

Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers

Gardening is our Passion . . . Education is our Purpose

November 2018

Next Meeting: November 8, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Table of Contents

<i>Coordinator's Corner</i>	<i>pg. 2</i>
<i>Hancock County Master Gardeners Meeting Minutes</i>	<i>pg. 3</i>
<i>Call for Speakers</i>	<i>pg. 4</i>
<i>Calendar of Events</i>	<i>pg. 5</i>
<i>New Resource for Identifying Common Yard & Garden Plants</i>	<i>pg. 11</i>
<i>Chrysanthemums</i>	<i>pg. 12</i>
<i>Time Flies Like the Wind, Fruit Flies Like Bananas</i>	<i>pg. 14</i>
<i>What Are Those Large Webs in My Trees?</i>	<i>pg. 17</i>
<i>Bag or Not to Bag?</i>	<i>pg. 20</i>
<i>It's Time to</i>	<i>pg. 22</i>

Coordinator's Corner

Thanks to Laurie Pressel for her excellent article on growing pumpkins in the Courier in October. Look for Tim Brugeman's article on November 24 in the Courier Weekend Section.

Doris Salis will be leading our Brown-bag training on the flora of New Zealand before our regular meeting at 6:00 PM on Thursday, November 8. We will be electing our president and treasurer at this meeting to serve a two-year term starting in 2019.

The requirements for inactive members to become active again are as follows. A person may remain inactive for up to three years without retaking the training classes. However, they must complete at least 10 hours of education during those three years. All Active Members must complete at least 30 hours of volunteer service in 2018 with 10 of those hours being in advanced education and three hours in a teaching role. Please turn in your hours to Lynn Farwig before the end of the year.

Be sure to make a note of the various activities being presented to us in Kay Sidaway's "Calendar of Events."

Our annual fundraiser activity, Wreath-Making Classes, will start on Sunday, November 25 at 2:00 PM at the library and will continue nightly at 6:30 PM at the library from Monday, November 26 through Wednesday, November 28. We will then hold another class at the library on Sunday, December 2 at 2:00 PM and then our final class on Thursday, December 6 at 6:30 PM at the Upper Room Church of God. Please plan to help at as many of these classes as you can. We always need nice greens (juniper, arborvitae, white pine, yew, blue spruce etc.) and colorful berries and foliage (variegated euonymus, holly, juniper with berries, celosia, etc.) and dried materials (ornamental grasses, teasel, cones, seed heads, etc.). Bring whatever you can to the classes. Marilyn Beltz will have a sign-up sheet at our November meeting so please volunteer. We especially need blue spruce this year so if you have a source, please let Marilyn know.

Please be sure to review the Standards of Behavior, Position Description, and Pest Management Information Policy before the end of the year. I will send these out by email and if you need a copy, please let me know. Please sign and date each document and place them in the office so they can be put in your file.

Have a very nice Thanksgiving.

Bill

HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

MEETING MINUTES

October 2018

Marilynn Beltz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., following a two-part brown bag session presented by Barb Phillips and Rose Morrison. Barb talked on harvesting your vegetables. She included information related to the size, maturity, times and look of various vegetables. Rose gave a seasonal update on our phenology garden.

Twenty-five Master Gardeners were in attendance.

Marilyn introduced Ed Lentz, Extension Educator who shared with us that Bill Jones would like to retire as the MGV Coordinator. Ed distributed and reviewed the Hancock County MGV Constitution and By-Laws. He highlighted areas in the Constitution that outline the rolls and responsibilities of our various officers and coordinator. He also noted the procedure for succession of our leadership

team. In conjunction with the Constitution it was determined that the President and Treasurer positions would be elected this year with their term running for two years. Anyone interested in running for either President or Treasurer should contact Noreen Walters our Vice President.

Ed also discussed two planned public hearings by the Hancock County Commissioners related to a quarter percent sales tax. The Hancock County Ohio State University Extension Office is partially funded by the county sales tax thus Ed was making us aware of the upcoming meeting which we could attend in support of our MGVS program and the extension office.

Treasurer's Report: Ann Woolum reviewed income and expenses for the month. Her report was accepted by the membership.

