From The Ground Up

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Fall Lawn Care

By Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

When I see the goldenrod in bloom, I know summer's end is near. As we transition into the fall season, it is a good time for homeowners to carry out a few lawn care tasks.

Seeding: Now is the best time to seed a new lawn or overseed sections that are bare. Mid-August through mid-September is ideal since the warm soil temperatures promote fast seed germination. The mild days and cool nights bring favorable conditions for the seedlings to grow and there is less competition from weeds as few weed seeds develop at this time of year.

Perennial broadleaf weeds: Fall is also the time to control perennial broadleaf weeds. These include dandelions, white clover, and ground ivy (aka Creeping Charlie). For small areas, weeds may be managed by manually pulling or digging them. For lawns with a more extensive weed problem or weed varieties that are deeply rooted, herbicides may offer more successful control.

In the fall, weeds are actively storing food in their root system for winter. When applying a broadleaf herbicide at this time, the herbicide is transported through the plant so is very effective. Be sure to keep the herbicide away from trees, shrubs, fruits, flowers and any vegetables in the garden.

To promote the effectiveness of the herbicide, apply when rain is not forecast for at least 24 hours and do not mow your lawn for three to four days after treatment. If a fall herbicide application is done, then a spring application is generally not necessary. Keep in mind that some broadleaf herbicides may harm new grass seedlings. For areas recently seeded, wait to



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apply herbicide until you have mowed the new seedlings two to three times. With the use of any chemical control always read and follow the label directions.

Lawn Aeration: Aeration helps alleviate soil compaction, which will improve air, water and nutrient movement through the soil. This, in turn, promotes better root development in your grass. April and September are good months to aerate. For well-drained soils, aerating twice a year is usually not needed. Lawns that have cool -season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass are best aerated in the fall. as the grass is still actively growing and will easily recover.

A core aerator does a better job at reducing compaction then a spike-type aerator. Core aerators remove small plugs of soil ranging from one-half to five-eighths of an inch in diameter and about 3 inches long. The plugs can be raked up from the lawn or, preferably, left to deteriorate. Several passes over the lawn may be necessary in order to get the soil properly aerated. From an article on home lawn aeration from the Iowa State University Horticulture Department, the aim is to have 20-40 holes per square foot. For best results, the lawn should be reasonably moist.

Fertilizing: Fall is an important time to fertilize your lawn. About two-thirds of your lawn's nitrogen needs should be applied during the



autumn months. Though the leaf growth may be slowing, the grass roots are still growing. For cool season grasses, the general rule of thumb is to fertilize once in the spring, again in mid-September and a third time around late October or early November. Apply one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet for each application. Do not apply more than that in one application.

Keeping up the vigor of your lawn will help in reducing weeds and attacks from pests and diseases. Follow good cultural practices such as proper mowing, fertilizing and watering to keep your lawn looking hearty and healthy.

Eye Spy...Powdery Mildew on Cucurbits



Photo: Sandy Lamfers

Powdery mildew usually only affects the leaves and stems (rarely the fruit). But since it can cause the leaves to wither it can reduce the productivity of the plant causing a lower yield. It can also cause fruit to ripen faster and it may affect the flavor and storage time of the fruit. If the leaves are dying back, you may also find the fruit are now more exposed to the sun and may get sunscald.

If a plant is severely affected and the leaves and stems have withered and died, remove the plant but if the plant is still productive you can choose to live with the mildew for the season. Next year plant resistant cultivars and plant with enough spacing to allow for good air circulation. You may find it again next year as it is the most common disease to affect cucurbits. But hopefully with good air circulation and resistant cultivars the infection will be minimal.

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3	4 <u>Harvest and dry herbs</u> for later use	5	6 Add water to ponds and water structures as needed	7	8 <u>Harvest onions</u> <u>when tops fall over</u> <u>and begin to dry</u>	9
10	11	12 Enjoy some sweet corn	13	14	15	16
17	18 Sow grass seed if need to overseed bare spots	19 Begin to freeze or can surplus garden pro- duce	20	21	22 Cut flowers from your garden and put in a vase for an indoor pop of color	23 "Tidy Up" 9:00 a.m.
24 31	25 Continue to harvest zucchini and cucumbers to keep plants productive	26	27 Sow lettuce, spinach and radish seeds for a a fall harvest	28	29	30



Photos from Priscilla Jurkovich's garden

The Herb Garden

The herb section highlights herbs that can be grown in the South Dakota region

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*, is a perennial herb from the mint (Lamiaceae) family that grows well in South D akota zone 4. Lemon balm prefers full sun with well drained fertile soil, but can also do well in partial shade. Lemon balm grows vigorously and can spread into other plantings if not contained. The lemon scented leaves are oval with serrated edges that come to a point. The flowers are small white tube shaped and can bloom June through August and attract bees.

