



University of Maryland • Home and Garden Information Center

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New Food Gardening Campaign Launched

by Jon Traunfeld



Grow It Eat It is an exciting new campaign, launched this month, that will teach Marylanders how to start and maintain successful food gardens. This collaboration between the Home and Garden Information Center and the Maryland Master Gardener program is a response to the deep recession and public desire for locally grown food and a connection to the earth.

Our vision: 1 million Maryland food gardeners producing their own affordable, healthy food.

The campaign's goals are to:

- Dramatically increase the number of food gardeners and food gardens in Maryland by teaching beginning food gardening to a wide variety of groups. We intend to reach all residents and garden sizes, from a 5-gallon bucket to an acre.
- Break down barriers to growing food at home, in schools and communities.
- Teach intensive, low-cost, organic growing techniques that maximize food production per area, protect and improve natural resources, and improve human health.
- Create a network of food gardeners through a new website featuring practical and updated information, www.growit.umd.edu, and a blog that will allow gardeners to share ideas, experiences, and recipes, www.groweat.blogspot.com.
- Answer the questions of new and experienced gardeners via the Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC) hotline Mon.-Fri., 8am-1pm

(1.800.342.2507) and via e-mail questions 24/7 through the web site- www.hgic.umd.edu

Maryland Master Gardeners are receiving special training and forming Grow It Eat It teams to promote the campaign and teach classes and workshops across the state. The web site has a "Classes and Events" button on the home page so that residents can quickly find local opportunities to start learning and growing. Our focus is on beginner gardeners but we will continue to develop resources and classes more suitable for seasoned food gardeners.

HGIC horticulture consultants are also receiving training to support Maryland's new food gardeners and answer the expected increase in vegetable, fruit, and herb questions. It looks like economic hard times are here to stay for awhile. Let's have fun and learn to become more self-reliant in our gardens this year. Maryland Cooperative Extension can show you how!

Spring Pruning of Ornamental Trees and Shrubs

by Ray Bosmans-Professor Emeritus

March is the month when gardeners start their chores. One of the most asked about gardening chores is the pruning of trees and shrubs. It requires careful thought and knowledge of the plant and its habit of growth. Once the branch is removed it can not be nailed back on if you don't like what you've done!

Pruning differs from trimming. Trimming is the removal of the ends of branches to help thicken or improve the shape a plant. An example of this is the trimming of a hedge. It typically does not have much long term impact on growth.

Pruning can be either light, heavy or somewhere in between. Light pruning is the removal of a few

problematic branches, such as low tree branches that always smack you in the face or the removal of a few long branches protruding from the plant. Removal of storm damaged branches is included. These types of light pruning can be done anytime that it is needed.

Some examples of heavy pruning may include the removal of many large branches, the thinning out of a tree's canopy, or the rejuvenation pruning of an overgrown shrub. This type of pruning is best done in early spring or when the plant is in winter dormancy. Don't do this in mid to late summer as it often stimulates succulent shoots, known as suckers, which will die in the winter and have to be pruned off again the following spring. Also, the growth stimulating effect caused by pruning late in the season often interferes with a plant's preparation for winter dormancy.

Another common question on pruning concerns the effects of pruning on flowering woody plants. Flowering woody plants are classified as either spring flowering or summer/fall blooming. Those that flower before June are considered spring flowering. Their blossoms are produced on wood that matured in the previous year. Pruning them in the spring will reduce flowering. If flower display is not important, then it will not harm the plant to be pruned now.

Woody plants that bloom from July into the fall, flower on the new wood produced in the current year. Their flower display can actually be improved with spring pruning.

Now is the time to survey your landscape for branches broken by the winter weather. Woody plants commonly damaged this winter are white pines, ornamental pears and red maples. Broken branches can be removed when ever noticed. Be safe, don't attempt pruning of trees that may be dangerous to you or damaging to property. Always refer such risky tree pruning work to professional certified arborists.

For more details on pruning techniques download HG-84-Pruning Ornamental Plants.

