Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers

Gardening is our Passion . . . Education is our Purpose

October 2018

Next Meeting: October 11, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

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Coordinator's Corner

Well, our gardening season is nearing its end as we see our days getting shorter and our mornings cooler. The lawns have greened up and, so remember to apply one pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet around Halloween.

Now is a good time to collect seeds from any open, pollinated flowers and veggies that we want to propagate next year. Remember to apply an insecticide containing imidacloprid to any pots that you plan to bring into the house. This will control insects on the plants or in the soil.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, October 11. Our Brown-bag training at 6:00 PM will feature Rose Morrison, who will discuss the Phenology Garden this year, and Barb Phillips who will discuss bringing in the harvest.

Our October Courier article will be provided by Laurie Pressel on Growing Pumpkins and it will appear in the Saturday, October 20 issue of *The Courier*. Look for the article in the Weekend section. Many thanks to Cheryl Miller for her article in September on bulbs.

I have told Ed Lentz that I would like to retire as Volunteer Coordinator at the end of this year. He will discuss the process for selecting our next Volunteer Coordinator at the October MGV meeting. He will also discuss some modifications to the organizational structure we have been trying to use this year. Please plan to attend this important meeting. Please read the MGV Constitution prior to this meeting.

Thanks to all of you for the many ways you take ownership of the Master Gardener program and help to make it successful. I'm proud to be a Hancock County Master Gardener Volunteer.

Bill

HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

MEETING MINUTES

September 2018

There was no September meeting due to the County Fair.

Calendar of Events

September 2018

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST	LOCATION	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
Tuesday, October 2	**Greater Bluffton Garden Club**	**6:30 PM**	**N/A**	**Bluffton Library**	**Fall Bulbs & Seasonal Color**	**Tim Brugeman**
Thursday, October 11	**Brown Bag Presentation**	**6:00 PM**	**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Results of 2018 Phenology Garden**	**Bill Jones & Rose Morrison**
Thursday, October 11	**Brown Bag Presentation**	**6:00 PM**	**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Harvesting Garden Produce**	**Barb Phillips**
Thursday, October 11	**Refreshments for MGV Meeting**		**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Barb Phillips, Barb Sherman, & Linda Laux will provide refreshments**	**Barb, Barb, Linda**

Thursday, October 11	**MGV Monthly Meeting**	**7:00 PM**	**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Monthly Meeting**	**Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz**
Friday, October 12	**Planting Our Landscaping**	**9:30-3:00**	**$40**	**Snyder Park Gardens, 1900 Park St., Springfield**	**New/different plants for landscapes**	**Clark.osu.edu**
Wednesday, Oct. 17	**Invasive Plants in your backyard**	**10:00-3:00**	**$20**	**WW Knight Nature Preserve 29530 White Rd., Perrysburg**	**Invasive plants**	**WWW.OIPW.INFO**
Saturday, October 20	**Courier Article**		**N/A**	**The Courier**	**TBD**	**Laurie Pressel**
Saturday, October 20	**Library Presentation**	**9:30 - 12:30**	**N/A**	**Hancock County Library**	**Children's Gardens**	**NEED VOLUNTEERS Contact Noreen @ 419-424-3218**
Saturday, October 20	**Fall in love with gardening**	**9:30 - 2:00**	**$40**	**1st Church of Nazarene 807 Coshocton Ave. Mt. Vernon**	**Garlic, succulents, hypertufa, edibile natives**	**740-397-0401 knox.osu.edu**
Monday, October 22	**Library Presentation by Pat Flinn**	**6:30 PM**	**N/A**	**Hancock County Library**	**Preserving the Harvest**	**Pat Flinn**
Thursday, November 8	**Brown Bag Presentation**	**6:00 PM**	**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Flora of New Zealand**	**Doris Salis**

