

Welcome to the fifth Issue of the Horticulture Committee's Quarterly Bulletin!

Autumn Perennial Garden Planting & Maintenance

September:

- As weather cools, garden bed preparation and planting can begin again.
- Divide and transplant spring- and summer-flowering perennials, including peonies, poppies and bearded iris, so that plants can establish before winter. Be sure to keep new plants moist.
- Generally, no more fertilizer should be applied this season.
- Continue weeding and apply touch-up mulch if needed.
- The preferred time of year to seed lawns in Connecticut is August 15-October 1 ("Connecticut Gardener" recommends Labor Day through October 15th) when the air temperature is cooler and the soil temperature is still warm. These two conditions favor root growth and development of cool-season turfgrass, which are the best for our Connecticut climate. The main cool-season turfgrasses suitable for CT lawns are Kentucky bluegrass, fine-leaved and tall fescues, and perennial ryegrass.

October:

- All dividing, planting and transplanting should be finished by October.
- Continue to keep new plants watered if the weather is dry. (Established gardens may need water too, so they can go into winter with sufficient moisture.)
- Some perennials may turn to mush at this time and can be pruned if desired. Otherwise, wait for several killing frosts, and prune in November.
- Beds can be prepared for spring planting throughout the month.
 - "If possible, begin preparing the soil in the fall before planting in the spring. Have the soil tested. The results will indicate what amendments need to be added during fall reparation and how much fertilizer needs to be added in the spring. Lime takes up to six months to adjust the soil pH, so it is applied early if possible... Adding organic matter may be necessary or helpful to improve the soil." —Text from the UConn Master Gardener program.

November:

- Topdressing with organic matter, if not done in the spring, can be done after autumn cleanup.
- Turn off all water and irrigation systems and drain all hoses.
- Clean and oil tools after all cleanup is complete.
- Clean all pots/trays to be used for spring seedlings.
- **See the excellent article below, "Putting the Garden to Bed for the Winter" by Judy Whitehead**

Source: “The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust.



Taken at Natureworks on August 8, 2017 by Judy Whitehead

Milkweed and Monarchs

In the 1990s, hundreds of millions of monarch butterflies migrated from the U.S. and Canada down to central Mexico. Researchers and scientists estimate that only a small fraction of monarchs remain now, mostly due to loss of habitat and use of pesticides. Protecting and restoring habitat for monarch butterflies in an array of landscapes and in our own gardens is urgently needed.

Asclepias [milkweed] is a large genus with 73 species native to the United States. Monarch butterflies use approximately 30 of these species as host plants, depending on the region. Milkweed is the only plant that hosts monarch butterfly caterpillars, and it sustains

monarchs in each of its life stages. Also, milkweeds produce a chemical that makes monarchs toxic and bitter-tasting to some of their predators.

Planting milkweed is an effective way to help monarchs. Here are milkweed species for our northeast region:

- Common (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- Swamp (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Whorled (*Asclepias verticillate*)
- Poke (*Asclepias exaltata*)

DO NOT plant tropical milkweed [*Asclepias curassavica*] because tropical types host a parasite that infects and harms monarchs.

To learn more details, here are just a few sites to visit:

xerces.org/monarchs

monarchjointventure.org

monarchwatch.org

Note: native plant vendors can be found under “Habitat Needs” of the “Monarch” tab at:

monarchjointventure.org

Provided by Denise Forrest

Lovely Native Lilies

Most lilies in our gardens are hybrids. However, there are a few lilies that are native in our New England region and bloom in varying conditions. Since they are best planted in the fall, now is the time to consider adding them to your property.

Lilium canadense (commonly known as Canada Lily or Meadow Lily) features whorled leaf pattern and nodding flowers with up to 20 pendulous flowers per plant. It grows 3- 5 feet tall, blooms June-July in full sun to part sun and needs moist rich soil. Color varieties include yellow, orange, or red with brown speckles. Bulbs multiply to form colonies. Plant in fall.

Lilium superbum (commonly known as Turk’s Cap Lily) is sometimes referred to as American Tiger Lily (however the other Tiger Lily comes from Asia). In the wild, Turk’s Cap Lily lives in wet meadows. Each plant can produce numerous flowers, and it is the tallest of native lilies. It grows 4-6 feet tall, blooms in July in full sun to part sun and needs moist soil that should not dry out. Color varieties are yellow or orange with maroon spots. These flowers attract hummingbirds. Plant bulbs 5-6” deep in fall. (Epithet of its botanical name means “superb”.)