Eastern Tent Caterpillar

by Mary Kay Malinoski

Eastern tent caterpillar is a common pest of wild cherry trees in the spring. Eggs are contained in 1-inch long, black, gall-like masses on slender twigs of wild cherry trees. Eggs generally hatch around the first week of April. Young caterpillars are black. They spin silk tents in branches. The caterpillars enlarge the tents as they grow. Mature caterpillars have a white stripe down the back. Most feeding damage is done in May. Preferred host trees in addition to wild cherry include crabapple and apple.

Eastern tent caterpillars are active during April, a month before gypsy moth. Gypsy moth caterpillars do not construct tents and are actively feeding primarily through May. See photos below for a comparison.



Eastern Tent Caterpillar



Gypsy Moth Caterpillar

Management of Eastern Tent Caterpillar

Prune out egg masses during the fall, winter or early spring, and destroy them. Mechanically destroy the webs and caterpillars in the evening during April. If an insecticide application is needed, use B.t. (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) when the caterpillars are small and be sure to penetrate the tents with the spray. If possible, remove wild cherry hosts on your property.

Winter Damage on Landscape Plants

by David Clement

Winter damage can occur on many plants. A rapid temperature drop following a mid-winter thaw can cause bark splitting. Dead twigs and branches in the spring may be the result of ice and snow damage from the winter. Injury during the winter or early spring season can be from frost or freeze injury.

Some evergreens exhibit yellowing or bronzing of the needles when exposed to winter sun and wind, but return to normal color when growth resumes in the spring. Winter injury may be confused with early stages of some fungal diseases. Needles turn from bronze to reddish brown or brown, as a result of exposure to cold, dry winter winds. Permanent damage occurs when conditions are severe, prolonged, or when temperatures change suddenly. Tissue death is caused by the removal of water in the needles faster than the plant can replace it through root uptake from frozen water in the soil. Winter scorched needles eventually drop off.



Browning and blighting from freezing and thawing cycles



Yellowing and off-color foliage from cold temperatures

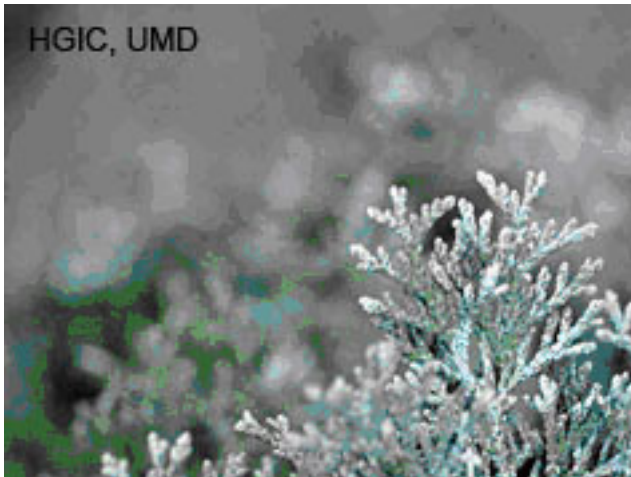
Leaf scorch symptoms can occur on broadleaved evergreens. Damage is most severe on shallow rooted plants such as azalea, rhododendron, holly, grape holly, boxwood, mountain laurel, or those at their northern limit for winter hardiness (*Magnolia grandiflora*, *Acuba japonica*, *Ligustrum lucidum*, *Camellia* spp. and others). Injury occurs on dry, windy, warm or sunny winter days when the ground is frozen. Plants are unable to move water from frozen soil to replace water lost from the leaves. Leaves curl and droop, then brown from the tips and margins, giving the leaves a scorched appearance. In many cases damage occurs during the winter months but symptoms appear in the spring as the plant begins to



Leaf scorch and winter burn injury from winter desiccation

emerge from the winter dormant period and move into the spring growth phase.

Heavy accumulations of de-icing salts can cause leaf scorch similar to winter damage and may kill buds and branch terminals.