Thursday, November 8	**Refreshments for MGV Meeting**		**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Karla Dennis, Randy Greeno & Lauri Pressel will provide refreshments**	**Karla, Lauri**
Thursday, November 8	**MGV Monthly Meeting**	**7:00 PM**	**N/A**	**OSUE Office**	**Monthly Meeting**	**Bill Jones / Marilynn Beltz**
Wednesday, November 14	**Fostoria Garden Club**	**Noon**	**N/A**	**Kaubisch Library, Fostoria**	**Fall & Spring Seasonal Color**	**Tim Brugeman**
Saturday, November 24	**Courier Article**		**N/A**	**The Courier**	**Article**	**Writer Needed!**
Sunday, November 25	**Wreath Class**	**2:00 - 4:00**		**Hancock County Library**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**
Monday, November 26	**Wreath Class**	**6:30 PM**		**Hancock County Library**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**
Tuesday, November 27	**Wreath Class**	**6:30 PM**		**Hancock County Library**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**

Wednesday, November 28	**Wreath Class**	**6:30 PM**		**Hancock County Library**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**
Sunday, December 2	**Wreath Class**	**2:00-4:00**		**Hancock County Library**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**
Thursday, December 6	**Wreath Class**	**6:30 PM**		**Upper Church**	**Wreath making class**	**Marilynn Beltz**
Thursday, December 13	**Christmas Potluck**	**6:00 PM**	**Bring a dish**		**MGV Christmas Party**	**Barb Sherman, Marge Miller, Marilynn Beltz**
Saturday, December 22	**Courier Article**		**N/A**	**The Courier**	**Article**	**Writer Needed!**
February 1 - 9, 2019	**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**
Wednesday, March 13, 2019	**Fostoria Garden Club (Carol Kinn)**	**Noon**	**N/A**	**Kaubisch Library, Fostoria**	**Spring Garden Makeovers**	**Need Volunteer Contact Tim Brugeman**

Time to Harvest Sweet Potatoes

B. Rosie Lerner

Although some folks may be sad to see summer coming to a close, many gardeners are looking forward to harvesting their sweet potato treasures.

Sweet potatoes are warm-season plants that are very sensitive to cold temperatures. The tuberous roots should be harvested by the time frost kills the vines or soon thereafter. Sweet potato roots continue to grow until frost kills the vines. Roots can be left in the ground for a short while; however, a hard frost can cause damage to roots near the surface. Chilling injury also results to roots when soil temperatures drop to 50°F or lower, and this can result in internal decay in storage. The greatest danger from delayed digging is the risk of cold, wet soil encouraging decay of the roots.

Depending on how early you were able to plant, you may find an assortment of "baby baker" or smaller roots, as well as full-size potatoes. Although you can cook newly dug sweet potatoes right away, their flavor and storage quality are greatly improved by curing at warm temperatures first. It is during the curing process that starch is converted to sugar.

Care should be taken during digging and handling to avoid skinning and bruising the roots. Even a small wound can easily become infected with decay organisms. Line containers with rags or other soft material, if possible, to avoid scratching the roots. Do not store badly injured or diseased roots. Although large amounts of soil clinging to roots during storage is not desirable, sweet potatoes are easily damaged during the washing process when freshly dug. Allow roots to dry and cure before removing excess soil.

Cure sweet potatoes by holding them for about 10 days at 80-85°F and high relative humidity (85-90 percent). In the absence of better facilities, they can be cured between 65-75°F for 2-3 weeks. To maintain the required high humidity (85-90 percent relative humidity), stack storage crates or boxes and cover them with paper or heavy cloth. Packing in perforated plastic bags will also keep humidity high, yet the perforations will allow excess moisture to escape.

Once the sweet potatoes are cured, move them to a dark location where a temperature of about 55-60°F can be maintained during storage. Sweet potatoes are subject to chilling injury, so keep them out of the refrigerator. Outdoor pits are not recommended for storage because the dampness encourages decay. Good results can be obtained by wrapping cured sweet potatoes in newspaper and storing them in a cool closet.

