

Extension Horticulture Newsletter (Fall / Winter Edition)

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Winterizing Your Gardens:

Making sure that you prepare your garden for the winter months is equally as important as the planning and planting that you do earlier in the season. Autumn is the perfect season to not only put your garden to rest, but also to reflect on the growing season and come up with ways to improve in the following year.

Fall garden checklist:

- ✓ Cut weak branches of perennials back (leaving behind sturdy plants)
 - Leave branches with 6-8 inches above ground for pollinators
 - Leave plants with seed heads for wintering birds
- ✓ Protect sensitive plants through the winter (use tree wraps and/or mulch)
- ✓ Make sure any diseased plant material is removed and destroyed (do not compost this)
- ✓ Add soil amendments to restore the nutrients and vitality to your garden
- ✓ **LEAVE THE LEAVES!**
 - Leaving behind your leaf litter and not cutting back all your perennials creates habitat for overwintering pollinators and other beneficial organisms in your landscape!
- ✓ Reflect on your gardening season, and make notes of what you want to improve for the following year

Protecting Trees:

Heavy snowfall in the past few weeks has blanketed much of Montana. Coming in quickly after a warm fall season means many landscape trees had yet to go dormant before snow started to pile up.

- ✓ If you have deciduous trees with leaves still on them when it snows, use a broom to gently shake off the excess snow from the limbs. The added surface area of the leaves can create additional strain on the limbs in the event of heavy snowfall, which can cause cracks or breakage.
- ✓ If you have young or newly transplanted trees, especially those with thinner bark, use a tree wrap to prevent sunscald injury over winter. Make sure that you remove any tree wraps as soon as temperatures begin to warm up in the spring.
- ✓ For trees and shrubs that are susceptible to winter desiccation (especially evergreens): if you have no snow cover, water these when air and soil temperatures are above 40°F to prevent moisture from escaping the trees at a faster rate than it can be replenished. Check out this [Winter Watering publication](#) from Colorado State University for more information.

Schutter Lab Updates:

Laurie Kerzicnik (MSU Extension Insect Diagnostician):

- We had a heavy infestation of ash bark beetles in 2020 on our urban green ash trees. They have been established for years but dieback and woodpecker feeding on the larvae under the bark were unprecedented.
- Heavy populations of two-spotted grasshoppers occurred in yards and gardens.
- Pearslug damage was widespread on cotoneaster and cherry.
- Several suspected “murder hornets” or Asian giant hornets were submitted as pictures and physical samples. However, the Asian giant hornet is yet to be detected in Montana. A nest was located in Blaine, WA in the fall of 2020 and has been destroyed (although two queens were found and killed that had escaped the nest).
- A new EAB Factsheet is available, and a link to it will be posted on the [IPM Website](#) (under resources).

Noelle Orloff (MSU Extension Weed and Invasive Plant ID Diagnostician):

In 2020 we received many garden vegetable samples showing symptoms consistent with synthetic auxin, also known as plant growth regulator, herbicide injury. In many of these cases, we suspected carryover of persistent herbicides in newly purchased topsoil or garden amendments such as compost and manure. This is not a new issue, but there was a sharp increase in the number of cases this year.

There are several MSU Extension publications that address this issue. For more information, see: [Understanding Herbicide Contaminated Soil Amendments for Greenhouses, Nurseries, and Home Gardens](#)
[How to Prevent Non-Target Injury of Broadleaf Crops and Vegetables by Residual Herbicides](#)
[Minimizing Pesticide Contaminated Soil Around the Home and Garden](#)

Master Gardener Updates:

Dara Palmer, Montana Master Gardener Coordinator

An online Level 2 Master Gardener program will be available next spring, just like the current online course for Level 1.

I am excited to announce a new grant opportunity for Master Gardeners! Growing Together Montana is a SNAP-Ed funded donation garden project that seeks to decrease food insecurity and help families with low income access fresh, healthy food and nutrition education. The project is a collaboration among SNAP-Ed, active Extension Master Gardeners, local food banks, and community volunteers. Applicants may receive up to \$2,000 to build, manage, and/or reinvigorate donation gardens.

If you are teaching Master Gardener classes this winter, or if you know of any Master Gardeners that may be interested in applying we ask that you 'plant the seed'! The application will be available in mid February, 2021, and grant recipients for the 2021 growing year will be notified on March 22nd. In depth trainings and support will be provided throughout the duration of the project. Stay tuned for more information!

Programming:

It has been a wonderful first few months of programming with some of you, and I look forward to delivering more horticulture events in the upcoming months, on topics of your choosing!

If you are interested in a virtual horticulture presentation/webinar for your county/region/reservation stakeholders- please contact me. I am currently putting together my Winter 2020/2021 webinar calendar and would be happy to accommodate your horticulture topic request, or can provide a topic if you don't have something specific in mind.

I am also happy to assist you in developing and/or delivering a presentation of your own, and can share slides, resources, content, etc. based on your needs. I look forward to working with all of you!

Happy Horticulture,
Abi 😊