De-icing salt accumulation on evergreen foliage

Blighted and browning can be caused by warm temperatures in February or March that stimulate buds, flowers or shoots into growth too early. Subsequent spring frost kills young buds and tender new growth, resulting in fewer flowers and later leaf development. Diagnosis is easy because frozen tissue turns blackish brown. The damaged buds and leaves usually drop off and the remaining bare branches should be pruned out, if new growth does not emerge as spring progresses. Blasted or damaged blooms can result from freezing of flower buds in early spring



Late freeze and frost damage to flower buds

before or during flowering. Branch dieback and leaf yellowing can be caused by sunscald, root damage, and cold weather following a warm spell.

Ice and snow damage can result in bent or broken limbs from heavy weight of snow and ice. Gently remove snow from shrubs with an upward movement of a broom. Do not attempt to remove ice from shrubs because ice laden branches are brittle and more likely to break.

Cultural practices that conserve soil moisture, prevent root damage and promote “hardening off” prior to winter will reduce winter damage. Avoid fertilization or pruning in late summer, which stimulates late season growth that does not have time to “harden off” properly and is much more susceptible to winter injury. When watering, soak the soil several inches deep, and then allow to dry between waterings. This encourages deeper rooting. Avoid frequent shallow sprinklings, which encourage surface roots that are easily injured by drought and cold. The use of mulches conserves soil moisture and prevents temperature fluctuations. Mulches also keep the soil cold in early spring, which helps to reduce premature bud break.

Even hardy trees may develop sunscald or frost cracks. Tree bark warmed by the sun in winter, can reach a temperature as much as 18 degrees warmer than the air temperature. To cambium layer beneath is damaged. This type of freeze damage is called sunscald.

Frost cracks occur when temperature fluctuations are extreme. Water in the cells of the tree trunk freezes and moves out of the cells, causing the wood to shrink. Tension between the frozen and unfrozen layers of wood is so great that the wood separates, causing a crack. The crack can form suddenly, and is often combined with a loud cracking sound. When temperatures warm, the wood absorbs moisture and the crack closes. Frost cracks can reopen and enlarge in subsequent winters and may extend to the center of the tree. Damage to tree trunks is most likely on the south and west sides of the tree where the sun is strongest.

Frost cracks may begin in previously wounded or pruned areas. Proper pruning and avoidance of injury may help to prevent some frost cracks. Tree species prone to frost cracking (those with thin or smooth

bark) may benefit from applying white latex paint to the tree trunk. The light color reflects light and helps to reduce temperature fluctuations. The following species are more likely to develop frost cracks: apple, beech, crabapple, elm, goldenrain tree, horse chestnut, linden, London plane, maple, oak, walnut, and willow.

The best prevention of winter injury is to select plants that are hardy in your area. Winter damage can be reduced by locating plants in partially shaded areas protected from winter winds. Place physical barriers about 18 inches away on the windward side of young trees to reduce winter injury. Barriers made from materials such as burlap or plastic can lessen winter wind damage by reducing wind velocity. Maintain adequate soil moisture in the fall to prevent winter desiccation. Inspect plants for winter damage in the spring and prune out affected areas.

Ask the Experts

by Debbie Ricigliano

Questions and Answers

Question: We are in the process of redoing the landscaping around our home. My husband is interested in incorporating native plants in our plan. Our property backs up to a streambed and we were wondering if you have any suggestions on planting in that area. Also, do you have a list of native plant nurseries on your website? Thank you.

Answer: Taking action to help protect Maryland's valuable watersheds is an invaluable endeavor. Planting a variety of shrubs and trees will create a buffer zone, which is called a riparian buffer, providing many environmental benefits. Riparian buffers help to filter impurities from the water flowing into streams, improving water quality. Plant roots also hold soil in place, reducing soil erosion. An added benefit is you will also be creating a wildlife habitat. Our website contains many publications that will provide assistance with your plan. Go to FS 726 and FS 727 for information on plant selection. We also have a list of native plant nurseries. Also, check with your county Soil Conservation Service and

Department of Public Works, perhaps they can offer you some assistance with creating a riparian buffer.

