November 2014 Newsletter

The summer garden chores aren't over when the last tomato is picked. Putting the garden to bed in the fall will give you a jump on next year's growing season.

- **Test your soil.** We can't stress this enough! Adding amendments to your soil in the fall will ensure that they are available in the spring for optimum plant growth.
- **Clean up the debris.** Pull up all dead and unproductive plants and add it to your compost bin. Many seasoned gardeners will have already removed old plant debris and planted cover crops to protect and enhance the soil.
- **Note to new gardeners:** Remove diseased or insect-infested plant material that may shelter overwintering states of these pests from the garden. This will reduce the potential for these disease problems from next year's garden. This debris should be bagged and put out for the trash and not put in the compost pile. Only really hot compost piles will kill off potential problems.
- **Don't leave the soil bare.** Cover the soil with shredded leaves or some other type of mulch to prevent erosion. Cover crops are preferred, but shredded leaves are a good alternative. Rake leaves into a loose pile and go over them with a lawnmower to cut them up. They will be much less likely to blow away if they are broken up. They can be worked into the soil next spring or seedlings can be planted through them. The mulch will act as a weed inhibitor.

Find more seasonal lawn tips

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**Featured Plant: Euphorbia ‘Mrs. Robb’s Bonnet’**

*Text and Photo by Ellen Nibali*

*euphorbia amygdaloides 'Robbiae'*

For gardeners on the lookout for plants with multi-season interest, this perennial euphorbia merits examination. In spring and summer, rosettes of leaves are a shiny deep green, a good backdrop for sprays of chartreuse flowers in late spring/early summer. In fall, it dazzles with rich purple shades, and it still provides structure in the winter garden. Hardy to zone 6, this 18-24” high euphorbia wants sun to part shade. Give it average garden moisture and soil, not too acidic. It will tolerate drought. A big plus—it’s deer resistant like most euphorbia. Do be careful of the stem sap, which can irritate skin. Wear gloves when handling it.

*More Featured Plants...*

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**Grow100 Winners!**

That's a wrap! We have our winners. We've got both the Period 3 favorite garden, plus the overall favorites for each garden type (Max Production, 4-Rs, and New to Gardening).

Check it out on the GIEI blog:

- Congratulations to Period 3 Winner - Pam Leifer
Beekeeping 101 - 2015 Session

Mike Embrey, University of Maryland Extension Apiculturist, will be offering a beginning beekeeping class at the Wye Research and Education Center in Queenstown, Maryland.

You will Learn:
- About bees in general
- About beekeeping equipment
- How and Where to set up and establish a hive
- How to use a smoker
- How to hive a package of bees
- About "b" pests and diseases
- About winterizing your bees

The opening session will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 9 AM to noon. Registration fee is $110, which includes the textbook, "The Beekeeper's Handbook, Third Edition" by Diana Sammataro. If you have your own book, the fee will be $80.

There will be a total of seven classes, the first five of which will be held on every other Saturday until April. The two final sessions will be held approximately the second week of August and the third week of September. These sessions will teach how to winterize your hives and how to protect your bees from diseases and pests.

For registration contact:
Debby Dant
Wye Research and Education Center
PO Box 169
Queenstown, MD 21658
410-827-8056 x115
Fax: 410-827-9039
ddant@umd.edu

Registration deadline is January 10, 2015. Make checks payable to University of Maryland.

For program information, contact Mike Embrey, 410-827-8056 x148, membrey@umd.edu.
Q: Can you explain why there are some "super" sized oak leaves falling?

I've been raking in an area next to a wooded area with a mix of oak, tulip poplar, maple, locust and sycamore trees. Some oak leaves (red or black oak maybe are up to 16 - 18" long mixed in with ordinary leaves. I haven't seen these large leaves on the trees but they are scattered in with all the rest on the ground. What's up with the huge leaves?

A: The super-sized leaves most likely came from a young oak tree growing in the shade of the forest. Because they are shaded and not yet part of the greater canopy, the leaves grow extra large in order to absorb as much sunlight as they possibly can, which is needed for photosynthesis. Leaves grown in sun do not need to be as large.

This ability to change based on environmental conditions is scientifically referred to as 'phenotypic plasticity'. You can find out more about oak tree leaf growth on the web by entering search terms like "oak leaf biology" using a search engine like Google.
Lawn fertilizer reminder!
The last day homeowners can fertilize their lawns is November 15th!

How to Fertilize Your Lawn Responsibly PDF

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