Bats in the Belfry

Kainen Morgan

At different times of the year, I get questions about bats in structures. Bats are a timely issue towards the end of summer because young bats will soon be able to fly. Excluding bats from structures is limited to this time. This process is typically called "venting" where access points (both in use and potential) are identified, most are sealed off, and the remaining points are fitted with one-way doors that allow bats to leave but not reenter. If only the opening they use is sealed off, they will simply use another entry point. Think of it this way - our houses have multiple points of entry, but you may only use one. You will use another if necessary.

Bats can make their way into a house in a number of ways – gaps between siding and chimney, gaps between roof sheathing and fascia board, etc. New and old construction alike. Eliminating access to all of these small, potential points of access can be a challenge. The bodies of some bat species are as small as your thumb. Even though you don't have an attic, there are still spaces inside a structure where bats can live.

Bats are one of the most difficult wildlife conflicts to deal with because of the nature of their habits. They can pass through extremely small openings, move throughout the inside of a structure, and often enter/occupy hard to reach areas. Bat exclusion is not an activity I recommend for most homeowners. There is a skill necessary to find and seal all possible access points. Since most of these are located high above ground and accessing these points can require special ladders, lifts and other safety equipment.

Having bats in the attic isn't simply a nuisance issue, but also can be a safety issue. Like Most wildlife carry diseases. With bats, **histoplasmosis** and **rabies** are the two that are the ones most concern for people with bats in their homes. The Center of Disease Control (CDC) has good information on these and other diseases. Fleas that live on bats can also be vectors for disease. It is always a good idea to limit exposure to wildlife animals as much as possible. For bats, venting in the end of summer and fall and preventing reentry is a logical first step.

If you have bats and want to solve the problem now is the time to contact professionals who can help. Unfortunately, most nuisance wildlife control operators don't do bat work because it requires specialized equipment and the difficulty of it. Because of that, control will not be cheap for the customer. Many people construct bat houses to attract bats. While beneficial, artificial bat houses will not attract bats from an attic.

Resources:
Selecting a Nuisance Wildlife Control Professional, The Education Store-Purdue Extension's resource center

Arrival of cool weather brings out cool season spider mites

Date: September 25, 2018 - Included in Issue: **18-16**

By: **Cliff Sadof**

What are spider mites? Most common trees, shrubs and flowers are susceptible to injury by one or more species of spider mites. Two spotted spider mites feed on a wide variety of plants. Their capacity to injure plants is representative of other species.

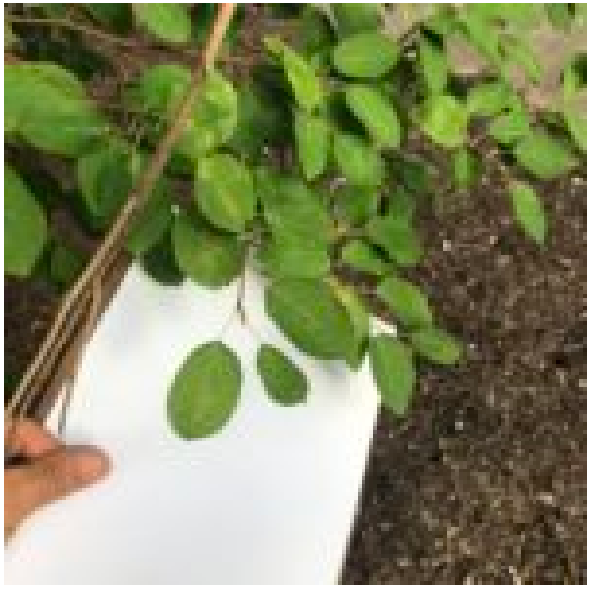
Summer is over. Why worry about spider mites now? Even though you can put away your mite controls for warm season mites on most flowering plants and shrubs, mites that feed on spruce trees, rhododendrons, and other broad leafed plants can be infested by the spruce spider mite and the southern red mites when the daily high temperature is below 85˚F. Spider mites are small 8 legged creatures that are more closely related to common house spiders than insects.

Use of some insecticides, like carbaryl and neonicotinoids, in mid- summer to protect plants against bagworms, and lacebugs can kill the predators that keep these cool season mites under control.