Community Garden: John & Linda Leiendecker stated that the Fall cleanup of the community garden was complete. This season 5027 pounds of produce was grown and had been harvested. The produce was donated to local groups in need.

Mugs of Joy: Linda Laux reminded everyone that she will be needing MGVS helpers for her holiday mugs project.

Wreath Classes: Marilyn shared that we will be needing a new source for the greens for our wreaths. The farmer who had help us in the past no longer owns the property thus we need an additional source or sources.

Courier Article: Laurie Pressel plans to write an article that relates to different things our MGVS learned this year. She requested that if you had an interesting new experience related to your gardening activities please share it with her.

Library Programs: Noreen Walters shared that a fall children's gardening program will occur on Saturday, October 20 from 9:30 to 12:30.

Speakers Bureau: Tim Brugeman has several speaking opportunities for Master Gardeners after the first of the year. If you would like to give a talk please contact him.

MGVS Training Class: Karl Farwig shared that there would be a Facebook ad related to our training class. The class is scheduled to begin on February 4. It will have a maximum enrollment of 25.

Memorial Gift: Ruth Furiate a long time Master Gardener passed away this Fall. It was suggested and agreed upon that the Hancock County Master Gardeners would donate a gardening book to the Hancock County Public Library in her memory. Sharon Hammer Baker will select the gardening book.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 8, 2018 with a brown bag presentation at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Miller

MGV Speakers Bureau Needs Speakers!

Don't be bashful, you can do this, and we will help. Our MGV skills list shows you all have great topics to share at a public program. As dates and potential topics are sent out requesting speakers, think about how you can match something you are comfortable talking about with the group asking our help. You do not have to be an expert speaker; it can be an informal sharing of material to support the topic. We can help you structure your presentation with notes, handouts and visual aids for an effective training event, with volunteer hours for you. Topics from your Brown Bag monthly presentations, Courier articles and even the displays from the County Fair also can be a good guides.

Please talk to **Tim Brugeman (419-672-8897)** if interested, and look at the these 2019 requests to roughly plan ahead.

March 13, 2019 (Wed) - Fostoria Garden Club at noon (lunch), Spring Landscapes Make-overs

March 27, 2019 (Wed) - Van Buren Lions Club at Arcadia 6 pm (dinner), any spring topic

September 10, 2019 (Tues) – Findlay Garden Club (evening) using native plants in landscape

Thanks!

Tim

Calendar of Events

October 2018

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST	LOCATION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Monday, Nov. 5	Courier Article - draft due	N/A	N/A	The Courier	Article in Nov. 24 newspaper	Tim Brugeman
Thursday, Nov. 8	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Flora of New Zealand	Doris Salis
Thursday, Nov. 8	Refreshments for MGV Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Karla Dennis, Randy Greeno & Lauri Pressel will provide refreshments	Karla, Lauri, Randy
Thursday, Nov. 8	MGV Monthly Meeting	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting and election of officers	Bill Jones / Marilyn Beltz
Friday, Nov. 9	GMO Training	5:00 pm	\$20	CFAES Greene County	GMO's, Hybrids, & Heirlooms	go.osu.edu/greenegmo
Wednesday, Nov. 14	Fostoria Garden Club	Noon	N/A	Kaubisch Library, Fostoria	Fall & Spring Seasonal Color	Tim Brugeman

Sunday, Nov. 25	Wreath Class	2:00 - 4:00		Hancock County Library	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz
Monday, Nov. 26	Wreath Class	6:30 pm		Hancock County Library	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz
Tuesday, Nov. 27	Pollinator Short Course	10:00-2:30	435	OSU Wooster Campus Fisher Auditorium	Pollination, bee biology, native bee ID, bumble bees, habitat	Register online 614-292-6089
Tuesday, Nov. 27	Wreath Class	6:30 pm		Hancock County Library	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz
Wednesday, Nov. 28	Wreath Class	6:30 pm		Hancock County Library	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz
Sunday, Dec. 2	Wreath Class	2:00-4:00		Hancock County Library	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz
Wednesday, Dec. 5	Courier Article - draft due		N/A	The Courier	Article in Dec. 22 newspaper	Laurie Pressel
Thursday, Dec. 6	Wreath Class	6:30 pm		Upper Church	Wreath making class	Marilynn Beltz