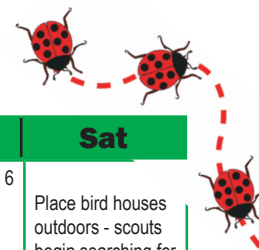
Question: Unfortunately I do not have the space or the time to plant a vegetable garden. I do love homegrown vegetables and shop at the local farmer's market when I get the chance. Are there any alternatives out there for busy folks such as myself?

Answer: There are options for people with tight schedules who are looking for fresh, local vegetables. Consider joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). CSAs forge a mutual beneficial connection between local farmers and consumers; farmers receive income at the beginning of the growing season to cover costs and consumers receive a variety of locally grown fresh produce. Consumers also have the satisfaction of knowing where their food is being produced and participating in a more environmentally responsible way of obtaining it. In addition to fruits and vegetables, some CSAs produce cut flowers, cheese, eggs, and meat. Go to the Maryland Agriculture Information site for a list of CSA farms.

Question: A representative from my lawn care company called the other day and told me that the next time they come out they would be taking soil samples for a soil test. He said something about soil testing being mandatory in Maryland. I wanted to check with you to see if this is true because it was never mentioned by them before.

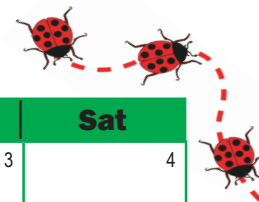
Answer: Yes, what your lawn care person told you is true. In 1998 the Maryland General Assembly passed landmark legislation in an effort to improve and protect Maryland waterways. The Water Quality Improvement Act stipulates that all agricultural operations with gross income greater than \$2,500 or sales of more than 8 animal units (one animal unit is roughly equal to 1,000 pounds live weight) must develop and implement a nitrogen-based and phosphorus-based nutrient management (NM) plan by a prescribed date. The Act does require lawn companies and commercial landscapers to test the soil and apply nutrients according to soil test results and Maryland Extension nutrient guidelines. Testing the soil every three years thereafter is mandatory.


MARCH 2009



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Plant pansies for early spring color	2	3 Do not work garden soil when it is too wet	4	5 Cut ornamental grasses to within several inches of ground	6	Place bird houses outdoors - scouts begin searching for nesting spots soon
8	9 Bare rooted plants can be planted	10	11 If needed, apply crabgrass preemergent mid March - early April	12	13 Hand pull weeds in asparagus & rhubarb beds	14
15 Plant peas and onion sets as soon as soil can be worked	16	17 Sow spinach, radishes, & fast growing salad greens	18	19 Prune roses - wait until you have bud eyes on the canes	20	21 Rake fallen leaves from groundcovers & prune out damaged leaves
22	23 Blooming peach trees can be pruned through petal fall	24	25 Turn compost piles	26	27 Prune grapevines - Sap flow is not harmful	28
29	30	31 Plant trees and shrubs	<p>Do you have a plant or insect pest question? Call the Home and Garden Information Center 1-800-342-2507</p>			

APRIL 2009



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Seed cool season turf through early April	2	3 Plant fruit trees that require little or no spraying	4
5 Set out broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, & onion transplants	6	7 Remove webs of eastern tent caterpillar from cherry & crabapple trees	8	9 Repot & divide houseplants	10	11 Transplant hardy herbs like sage, oregano, thyme, and lavender
12	13 Plant trees, shrubs, & perennials	14	15 Monitor azaleas, rhododendrons, & pieris for lace bug damage	16	17 Cover vegetable transplants with floating row cover to prevent insect feeding & frost damage	18
19 Allow foliage to die back on spring flowering bulbs	20	21 Ticks are active-check yourself after working in yard or near woods	22	23 Cut butterfly bushes back to 12"-18" above ground	24	25
26	27 Perennial plants can be safely divided and moved	28	29 It's normal for holly and magnolia leaves to begin to yellow and drop	30	 <p>MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION <small>UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK • EASTON SHORE</small></p>	