Lemon balm has flavored teas, beer, medieval cordials, Chartreuse and Benedictine liquors. The leaves can be used in salad dressings, soups and sauces. The fragrance and the flavor are lost in drying, so use fresh whenever possible.

Lemon balm has many medicinal uses. Lemon balm has been used for insomnia to improve the quality and the length of

sleep. The calming effects have been used to relieve systems from attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), high blood pressure, and Alzheimer's disease. When made into a tea, it can be applied to the skin to treat cold sores. As with most herbs in the mint family, it has been used for digestive problems including upset stomach, bloating, gas, vomiting, and colic. It has pain relieving qualities and has been used to relieve menstrual cramps, headache and toothaches. The crushed leaves rubbed on the skin have been used as a mosquito repellent.

Checking in on my garden tomatoes

By Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

In my family, we love to eat tomatoes and every summer look forward to when we can harvest our bounty. Unfortunately, this year is turning out to be somewhat of a tough year for our tomatoes. Our first harvestable tomatoes were sadly taken by a very common disorder called blossom end rot. It looks as awful as it sounds. Blossom end rot begins as a sunken, dark spot on the blossom end of the tomato. It is often found in early developing fruit. Our large beef-steak varieties were most affected - much to the chagrin of my mom who grows them for canning. The small, grape-size and cherry tomatoes were unscathed.

Blossom end rot is caused by the plant's inability to provide enough calcium to the rapidly-growing fruit. This can happen when there are wide fluctuations in moisture. The best way to prevent blossom end rot is to avoid inconsistent watering. Try to maintain an even moisture supply throughout the root zone by watering regularly especially during dry weather (most vegetables need about one inch of water per week). Also, do not over-fertilize plants. Excessive nitrogen can make blossom end rot worse. Blossom end rot can also affect other produce such as peppers and summer squash. Happily, our peppers have been perfect so far this year and I have not noticed any rot on our recent tomatoes – now that I have been paying more attention to my watering.

While keeping an eye out for blossom end rot, I detected some leaf spots on a few tomato plants. Our tomatoes have had this before - Septoria leaf spot. This fungal infection is probably the most common foliar disease seen on tomatoes. It shows up as small, circular spots that have light colored centers with dark edges. Symptoms first appear on the lower, older leaves then move upward on the plant. The spores of the fungus spread to new leaves by the splashing of water. Infected leaves turn yellow, shrivel and fall off. This disease generally appears after the plant has set fruit. Septoria leaf spot affects the leaves not the fruit although with significant leaf loss, you can see a reduction in yield. Good cultural practices help control Septoria leaf spot. Remove affected leaves and dispose of any debris on the ground around the plant (the fungus survives the winter in tomato debris). Watering at the base of the plant to

avoid wetting leaves will also help reduce the spread of the fungus.

Early blight is another fungal disease that causes leaf spots and often shows up this time of year. Tomato plants may become infected with both early blight and Septoria leaf spot. As with Septoria, early blight will first affect the lower leaves. Brownish, black spots up to a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter form on the leaves and will often run together creating larger, irregular shaped blotches. With early blight, the leaf spots can also develop dark, concentric rings giving it a "target" appearance. Plus, the fruit may be affected developing sunken areas near the stem end that take on a black, velvet-like look. Control for early blight is the same as for Septoria leaf spot.



like scarring forming on the blossom end of the tomato is a condition called catfacing. This occurs when cold weather strikes at the time blossoms are developing. This results in the death of some cells creating deformities in the fruit. Catfacing is most often found in the larger tomato varieties. Though the tomatoes may look odd, the fruit are still fine for eating and canning – just trim away the affected areas.

If you run into a few problems with your tomatoes this season like I did, don't despair. Fresh, vine-ripe tomatoes usually abound at farmers markets, which are still going strong. If you want to enjoy tomatoes and other wonderful foods, consider coming along on a "Farm to Fork" culinary tour through parts of northwest Iowa on September 4th. The tour is aimed at connecting people to locally grown food and to taste some of the flavors in northwest Iowa Learn more at www.flavorsofnorthwestiowa.org. Happy Eating!