Thursday, Dec. 13	Christmas Potluck	6:00 pm	Bring a dish		MGV Christmas Party	Barb Sherman, Marge Miller, Marilynn Beltz
Saturday, Jan. 5	Courier Article - draft due		N/A	The Courier	Article in Jan. 19 newspaper	Writer Needed
Thursday, Jan. 10	No meeting					
Feb. 1 - 9	Tandada Foundation special volunteer vacation for OSU Ext MGVs & Friends	9 days	\$1,400 +	Highland Ecuador	Work on various horticultural projects	Denis Johnson johnson.2924@osu.edu 614-292-6089
Monday, Feb. 4	MGV Classes begin	TBD		OSU Office	Training to become MGV	Any MGV
Tuesday, Feb. 5	Courier Article - draft due		N/A	The Courier	Article in Feb. 23 newspaper	Ann Woolum
Thursday, Feb. 14	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	TBD	Volunteer Needed
Thursday, Feb. 14	Refreshments for MGV Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Provide Refreshments	Volunteers Needed

Thursday, Feb. 14	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	
Tuesday, March 5	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article in March 23 newspaper	Bob Campbell
Wednesday, March 13	Fostoria Garden Club (Carol Kinn)	Noon	N/A	Kaubisch Library, Fostoria	Spring Garden Makeovers	Need Volunteer Contact Tim Brugeman
Thursday, March 14	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	TBD	Volunteer Needed
Thursday, March 14	Refreshments for MGV Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Provide Refreshments	Volunteers Needed
Thursday, March 14	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	
Friday, April 5	Courier Article		N/A	The Courier	Article in April 20 newspaper	Writer Needed
Thursday, April 11	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	TBD	Volunteer Needed
Thursday, April 11	Refreshments for MGV Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Provide Refreshments	Volunteers Needed
Thursday, April 11	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	

Sunday, May 5	Courier Article			The Courier	Article in May 25 newspaper	Writer Needed
Thursday, May 9	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	TBD	Volunteer Needed
Thursday, May 9	Refreshments for MG Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Provide Refreshments	Volunteers Needed
Thursday, May 9	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	
Wednesday, June 5	Courier Article			The Courier	Article in June 22 newspaper	Writer Needed
Thursday, June 13	Brown Bag Presentation	6:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	TBD	Volunteer Needed
Thursday, June 13	Refreshments for MG Meeting		N/A	OSUE Office	Provide Refreshments	Volunteers Needed
Thursday, June 13	MGV Monthly Meeting	7:00 pm	N/A	OSUE Office	Monthly Meeting	

New Resource for Identifying Common Yard and Garden Plants

B. Rosie Lerner

October 23, 2018



Want to know more about common yard and garden plants? Meet the new Purdue Plant ID Pal.

The web-based resource is easy to use. 4-H and FFA youth will find it especially helpful as they learn to identify ornamentals, fruits, and vegetables for local, state and national competitions.

Purdue Plant ID Pal has four sections:

ornamentals (woody plants)

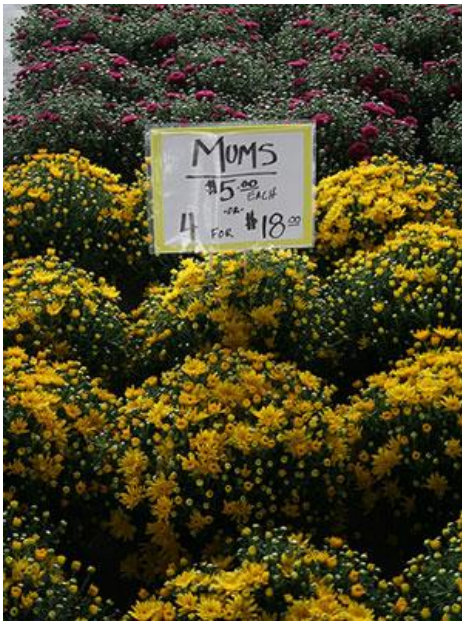
- ***flowers and indoor plants***
- ***fruits and nuts***
- ***vegetables***

You'll find more than 850 photos of nearly 200 plants, brief text descriptions and a glossary of botanical terms.

