November 2016

Have you seen this?

Snowy Tree Crickets

Those chirping crickets counting down the days of autumn may be snowy tree crickets, as well as the better-known black field crickets. Snowy tree crickets are actually pale green, not white, with slim bodies. At night, these omnivores hunt for insect prey or nibble plants. Leaves may appear ragged. Tree crickets are heard often, because they favor trees, shrubbery, and vines at wood edges and around houses. They produce one generation a year, and are active July through October. Only the males chirp, rubbing together teeth-like structures on their wings. These "thermometer crickets" chirp at a rate correlating with temperature. Count the chirps in 13 seconds and add 40 to determine degrees Fahrenheit.

Learn more about Crickets: Publication EL 50 (PDF)

Deer are here to stay...Deal with it!

It comes as no surprise to most of you that...
deer feed on the buds, leaves, and stems of many ornamental plants. High populations can cause serious damage to farms, orchards, nurseries, and suburban properties. Deer damage may first appear as general thinning on lower of branches, especially on yews.

Deer can also severely damage shrubs and trees by rubbing their antlers to remove the velvet covering. Antler rubbing usually occurs on small flexible saplings, tree trunks, and limbs.

Begin repellants or scare devices as soon as you notice deer activity. Control is more likely to be successful if deer do not form a habit of browsing on your property. For best results, alternate deer control methods.

To determine the most effective control, consider the pattern of damage, the deer population, site characteristics, and the economic impact of the damage. In general, summer damage is less extensive than winter damage, and can be controlled using repellants, scare devices, or low cost temporary fencing. Permanent fencing, to prevent long term damage to trees and shrubs, may be the only realistic solution to winter deer browsing.

Effective controls for antler rubbing damage include fencing, scare devices, and tree protectors. Fencing and other deer control methods are discussed in detail in (PDF) Bulletin 354, "Controlling Deer Damage in Maryland." Tree protectors, such as plastic tree wrap, tubes, or 4’ woven wire cylinders, provide a physical barrier to prevent damage. Repellants are not an effective control against antler rubbing.

→ Read more on deer control

Looking back at the 2016 growing season

*Erica Smith takes a look at the 2016 growing season. Read the full post on the GIEI Blog.*

Now that we’ve all taken a breather and are enjoying the cool weather of fall, so much as I personally would like to forget a lot of 2016’s gardening issues, it’s worth taking a look back while it’s still fresh. Here, in brief, are some of the things I’ll be mulling over and discussing with fellow gardeners over the winter.

1) Improving timing of tomato planting.
2) Using shade cloth with tomatoes.
3) Using cover crops not only in empty beds but in between growing plants.
4) Getting after those pest insects.
5) Dealing with rodents!
6) Getting those fall vegetables to grow despite heat and drought in late summer.

→ Read on
Q&A

We had ‘Knock Out’ roses planted this year by a landscaping company. They did beautifully and bloomed for a really long time. Is there something I need to do for them this fall to prepare them for winter and when and how do I prune them?

A

‘Knock Out’ roses are very hardy in Maryland. They do not need any special care for the winter. In dry falls, water them deeply before the ground freezes. They are pruned in March. Prune out any winter damaged, crossing, or dead canes. You can then prune them back by about 1/3 and shape them as desired. Prune canes back to a major stem slightly above an outward facing bud. Deadheading the spent blooms during the season is not necessary, but doing so can stimulate the shrub to produce new growth and flower buds.
Watch video on Early Spring Pruning of Roses

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension’s experts have answers! Send in your questions and photos to Ask an Expert.

Have a suggestion for a topic to cover in the HGIC newsletter? Send in your suggestions.