Lilium philadelphicum (known as Wood Lily) attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. It is a small plant 6”-24” tall, and blooms July-August with 1-5 flowers per stalk. It can tolerate full sun to full shade and needs rich, dry, well-drained soil. It is a bulb plant that colonizes in drier soils. Note: protect bulbs from voles with hardware cloth around newly planted

corms. (Interesting fun fact – Wood Lily bulbs were harvested by Native Americans for food and medicine.)

Erythronium americanum (known as Trout Lily) is a member of the Liliaceae plant family but is not a true lily since it does not belong to the *Lilium* genus. However, it is worthy to include because of its lily-like appearance. Trout lilies grow wild in deciduous forests and are good for woodland gardens and damp locations. They naturalize easily, growing from corms with stolons that allow them to spread to form colonies. This dainty bell-shaped yellow flower grows 6" tall, blooms April or May in full shade to part shade, in rich moist humusy soil that is slightly acidic. Plants are dormant in summer. The common name is derived from its green and brown spotted leaves that resemble the Brown Trout. Plant bulbs in fall, spacing 4"-6" apart, 2"-3" deep.

Provided by Denise Forrest

Fun Flower Facts and Lore

- Chrysanthemums originated in China in the 15 Century BC, primarily for medicinal use.
- Wild Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is an invasive climbing vine that escaped cultivation years ago. It is able to grow up to 30 feet in a single season.
- Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*) grows wild from Canada to the Carolinas and across the northern United States. Lore describes a Native American named Joe-Pye who used it to cure fevers; and early American colonists used it to treat typhus.
- Narcissus 'Mrs. R.O. Backhouse' was listed in a Scheeper's catalog in the 1930s for more than \$30 dollars per bulb – during the height of the Depression.

Provided by Denise Forrest

"Echinacea Isn't Just as Nature Made It Anymore"

There was an article on Sunday, August 29, in the New York Times (Real Estate Section - In The Garden), about Echinacea and its many cultivars. A study in 2020 compared 75 kinds of coneflowers. In this most recent study, a "pollinator survey" was used to tally insect visitation (by bees, wasps and butterflies). Many of the top-performing cultivars "didn't show a lot of human intervention"; in other words, they were pretty native. Echinacea is an American genus. The traditionally colored *Echinacea purpurea* 'Pica Bella' was the "absolute top performer." "The white-flowered 'Fragrant Angel,' also a *purpurea*, averaged by far the most butterfly visits of any plant in the trial, and was a hit with bees and wasps, too. ...Another highly rated white variety was 'Snow Cone', a compact plant with the species *Echinacea tennesseensis* in its parentage." Pollinators were less drawn to the hybridized plants and, in fact, some of these cultivated plants offer less pollen, less nectar and usually fewer seeds. *E. purpurea* has undergone subtler changes than those cultivars with dramatic double flowers. In the wild form, what we call petals are narrower and longer. So, before you shop, know which cultivars best support pollinators. The article listed Broken Arrow Nursery as one of the nurseries that carries

Echinacea purpurea 'Pica Bella' and suggests you ask your garden center for it. Hopefully consumer demand will help bring it back into wider supply.

Source: New York Times Article, August 29, 2021 (Real Estate Section – In The Garden)

Provided by Sue Kelley

Putting the Garden to Bed for the Winter

When you put your own garden to bed this fall, keep in mind the following tips.

Fall Perennial Cutbacks

The first task most gardeners consider when preparing the garden for winter is cutting back perennials. While cutting everything to the ground may give the garden a tidy look, it does a disservice to wildlife species that can make use of some plants in the winter. Leaving perennial seed heads provides natural foraging habitat for native wildlife. In the winter months when food is scarce, gardens full of withered fruit and dried seed heads can provide birds with a reliable food source. Seed-eating songbirds such as finches, sparrows, chickadees, juncos, and jays will make use of many common garden plants. When cleaning up the garden, prioritize removing and discarding diseased top growth, but leave healthy seed heads standing.

Beyond providing habitat, limiting fall clean-up can also provide winter interest in the garden. Dried stalks and leaves add a different dimension to the garden once the snow begins to fall. In particular, ornamental grasses add color, movement, and texture to the winter landscape.