Each plant entry has multiple images, including close-ups of stems, leaves, flowers, fruit, and in some cases specialized plant structures that might aid in identification. For example, the iris entry includes an image of specialized underground stems called rhizomes.

How much did you learn? Click on the Quiz to give the Purdue Plant ID Pal a try at: <http://purdue.ag/plant-id-pal>

Chrysanthemums



We don't get much in the way of traditional fall displays from changing of the leaves here in Florida, so how can you bring those autumnal colors into your fall landscape? Mum's the word, chrysanthemums that is.

Often shortened to mums, chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum x morifolium*) are popular and colorful perennials that come in many colors and a variety of sizes.

Characteristics

Mums are easy-to-grow, herbaceous perennials that can live for years and continue to bloom. Generally these plants grow to be about 6 inches tall although they can reach 2 feet in height when flowering.

Mums form rounded mounds that, when in bloom, are just bursting with color. Not only do mums come in an array of colors, they also come in a variety of flower forms. The *single* flower form looks much like a daisy, while the *pompon* form has more of a globular shape. There is even a *spoon* flower form where the flower petals are tubular and flatten out at the tips, resembling many little spoons. Mums are great for mass plantings and cut flowers. As a bonus, the flowers attract butterflies.

Planting and Care

When buying potted chrysanthemums, shop for "garden mums," which are hardier than those labeled as "florist" mums. Look for healthy, well-shaped plants with many flower buds. The more buds you see on your plant the more blooms you will enjoy in your garden. Garden mums are cold hardy and prefer full sun, but can also thrive with just morning or afternoon sun. Mums grown in containers are a great way to brighten up a porch, patio, or front door.

Plant your garden mums in soil that's well drained and has been enriched with plenty of organic matter. Water as needed and apply a slow-release fertilizer. To maintain a compact, well-branched form, lightly prune your mums from late spring through mid-August if they grow more than 6 inches tall. Dead heading will encourage new blooms and keep the plant looking attractive and healthy.

Mums naturally set buds and flower fall through spring, when the days are short. But garden mums can be purchased blooming at any time. You can even spread the "mum love" around by propagating your plants, either by division or cuttings.

Time flies like the wind, Fruit flies like bananas

Timothy J Gibb



Is it that time of year already? Summer is gone and fall is here. Temperatures are cooling, leaves are beginning to turn color, vegetables from the garden and fruits from the orchard are ready for harvest, and fruit flies are flying throughout the kitchen. These are all signs that autumn is upon us. Wow! Where did the time go?

An old adage goes something like "time flies like the wind." How true it is. However, a similar and equally true saying - no doubt coined by the kitchen staff - goes something like "fruit flies like bananas."

Time flies like the wind, but fruit flies like bananas! Both statements are true and both warrant deep reflection. But what is their relationship?

Gardeners are now finally and proudly bringing their bounties of fruits and vegetables into the home for eating or processing, but in so doing, they often also accidentally introduce eggs or larvae from a nuisance pest called a fruit fly, or more properly, a vinegar fly. In their adult stage - when they really become noticeable - they appear as tiny brown- or black-colored flies, about 1/8 inch in length, that usually have red eyes, if you look really closely. And, while you are looking closely - and I mean really closely - look for black striping on a yellow abdomen. That will confirm them for sure.

Most people don't really take the time to observe vinegar flies all that closely, because they are busy shooing them away from their food. So, just spotting tiny flies around ripening fruits or vegetables in the fall is enough to give a pretty accurate diagnosis.

The biggest complaint from most people is that these flies are a nuisance pest. They fly around just about anywhere fresh food is stored, washed or prepared. They land on nearly everything, and fly about our heads and faces. They are just really ... well ... pesky.

Vinegar or fruit flies can be pests year-round, but are especially meddlesome during the late summer or fall because that is when fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes, melons, squash, grapes, apples, peaches, or just about any other perishable items, are brought in from the garden. They usually begin out of doors where they lay tiny eggs in the cracks or folds in the produce. Eggs hatch into tiny white larvae that invade the flesh of the fruit or vegetable. When infested produce is brought into the home, the maggots complete their development and emerge as adult flies, ready to re-infest any overripe fruits or vegetables stored on the countertops.