Inspect your plants for spider mites. Look for plants that begin to fade in color and appear as if covered in dust or appear bronze or covered in webs.

Arborvitae leaves attacked by spruce spider mite appear yellow.

Spruce spider mite and fine webbing visible under a lens (Photo by S. Mayer, Purdue).



Professionals or garden enthusiasts could tap a dry branch over a white sheet of paper to look for mites. You will probably need a magnifying lens to see the mites.

How to control spider mites

If you just have one or two affected plants or small parts of a plant affected, consider pruning or removing the infested part and spraying the remaining plant parts with a strong shower of water from your garden hose. This will knock off some mites, and if you do it repeatedly over a week or two, it could encourage the growth of a fungus that kills spider mites.

Apply a solution of 2% insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, or neem oil to kill spider mites if hosing down your leaves is not an option for your plants. Do not use oil or soap on blue spruce, as this will turn leaves green.
If your plant is dripping with mites and webs and all else has failed, you can use a miticide. Homeowner products with the active ingredient bifenthrin can kill spider mites and hold them back for as long as a month before the spider mite population comes back. Professionals have a wider choice of products to choose from. For more information on specifics see our bulletin on **managing spider mites in the urban landscape.**

Invasive Plant Species Alert - Japanese Stiltgrass

Authors
Cindy Meyer

Japanese stiltgrass was not on my radar until a recent visit to a local park. It had piqued my interest because of the lushness of the plants beneath a full canopy of trees. My first thought was, what is this grass that could be a recommendation for shady sights? My excitement quickly waned because our hosts explained that the annual grass unfortunately, is considered an invasive species. In fact, this non-native species from Asia, which was first found in Tennessee in 1919, can produce up to a 1000 seeds per plant and crowds out native plants. The seeds from this plant are dispersed by a number of mechanisms including foot traffic, water movement, equipment, and wildlife.

Japanese Stiltgrass

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) can be found in disturbed areas such as; edges of fields, forests, ditches, recreational trails, etc. It grows in low-light environments with sufficient soil nutrients and moisture but it can also adapt to low-nutrient and low-moisture areas with adequate light.

Japanese stiltgrass leaves are flat, pale green, asymmetrically lance-shaped, and about 1–3 inches in length. Leaves are sparsely hairy on both sides and along the margins. A shiny, off-center, mid-rib is conspicuous on the upper surface, which is sometimes described as a silver stripe, and is a distinctive identification feature. Leaves are arranged alternately along the branched stem and project outward. Spikelike flowers up to 3 inches long develop in late summer or early fall in the axils of the leaves at the tip of the stem. A shallow and fibrous root system is a distinguishing characteristic that sets it apart from the native white grass (*Leersia virginica*), which has a stout rhizome.

Japanese Stiltgrass leaves are lance-shaped and have a silver colored, off-center, mid-rib.

Management

Managing for Japanese stiltgrass is not unlike managing for other invasive plant species. It requires diligent, hard work! Inspection of equipment such as mowers, road maintenance equipment, and timber harvesting is important. Cleaning and sanitizing equipment with known stiltgrass infestations helps to prevent spreading of this grass. Hand-pulling is effective late in the season before plants flower. Pulled plants should be bagged. Mowing and/or weed eating is also effective if done before the plants mature and go to seed. Chemical control with non-selective herbicides, non-selective pre-emergent herbicides and selective grass-specific herbicides can be effective but may require more than one application over the course of a few years. When using any chemical always read and follow label instructions.

More Information

Ohio State University Extension - Ohioline Factsheet
https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/F-70-11

Along Came a Spider . . . Web

Timothy J Gibb

Spiders are at once one of the most feared — yet beneficial and misunderstood — and studied animal in the world. Legend suggests that the mere sighting of a spider brings good luck for the day, and many cultures adhere to the myth that killing a spider will bring seriously bad luck. Not only are spiders beneficial, they can also provide unparalleled educational opportunities.