All perennials left standing for the winter should be cut to the ground in the spring before new growth starts.

Leaves

October is also the time when the majority of deciduous trees and shrubs lose their leaves. Leaves can account for a huge amount of yard waste that must be dealt with before winter to avoid smothering the lawn, promoting snow mold diseases, and encouraging rodent activity. Although fallen leaves may seem like a nuisance, they are also an incredible resource that can be used as a mulch or soil amendment. There are a few different ways of managing fallen leaves in the yard and garden.

1. Rake up and compost or discard the leaves. Composting leaves is a good way to recycle nutrients, and compost can be used to improve the soil.
2. Mulch the leaves in place with a lawn mower. This not only cuts down on labor, but also returns nitrogen to the soil as the chipped leaves decompose. Mulching leaves into the lawn works very well as long as it is done several times throughout the season. Once a thick layer of leaves builds up, it is nearly impossible to get all of the pieces to filter down between the grass blades. At that point, it is much easier to simply rake them up and add them to the compost.
3. Save the leaves to use as mulch. Leaves can make a wonderful mulch for annual, perennial, and vegetable gardens if they are chipped into small pieces. A thick layer of chipped leaves can be just as effective at suppressing weeds and conserving soil moisture as bark mulch, and they usually break down within a season and build soil organic matter.

Pull Up Annuals and Vegetables

After the first killing frost it's time to remove annual flowers and vegetable plants from the garden. Not only is this debris unsightly, but if left in place it can potentially contribute to disease issues next year.

Two common fungal diseases of tomato, early blight and Septoria leafspot, overwinter in the soil of crop debris. Pulling up and discarding all parts of infected plants helps reduce infection the following season, particularly in small gardens that do not have much opportunity for crop rotation.

If desired, some annual plants can be successfully saved from season to season by either digging them up or taking cuttings before frost. For instance, coleus can easily be saved from year to year by potting up entire plants and keeping them indoors over the winter, or by rooting cuttings. Other plants that can be kept with relative ease include geraniums, fuchsia, lantana, begonias, and impatiens.

Dig Up Tender Bulbs

Many tender "bulbs" such as cannas, dahlias, and gladiolus can also be dug up and kept from year to year with relative ease if they are treated properly. Wait to dig up bulbs until the top growth dies back or is killed by the first frost.

1. Use a garden fork or a spade to loosen the soil around the entire plant.
2. Gently lift the bulbs from the ground, being careful not to cut or skin them in the process. Any damage allows disease organisms to enter, leading to rot and storage losses.
3. Clean the soil from the bulbs. Swish them around in a tub of water or use a garden hose to wash away any clumps of soil before allowing them to dry and cure.
4. Place the bulbs in a well-ventilated area with a constant temperature between 60 and 70° and out of direct sunlight for a few days. Always remember to label all stored bulbs.

Once the bulbs have cured, they should be packed in moistened sphagnum peat, vermiculite, or wood shavings. A little moisture goes a long way. If the storage medium is too wet, the bulbs will likely rot. The bulbs can be placed inside plastic bags or cardboard boxes and then covered with peat or vermiculite.

Protect Vulnerable Trees and Shrubs

Some perennials and shrubs can benefit from a little extra winter protection. Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidi*) and bluebeard (*Caryopteris sp.*) don't always make it through the winter unless they are given a defense. Sometimes all it takes is adding an extra layer of mulch over the roots to insulate them from extreme cold. Periods of freezing and thawing can also heave new plantings from the ground, and in the process exposes the roots to drying winter winds. Mulching insulates the soil and prevents frost heaving. At least two inches of woodchips, shredded leaves, or straw should be applied over the root zone, taking care not to pile mulch against the plant's trunks and crowns.

Broad leafed evergreens, such as rhododendrons, and other marginally hardy deciduous shrubs are especially susceptible to drying out in the winter months. Even in cold weather, buds, leaves, and needles lose water in a process called transpiration. Water loss is greatest during periods of strong winds, and mild sunny weather. When the ground is frozen, water is largely unavailable to roots, and plants are unable to make up the water they've lost. When water is transpired faster than it is taken up, the leaves begin to desiccate and turn brown.

Shrubs such as hydrangeas and [roses](#) may produce more flowers if they are wrapped with burlap or surrounded by a cage filled with coarse mulching material (like peat moss, shredded leaves, or weed-free straw).