They may also be brought home via ripened bananas or other produce from the grocery store, and once in the home, they are experts at finding foods to eat, such as rotting potatoes, onions that have been forgotten in the back of the pantry, or even small amounts of fermenting juices that may have been spilled behind sinks or counters. In fact, they can breed in empty bottles and cans in the recycling bin, or even dirty mops and cleaning rags. All that is needed for development is a moist film of fermenting material. Clogged drains or garbage disposals, or dirty trashcans are equally adequate for the flies, and this is where the even bigger problem lies. Vinegar flies have the potential to spread nasty bacteria and other disease-producing organisms from garbage to the foods we are eating.

Regardless of where they originate, once inside a home, their reproductive potential is enormous. Given the opportunity, a female, assuming she has already been out on a date with a male fruit fly, can lay about 500 fertile eggs. That is a huge number of eggs for a tiny fly. Now - and here is the really mind-blowing fact - an entire vinegar fly life cycle (from egg to adult) can be completed in as little time as one week.

Pull out your calculators for a moment. This means that one particular pregnant fruit fly can lay eggs on October 1, and if all 500 eggs could hatch and develop through their customary larval and pupal stages, they would become 500 flies by October 7. Each of these could easily find a mate and, assuming that half are females, could produce 125,000, if all conditions were just right, by October 14. Anybody working or eating in the kitchen will notice a problem by this time and will have taken action.

But just for the sake of this story, let's say that these 125,000 all remained undetected, healthy and had plenty of breeding sites to feed and lay eggs. If so, there could be 62.5 million by October 21 and more than 15.5 billion by Halloween. Even your typical, unobservant, couch potato type husband should have noticed a problem by that point.

But fly populations don't get that big, that quickly, in most cases. Not all eggs hatch, nor do all larvae survive to reproduce. In most cases, someone will have nagged the husband enough that the garbage will have been taken out, and the available breeding and feeding resources will have been removed well before then.

This is actually the best way to avoid problems with vinegar flies: not with aerosol pesticide sprays, but rather by eliminating the

availability of food and breeding sites. Produce that has ripened should be eaten, discarded, refrigerated or processed. Leaving it sitting out on the countertop for an extended length of time is asking for trouble. Accumulating trash, especially trash with organic material in it, is risky. Even small spills, dirty trash containers, or cans or bottles that have not been rinsed out, can be enough to produce large numbers of flies.

Once a home is infested with fruit flies, all potential breeding areas must be located, cleaned or eliminated. Unless these breeding sites are removed, the problem will continue, no matter how often insecticide sprays are applied to control the adult flies. This can be very challenging, and will require persistence on the part of the homeowner.

After all breeding sites have been eliminated, homeowners may want a solution for the pesky swarm of flies that continues to hover in the kitchen, wondering where their food source has gone. A couple of options in addition to the aerosol pesticides, may help.

A vacuum cleaner can suck them up quite readily. Even a DustBuster in the hands of a determined homeowner is bad news for vinegar flies. This sometimes becomes an obsession, and even though a bit time-consuming, feelings of great triumph are often reported by humans searching for, carefully stalking and, at the last second, sucking up the odd, unsuspecting fly.

Once all other sources of food are removed, homemade vinegar fly traps, consisting of a few ounces of apple cider vinegar and 1/2 teaspoon of dish soap in an open dish or bowl can be effective when placed near where the swarms persist. The flies are attracted to the smell of the vinegar (why they are often called vinegar flies - duh), and will attempt to land in the bowl, but because of the soap, the surface tension of the vinegar is reduced and the unsuspecting flies drown in the very irresistible, intoxicating liquor that they crave. (Not a bad way for a vinegar fly to go - if you really think about it.)

Next to actually hunting the flies with the vacuum cleaner, this method is very popular and reportedly brings great satisfaction for the homeowner. In fact, some are known to check the trap last thing at night before going to bed, and actually wake up early in the morning just to count the number of flies removed during the nighttime. Cheers and fist pumps follow, usually in direct proportion to the number of flies caught times the amount of annoyance that the flies have caused.

So, the take-home message is simple. Always remember that ripe fruits and vegetables, plus even a short period of time, equals fruit flies. It is basic entomological mathematics.

