October 2016

Gourds Gone Wild

At the end of this fall season, instead of trashing your gourds, let them surprise you for next year. Gourd plants have the habit of hybridizing, i.e. interbreeding with whatever related plant is handy. Their seeds can have some characteristics from each parent and can be full of surprises.

The gourds pictured sprouted where last year's gourds were tossed around to see what would happen this year. This plant germinated at the base of a dwarf Alberta spruce and climbed merrily over it, with no harm to the spruce and to the entertainment of the gardeners.

---More on cross-pollination

Brown marmorated stink bugs - Are looking for places to overwinter indoors.

Ornamental cherry trees - Have experienced premature leaf drop again this year.

Fertilizing Lawns and Protecting the Chesapeake Bay - Now that we have gotten rain, fertilize your lawn for the fall to help recover from summer stress.

Article

Repair Your Lawn

Fall is THE time to repair a cool-season lawn. Cool-season
The most prevalent grass species used in Maryland are Kentucky bluegrass, creeping red fescue, K-31 tall fescue, and turf-type tall fescues. All lawns suffer varying degrees of damage in the summer. Fall is the recommended time to repair a lawn for several reasons: 1) Cooler temperatures allow the grass to recuperate from summer stress, and help young grass seedlings get established. 2) New roots and shoots known as "tillers" naturally develop this time of year. 3) There is more rainfall to help a new lawn become established.

Here is a quick checklist to help you get the job done:

1. If your lawn's soil is compacted, aeration is the first step. Lawn aerating machines can be rented at many hardware stores.
2. For the best results when seeding, buy Maryland certified seed and University of MD recommended varieties.
3. A very important step in lawn care and other gardening is to monitor and correct your soil's fertility. A soil test should be performed once every three years.
4. If broadleaf weeds are a problem (i.e. dandelion, plantain, ground ivy, etc.), control them with spot applications of a selective liquid broadleaf weed herbicide.
5. Whether over-seeding or starting a new lawn from scratch, it's important to have good seed to soil contact. Prepare a good seed bed by loosening the soil surface prior to sowing grass seed.
6. Apply granular fertilizer and lime according to the soil test recommendation. Remember to sweep fertilizer and lime granules off of paved surfaces back onto the lawn to prevent their washing into storm drains.
7. Cover new seed with peat moss or straw and water daily until it sprouts.
8. Once the new grass has sprouted, reduce the frequency of watering but increase the amount of water applied per watering. 9. After the seed has germinated and it is time to mow, maintain it by mowing at the proper height. Mow frequently enough so that no more than one-third of blade is removed per mowing, and keep the grass at a height of 3 inches.

By Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus, University of MD

View more HGIC info on lawns

Plant your trees and shrubs soon!

Autumn is a good time to plant bare-root stock. Soil temperatures and moisture levels encourage active root growth at these times of year and lower air temperatures and dormant crowns help to minimize transplant shock.

Make sure to take a look at our Trees & Shrubs section for information on selecting, purchasing, care, and planting of woody plants.

Watch our video on planting a container grown tree
This Saturday, Oct 8th: AGNR Open House

SAVE THE DATE! The 2016 AGNR Open House will be held on Saturday, October 8 from 10 AM - 3 PM. We hope to see you there! Fall is a busy time, but we hope you will mark your calendars and make time to attend the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) Open House.

The 2016 event will be held on Saturday, October 8, from 10:00 am. to 3:00 p.m., at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center, Clarksville Facility at 4240 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, in Howard County, Maryland. It's FREE and open to the public.

More Info

Featured Video

Master Gardener Youth Garden Program

Take a look into the Montgomery County Master Gardeners’ Youth Garden Program.

View on YouTube

Q&A

My husband noticed yellowjackets flying in and out of a gap between the vinyl siding on our house. He sprayed wasp and hornet spray and sealed the opening and we don’t see any yellowjackets outside. However, we’re sure there are live yellowjackets still inside the wall. How long will it take for them and for the hive to die?

Normally if a yellowjacket nest is located outdoors, after the first few hard frosts the occupants of the nest will die. The queen will leave and overwinter.
elsewhere. The nest is not reused the following year. But in your case, since it sounds like they are nesting in a protected place; the workers may survive the winter. We'd suggest doing some investigation. You should hire a pest control company who has experience with this type of problem as yellowjackets can be very aggressive when protecting their nest. They can also do interior damage to the walls, which is another reason to take action.

→ More info on yellowjackets

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.