Wait to Prune

Although it may be tempting to pull out the pruning saw and loppers after the leaves have fallen, it is almost always best to wait to prune trees and shrubs until late winter or early spring. By waiting to prune until late dormant season (February to early April), gardeners avoid a number of physiological and disease issues. Pruning in the fall often causes dieback at the pruning sites, as new growth at wounds is more susceptible to damage from severe winter temperatures.

When apple trees are pruned in the late dormant season, new wounds are only exposed for a short time before active growth starts and healing can begin. Some disease issues can also be avoided by pruning in the late winter or early spring. Trees are much less likely to become infected by pathogens, such as fire blight, when they are dormant because disease causing agents such as bacteria and fungi are inactive at that time of year as well.

Source: Blog of Univ of New Hampshire Extension. 'Tips for the Home Gardener' Emma Eler, Landscape and Greenhouse Field Specialist

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Beech Leaf Disease



Beech leaf disease (BLD) was first identified in Ohio in 2012, and first verified in Connecticut in 2019 in Fairfield County. It has since been found in all counties except Hartford. The disease affects American beech, and European, Oriental, and Chinese varieties. Infected trees have been observed in forests and landscaped settings.

It was confirmed in 2020 that the cause of BLD is a foliar nematode, a microscopic worm. It sometimes overwinters in leaf litter, but more often in leaf buds. At this time, scientists are still researching the spread and transmission of BLD, and how to manage it.

Early symptoms of BLD are seen in leaves and buds. Dark green bands are visible between the veins on the underside of leaves. These bands can later turn yellow or brown. Eventually, the affected leaves wither, curl, and develop a leathery texture. Last summer's heat and drought and this year's dry spring, caused more harm to the mature beeches and young saplings in CT. Affected trees with a heavy infestation will ultimately die within 3-5 years.

The loss of beech trees will impact the forest ecosystem. Beech nuts are an important food source for woodland birds and mammals, including squirrels, deer, and black bear. Beeches also provide nesting sites for songbirds and small animals. Their leaf litter enriches the soil nutrients in the forest, and their canopies shade understory plants.

Unfortunately, no effective control or eradication measures have been developed. BLD is spreading quickly to the East coast, and quarantines and regulations may be required to contain the spread.

Sources: CAES and www.umaine.edu

Provided by Judy van Heiningen

Horticulture 2020-2021 Challenge - Garlic

For all of you who accepted the challenge to grow garlic, we would like to hear what your experience was—all the good, bad and the ugly so please bring a sample of your results to our September meeting.

Horticulture 2020-2021 Challenge - Gourds

For all of you who accepted the challenge to grow gourds, attached is a link to our gourd handout. <https://gcmct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GCM-Ornamental-Gourd-Challenge-Handout-April-2021.pdf> The large bottleneck and birdhouse gourds should stay on the vine until they are no longer bright green. Expect them to turn brown. Same with the luffa gourds. The ornamental gourds can be harvested when their stems turn brown. We are asking you to bring in samples of your gourds to the November GCM meeting.

Horticulture 2021-2022 Challenge - Bulbs

How timely to have Brent from Brent & Becky's as our September Program speaker! This year we thought it might be a good time to include early ephemerals such as Common Snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*) and more TBD. The Horticulture Committee will select 3 or 4 different types of bulbs and distribute them in October or as soon as we receive them. Also, we will include bulbs in our March, April (Tri-Club) and July Horticulture Exhibits to broadly include any bulb you might select or already have in your garden.

GCM MEMBER SURVEY

Time for another survey:

1. What horticulture workshops would you like us to offer?
2. What articles would you like to see in the Bulletin?
3. What can we do to help you bring in plant specimens either for exhibits or just for fun?
4. Do you have any “learnings” to share from this year’s gardening experience?

Send your suggestions and comments to the Horticulture Chair, Sue Kelley, at kelleys4@gmail.com. The Horticulture Committee will review everyone’s comments and share the feedback in our next Bulletin.

Because there are so many talented gardeners in the club, we invite you to submit Horticulture information you’d like to share. We are particularly interested in documenting our collective horticulture knowledge.

Horticulture Committee: Susan Kelley (Chair), Catherine Ferguson, Denise Forrest, Judith Tosiello, Judy Van Heiningen, Judy Whitehead and Marleen Pacelli