Or, if it is easier, just remember the old adage "time flies like the wind and fruit flies like bananas."

What are those large webs in my trees?

.October 10, 2018 –
Robert Bricault

Fall webworm webbing in trees brings more anxiety than harm to the plant



Fall webworm. All photos by Jean Persely.

What should I do about all the webs in my trees? A caller to the Michigan State University Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline was concerned that caterpillars within the webbing were still causing damage to her trees. Should I spray? Should I trim it out of the tree? Can I burn it out of the tree? If I leave the web, will the insects return to it next season?

Fall webworm, *Hyphantria cunea*, is a moth that is better known for its caterpillar stage that creates large webbing at the ends of branches. Webs up to 2 to 3 feet in length can be seen at ends of branches from mid-summer and into fall. When active in the summer, they may contain a colony of hundreds of webworm caterpillars.

This native species feeds on at least 80 species of trees, though most commonly seen on walnut, birch, black cherry, elms and maples. Young larvae begin to feed in early July in southern Michigan, and at the start of August in northern Michigan. Protected within the

webs, newly hatched caterpillars first feed on the upper surface of the leaves, and after several molts the larger caterpillars consume whole leaves.

Explaining that it is not a serious threat to the tree is often not the answer expected. Since the colony of caterpillars feed from mid- to late summer, it causes less damage than insects that feed in the spring. By late summer, plants have had time for their leaves to produce energy reserves for the following season. Trimming out the web is an option, but often it is not feasible as it is high up in the canopy and cannot be reached.



Fall webworm caterpillars feed on leaves for about six weeks. Once done feeding, the 1-inch long caterpillars move from the webbing to bark crevices or move down into the soil where they form a cocoon. Within this cocoon, they survive the winter to emerge as a moth the following spring.

This late in the season, most of the caterpillars have left the nest and a close inspection of branches within the webs reveals developing buds for next season. Webs will deteriorate over the winter and webworm caterpillars will not return to these webs next spring.

Never burn the webbed branch while it is in the tree. This extreme measure damages the plant more than the insect would. Trimmed out branches can be burned or buried. Although feeding by the webworms strips leaves within the webs, it likely will not kill the branch.

Control measures work best when webs are still small. The webbing makes it difficult to spray with pesticides since the caterpillars are protected within the web. Pesticides will work if nests are torn by a high pressure spray. Even a garden hose set to a high pressure can tear into a nest and kill many caterpillars.

Fall webworm can be managed with lower toxicity pesticides, but a smart gardener will first consider if pesticides are even needed. There are times when a number of webs in one smaller tree would create a situation where management options need to be considered. See this [Fall Webworm tip sheet](#) from the University of Minnesota for management options.

Will a nest left in the tree result in caterpillars returning to the nest in the spring? No, they do not return to these nests, but it is possible the insects that survive within cocoons on the bark or in the soil emerge as moths to lay eggs on leaves on the same tree or nearby trees. The good news is that for the most part, fall webworm nests are rarely a stress on the tree and fortunately nature has provided dozens of parasitoids and predators to help keep it in check.

This article was published by **Michigan State University Extension**

To bag or not to bag?

October 31, 2018 - Author: Terry Gibb

If you start early, you can avoid all the work and time of raking, bagging and hauling leaves from your lawn.



All photos by Rebecca Finneran, MSU Extension

Fall leaves look beautiful on the trees but not so much on the ground. While we can and do travel many miles to look at the fall colors, we don't want to see those same colors all over our property. There are three options to get those leaves off your lawn.

Option No. 1: Rake or blow all those leaves into piles, bag them up and either take them to a compost facility or on trash day, carry them all out to the curb for pick up.

Option No. 2: Rake or blow all of your leaves and start a compost pile. Leaves are a great material for composting. You could add some grass during these final few weeks of grass cutting to get a nice compost pile started for next spring's plantings.

Option No. 3: If you start now, you can avoid the raking and bagging and moving of leaves by mulching them back into your lawn. Michigan State University research has shown there are several eco-friendly benefits to mulching leaves back into the grass:

- You get a faster green up of your grass next spring while using less fertilizer. The small decomposing leaf pieces provide nutrients to your lawn over the winter for quicker greening in the spring.
- You will have less weeds. The small leaf pieces cover any bare or thin spots in the lawn that are good places for weed seeds to germinate.