Just watching a determined spider construct a web and catch prey can be an inspiring study in perseverance and engineering. Studying the effects of spider webs strung across pathways can provide hours of solid entertainment, along with insight into lunatic behaviors of weaker minded individuals in our society…. Case in point: I have discovered that there is such a thing called a “web-face dance.” It is often performed on a trail in the woods during late summer or fall but can occur in any random location, such as an alleyway between out-buildings or a door threshold if the door has been left open for a while. The dance is always performed solo, and if several people are walking together, it is always performed by the lead person, much to the delight of the rest of the group.

My son-in-law did not invent this lively dance but he has certainly perfected it. It occurs without warning. I have attempted to break down the specific choreography, but because the tempo is so fast it is a blur, and without slow-motion video capability, it's difficult to separate his specific steps. I can only generally describe them as follows: The web-dance appears to be initiated when his feet realize that his face has planted, or is about to plant itself, into a dreaded spider web. His head and upper body freeze in midair and actually begin backtracking. This move is quickly followed by a burst of very rapid backpedaling footsteps coupled with wild flailing of hands and arms, pawing and clawing at the face and ears while filling the air with karate chops. Hat, glasses and anything he is carrying go flying.

Next, his legs finally catch up and join in the erratic, spasmodic midair thrashing. Strange, muffled, whimpering noises, emitted in bursts, always accompany this rather undignified dance that continues for several minutes. As the dance nears its conclusion, the noises begin to resemble pseudo-English swear words followed at last by the declaration, "I detest spiders!"

The silver lining to my son-in-law doing a web-face dance is that witnesses are treated to an unforgettable, hilarious spectacle and are seldom able to control waves of convulsive laughter.

What triggers this dance and how can it be controlled? Medical research indicates that a web-face dance is strictly a reflex action, no conscious thought involved. The futile flailing of arms and legs was once thought to both ward off any lurking spider and simultaneously free oneself of the sticky webbing across the face. In truth, it does neither. It is all to no avail. There is no removing the web. It is too sticky and near invisible.

At the same time, if the spider has a chance, it will sense that a human is bigger prey than it is willing to take on and will retreat. But occasionally the spider is caught in the melee and is transferred to the dancer's person. This results in even more foreign vocabulary and frantic brushing and clawing of the face, hair and head region. Even after removal, the very thought of the incident elicits impulsive behaviors of brushing fingers through hair and rubbing the face – which continues sporadically until quieted by a hot soapy shower or until the following weekend, whichever comes first.

In most cases, the net result is that no harm occurs to a person who bumps, even face first, into a **spider web** – discounting the humiliation of having performed the web-face dance in public.

Chalk it up to living in the Midwest. It is the price that must be paid as a hiker, biker, jogger, homeowner, gardener or outdoor enthusiast. There ARE risks involved with exploring nature. Boldly going where no man has gone before exacts a price. Spider web-induced dancing is one cost.

Over 30,000 species of spiders have been described worldwide. While my son-in-law asserts that virtually every one of them has made a web on the very trail he is hiking, such is really not the case. Only about 3,000 species occur in the United States, and only about one third of those species construct webs. Even so, that still leaves plenty of spiders to torment trail blazers. Web-making spiders come in all sizes, shapes and colors. Some appear to be large enough to capture big birds, medium-size mammals and even small children. Others are very tiny, as small as $1/20^{th}$ of an inch in length. Each group of spiders has a unique life history and behavior. Some of the most unusual and colorful spiders, common in yards near homes at this time of year, are the orb-weaving spiders. Orb-weavers, often called garden spiders, weave an elaborate web to ensnare their prey. Such webs are perfect displays of biological architecture.

Spider webbing (silk) is one of the most amazing materials known to man. Different silks are made for different spider purposes, but in general they all begin as a liquid composed primarily of proteins produced in the silk glands within the spider's abdomen. The liquid silk is drawn out of the spinnerets at the rear-end of the abdomen and then hardens to form the silken thread upon which the web is formed. This process then allows for small liquid globules to be strategically placed by the spider in the web. These droplets are not stretched into strands, thus remain liquid and therefore sticky. The hardened webbing together with the sticky droplets are what catches the insect prey and are also what elicits the web-face dance in humans.