Weed of the Month: Wild Carrot By Paulette Keller, Master Gardener



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<u>Growth</u>: Wild Carrot, also known as Queen Anne's lace, has a flat topped white umbel made up of many tiny white flowers. Sometimes there is a single purple flower in the center. The flower cluster starts out all curled up and will open up for pollination. After pollination, the cluster rolls itself up again and goes to seed at the end of the season. Wild carrot can grow from 1-5 feet tall and is a biennial. It appears as a rosette with a taproot the first year of growth. The leaves resemble those of the domestic carrot and have the same scent. The stems are upright, branched and hollow. The surfaces can be either smooth or covered with bristly or rigid hairs and are sometimes red or purple. Wild carrot can be found in the eastern half of the Great Plains in pastures, meadows, roadsides and woodland openings and edges.

<u>Uses and Values</u>: The roots of wild carrot are long, pale, woody and are thin and can be used in soups, stews and in making tea. They are a good source of vitamin A and are high in sugar, second only to beets among root vegetables. Several cultures were known to use

the root to sweeten puddings and other foods. The leaves can be chopped and tossed into a salad. Flower clusters can be also be used in a salad. It is best to use the first year's growth of wild carrot in cooking. The seeds are eaten by upland birds and small mammals.

<u>Historical</u>: Carrot seed was brought to America by the early colonists and escaped gardens and reverted back to its wild form. The root was used by pioneers to color butter.

<u>Other:</u> Legend says that Queen Anne's lace earned its name because the flower resembles lace and the reddish flower in the center represents a drop of blood, which fell on the lace when Queen Anne of England (1665-1714) pricked her finger while sewing.

Edible Flowers: Nasturtium (Tropaeolum majus)

Excerpt from Edible Flowers, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Publication RG 302, Revised March 2013.

This 12-inch-tall annual has richly colored red, orange, or yellow flowers from midsummer until the first frost. The leaves have a distinctive round shape. Sow seed 1/2 inch deep in early spring. Plants produce the most flowers in full sun. Avoid fertilization. Plants in highly fertile soils produce lush foliage but few flowers.

Nasturtium flowers have a peppery, zesty taste that can substitute for mustard in sandwiches. Add to salads or cure in vinegar. They make an attractive garnish on a plate or add color when petals are added to butter.



Photo nasturtiums from https://store.extension.iastate.edu/Product/rg302-pdf

Reminders

• Do not use flowers exposed to pesticides or those growing by the roadside. Also, be cautious if you have hay fever, asthma, or allergies.



• Harvest flowers in the morning after the dew has evaporated. Choose flowers at their peak for best flavor. Put long-stemmed flowers in water and keep in a cool place. Use short-stemmed blossoms within a few hours of harvest or store between layers of damp paper toweling or in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Just before using, gently wash flowers, checking thoroughly for insects and soil.

• Remove the stamens and pistils from the flowers. Also remove the green, leaf-like sepals at the base of the flowers.

LOCAL FOODS CORNER

Refugees in Sioux Falls Launch Farmers' Market By Chris Zdorovtsov Community Development Field Specialist



SDSU Extension, in partnership with the Somali Bantu Community Development Councils of South Dakota and HyVee, introduces a new beginning farmer incubator program, New Roots for New Americans. This program helps Sioux Falls refugees learn skills of horticulture and gardening, nutrition, cooking and food preservation skills, food safety and local food entrepreneurship.

Participants launched the New American Garden Market at the 10th St. HyVee, July 19. The hours

of the market are Saturdays from 10 a.m.- 4p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m.- 3 p.m. They offer a wide range of locally grown produce as well as knitted items.

Since January refugees participated in an intensive six-month classroom and garden-based training program, designed by SDSU Extension. Currently, there are 38 participants. Through this program, participants gain, community garden plots at the New American Garden and an opportunity to sell produce at the farmers market. Approximately two-thirds of the students will sell their produce at the farmers market. The remaining are grown for their families.

The trainings also included field trips to see commercial fruit and vegetable producer operations. In April participants visited Linda's Garden in Chester, South Dakota where they observed field and high

tunnel production. In June, they visited The Good Earth in Lennox, South Dakota, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation.

The program is funded through a Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) grant, which the Somali Bantu Community Development Councils of South Dakota acquired to assist aspiring, limited-resource refugee in developing their skills as gardeners, to encourage healthy diets and to sell their produce.

"A partnership with SDSU Extension has enhanced our program and brought new opportunities to our organization. Participants are learning about growing food in South Dakota, food safety, preservation and nutrition," said Abdul Sidow, Executive Director of Somali Bantu Community Development Councils.

This grant helped fund the establishment of a community garden, a program director and horticultural educator/garden mentor. A partnership with the East 10th Street Hy-Vee provides the ground for 102 raised garden beds at the New American Garden.

To learn more, contact Chris Zdorovtsov, SDSU Extension Community Development Field Specialist at 605-782-3290.

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