off-white flowers against dark green foliage in spring. The foliage turns to dark maroon in the fall and display clusters of berries that chameleon from pink to red and end as dark blue. Birds are attracted to it. Plant a group of several for naturalization and cross-pollination. This shrub tolerates moist boggy soil and grows in full sun to part shade to around 6 feet.

Sources: missouribotanicalgarden.org

Ornamental Grasses for Kentucky Landscapes https://simpson.ca.uky.edu/files/ornamental_grasses_for_ky_landscapes.pdf

Quick TIP

Plants are not the only story in a yard, though. Homeowners should also consider hardscaping – that is, stonework, weather-resistant sculptures, fencing or other features that form the architecture of the space. Birdbaths, sculpture and other garden ornaments stand out in the winter landscape in stark contrast to the more subtle seasonal colors. Big spaces call for larger ornaments.



Upcoming Horticulture Events

Upcoming Events

7

November

November 20

Desert Gardens

270-821-3650

Hopkins County Extension Office
(Madisonville)

December 6

Holiday Wreath Making

606-739-5184

Boyd County Extension Office
(Catlettsburg)

December 13

Holiday Wreath Making

606-739-5184

Boyd County Extension Office
(Catlettsburg)

December

December 2

Holiday Wreath Making

606-739-5184

Boyd County Extension Office
(Catlettsburg)

December 9

Holiday Wreath Making

606-739-5184

Boyd County Extension Office
(Catlettsburg)

December 18

Zen Gardens

270-821-3650

Hopkins County Extension Office
(Madisonville)



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