Spider webbing is an intricate marvel of engineering and is unequaled in the natural world as a means of capturing prey. (photo credit: Tim Gibb)

It has long been known that spider silk contains remarkable mechanical properties in terms of strength, resilience and flexibility. Pound for pound, natural spider silk is 35 times as tough (amount of energy per unit volume that a material can absorb before rupturing) and has a tensile strength (ability to stretch without breaking) of four times that of steel. This means that spider silk, based on weight, can absorb more than 100 times the impact of a .357 caliber bullet and could actually stop a moving train in its tracks. While the superior properties of spider silks are well known, as of yet there has been no way to produce spider silk in commercial quantities, and obtaining sufficient quantities of the material by collecting existing webs has been problematic. My uncooperative son-in-law is unwilling to intentionally plow head-first into spider webs and wait until people peel the sticky material from his face and ears – even for the sake of science. In addition, spider silk is a famously light material; a strand of spider silk long enough to wrap around the world would weigh less than 18 ounces. Think of the number of web-face dances required to harvest even an ounce of spider webbing.

Rearing spiders en masse and harvesting their silk is also stymied, mostly because spiders are cannibalistic – they do not do well in groups. To solve these problems, genetic engineering technologies are being explored. By genetically engineering spider silk-making genes into an organism which is already one of the most efficient commercial producers of silk — the domesticated silkworm — large quantities of spider silk may, in theory, be produced.

We use the term genetically engineered spider silk instead of synthetic spider silk because these materials are not synthetic; they are made by genetically engineered silkworms, and the fiber is composed entirely of protein produced naturally by the silkworm. They are synthetic spider silks only in the sense that they are not being produced by a spider, but by a much more efficient organism.

If one gets past the annoyance (think web-face dance) to take a close look at spiders, it quickly becomes apparent that spiders are truly fascinating and beneficial creatures. They are masters at catching insects, including mosquitoes, in their webs. There is no doubt that spiders account for significant insect control. True, there are some (very few) spiders, such as brown recluse and black widow, that have dangerous bites. In reality, however, the vast majority of spiders are not only harmless but are, in fact, beneficial. Finding them in a yard is a good thing. It means that the yard is a healthy environment.

Therefore, in nature, spiders should be left alone to do their thing. What little inconvenience they cause is more than made up for by the good that they do. Remember too that their annoyance is temporary. Spiders generally do not live past the fall.

IT'S TIME TO.....

By: Rosie Lerner, Purdue University Extension Office

HOME (Houseplants and indoor activities)

- Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day - for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. - for eight to 10 weeks until red bracts begin to show.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and allow an additional three to four weeks for blooming.
- Houseplants, especially those grown outdoors during the summer, commonly drop some or many of their leaves in response to the lower natural light intensity in autumn and reduced light intensity indoors.
- Water indoor plants less frequently, and discontinue fertilizer as plants slow down or stop growing for the winter season.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Keep plants, especially newly planted stock, well watered until ground freezes.
- Have soil ready to mound roses for winter protection. Do not mound or cover roses until after leaves drop and soil is near freezing, usually late November or early December.
- Strawberry plants need protection from winter's extremes, but applying winter mulch too early may cause crowns to rot. Apply winter protection when plants are dormant but before temperatures drop below 20 degrees F, usually late November or early December.
- Rake or shred large, fallen tree leaves such as maple, to prevent them from matting down and smothering grass. Raking smaller leaves, such as honey locust, is optional.
- *September and October are good months to apply broadleaf weed killers. Be sure to follow all label directions, and choose a calm day to prevent spray drift.*
- Continue mowing lawn as needed.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 degrees F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated, plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.
- Harvest Brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.
- Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.
- Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 degrees F for two to four weeks.
- Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.
- Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snows for insulation and moisture.
- Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's planting from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.
- Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.
- Plowing and incorporating organic matter in the fall avoids the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Fall-prepared soils also tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.
- Carve a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.
- Dig tender, garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Caladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost. Dig canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location.
- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.