To mulch leaves into the lawn successfully, just follow a few simple steps:

- Start mowing and shredding the leaves as soon as there is a thin layer on the lawn.
- Set the mower at its highest setting and mow as usual. Then mow in the opposite direction making a criss-cross or 90-degree pattern. There will be leaf residue on the lawn but it will continue to break down, falling through the grass to reduce future weeds and provide those essential nutrients. Also, fall is the best time to feed your lawn. After several years of leaf mulching, the process may almost completely eliminate dandelions and crab grass.

Under normal conditions, the lawn should only need to be mowed weekly. However, if strong winds occur, it may require mowing more frequently. Leaves can be mulched up to approximately 6 inches deep and still have good results depending on the type of mower being used.

If a total leaf fall occurs and there are too many leaves to mulch, another option for the leaves is using your mower to bag the leaves for use around flower beds, trees, shrubs and vegetable gardens. The small leaf pieces will easily break down over winter. They will provide nutrients to these areas and reduce weed germination making next spring that much easier.

Less work, better lawn and garden and saving money all adds up to some nice benefits for doing less.

For more information on mulching, see Michigan State University Extension's "Smart Gardening" video below.

IT'S TIME TO.....

By: Rosie Lerner, Purdue University Extension Office

HOME (Houseplants and indoor activities)

- Check houseplant leaves for brown, dry edges, which indicates too little relative humidity in the house. Increase humidity by running a humidifier, grouping plants or using pebble trays.
- Extend the lives of holiday plants such as poinsettias and Christmas cactus by placing them in a cool, brightly lit area that is free from warm or cold drafts.
- Houseplants may not receive adequate light because days are short and gloomy. Move plants closer to windows, but avoid placing foliage against cold glass panes. Artificial lighting may be helpful.
- Because growth slows or stops in winter months, most plants will require less water and little, if any, fertilizer.
- If you are forcing bulbs for the holidays, bring them into warmer temperatures after they have been sufficiently precooled. Bulbs require a chilling period of about 10 to 12 weeks at 40 degrees F to initiate flower buds and establish root growth. Precooled bulbs are available from many garden suppliers, if you did not get yours cooled in time. Then provide two to four weeks of warm temperature (60 F), bright light and moderately moist soil to bring on flowers.
- When shopping for a Christmas tree, check for green, flexible, firmly held needles and a sticky trunk base – both indicators of freshness. Make a fresh cut, and keep the cut end under water at all times.

- Evergreens, except pines and spruce, can be trimmed now for a fresh supply of holiday greenery.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prevent bark splitting of young and thin-barked trees, such as fruit and maple trees. Wrap trunks with tree wrap, or paint them with white latex (not oil-based) paint, particularly on the south- and southwest-facing sides.
- Protect shrubs such as junipers and arborvitae from extensive snow loads by tying their stems together with twine. Carefully remove heavy snow loads with a broom to prevent limb breakage.
- Protect broadleaves, evergreens or other tender landscape plants from excessive drying (desiccation) by winter sun and wind. Canvas, burlap or polyethylene plastic screens to the south and west protect the plants. Similarly, shield plants from salt spray on the street side.
- Provide winter protection for roses by mounding soil approximately 12 inches high to insulate the graft union after plants are dormant and temperatures are cold. Additional organic mulch such as straw compost or chopped leaves can be placed on top.

Garden (flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- To protect newly planted or tender perennials and bulbs, mulch with straw, chopped leaves or other organic material after plants become dormant.
- Store leftover garden chemicals where they will stay dry, unfrozen and out of the reach of children, pets and unsuspecting adults.
- Once the plants are completely dormant and temperatures are consistently below freezing, apply winter mulch to protect strawberries and other tender perennials. In most cases, 2 to 4 inches of organic material such as straw, pine needles, hay or bark chips will provide adequate protection.
- Check produce and tender bulbs in storage, and discard any that show signs of decay, such as mold or softening. Shriveling indicates insufficient relative humidity.
- Clean up dead plant materials, synthetic mulch and other debris in the vegetable garden, as well as in the flowerbeds, rose beds and orchards.
- Make notes for next year's garden.