



Acreage Living

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Acreage Living is published bi-monthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension Office to be placed on the mailing list or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.

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End-of-Season Sales Stretch Landscaping Budgets

By Mary Ann deVries, ISU Polk County Extension Horticulturist

One option to stretch a landscaping budget is to buy landscape plants found at end-of-season sales.

My husband planted an orchard from end-of-season specials, many of which came with no label. If you have limited space, planting unlabeled trees is not something you'll want to do. Dr. Jeff Iles of Iowa State University's Horticulture Department equates a tree with no label to going on a blind date. You never know how it's going to turn out. But we have lots of space and it's great fun watching the trees grow and develop. We have learned about the characteristics of each tree – how it grows, what the fruit is like, when the fruit ripens.

When buying bargain-basement beauties, here are some things to look for:

1. A reasonable number of green leaves, free from leaf spots or scorching
2. No cracks, cankers, gouges, or other bark damage on the trunk or main branches
3. Soil that appears moist and ample for the root ball
4. A general idea of how big the plant will grow and how much sun it needs; if there's no label and you don't recognize the plant, pass it up.

Mulching and watering summer plantings are extremely important to their success. A shade cage over the top of new plants or transplants for a week or two provides relief from the hot sun and harsh winds that can dry out a young plant in only one day.

With careful selection and diligent after-planting care, bargain-priced landscape plants are budget-friendly options for new acreage owners.

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Diesel in the Winter

By Shawn Shouse, ISU
Extension Ag Engineering
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If you have equipment that uses diesel fuel, here are some winter facts you need to know. Diesel fuel contains paraffin wax, which for common #2D diesel fuel, remains liquid above 10 degrees F. At cooler temperatures, the wax begins to solidify into crystals. Below about 0 degrees F, the crystals become so large that the fuel becomes too thick to pour and the fuel system may plug completely.

For cold temperature operation, #1D diesel fuel is refined to have less wax and will remain liquid at temperatures down to -40 degrees F. In northern states, an appropriate "winter blend" of #2 and #1 diesel is available from fuel suppliers.

Although most diesel engines sold in Iowa are equipped to use winter blend fuel, check your equipment operator's manual to make sure. Because #1D fuel has less energy per gallon and provides less lubrication for the fuel system, excessive use of #1 fuel is not recommended.

Fuel additives are available to lower the minimum operating temperature of the fuel. Check with your fuel supplier before adding these products to your fuel.

Identify Signs of Meth Production and Use in Rural Areas

By Terry Finnerty, ISU Extension Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist

I live on an acreage outside one of central Iowa's larger urban communities (not Des Moines). It is one of the many communities in Iowa and the Midwest plagued by methamphetamine production in rural areas. I have seen in ditches transparent grocery bags stuffed with drug paraphernalia, sections of garden hose and aquarium tubing, and propane canisters with blue-stained valves.

These are the tools of methamphetamine production, which often are discarded in ditches and waterways. Not only does methamphetamine cause addiction and suffering among its users, it also creates an environment that is unsafe and unhealthy for others.

What can you do? First, be aware. Methamphetamine, also known as meth, crank, ice, and chalk, is an extremely powerful and highly addictive stimulant that alters the chemistry of the brain and causes severe damage to internal organs.

Products used in methamphetamine production (things to look for) include anhydrous ammonia (stored in portable propane canisters), ephedrine or pseudoephedrine (found in over-the-counter cold medicines), drain cleaner, stove fuel, ether-based starting fluids, red-stained coffee filters, aquarium and garden hoses, and flashlight batteries (peeled open to extract the lithium cores). Other evidence of meth lab activity in your area may include a strong odor that smells like cat urine, ether, ammonia or acetone around buildings or vehicles, attempts to reinforce doors and blacken out windows, and unusual amounts of activity into and out of residences.

Next, be wary. Meth users can be extremely agitated, paranoid, and violent. Never confront a suspected user or producer, and never touch discarded materials. Notify a local law enforcement agency immediately of your suspicions.

Finally, be involved. Methamphetamine activity is not going away, and law enforcement agencies rely upon local citizens to help them with their efforts to eliminate this problem. If you suspect methamphetamine production in your neighborhood, contact your nearest law enforcement agency.

For more information, visit the following Web sites:

www.streetdrugs.org

www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

www.lifeormeth.org

Resting Pastures—the Key to More Productive Pastures

By Carl Neifert, ISU Extension Livestock Field Specialist

Giving your pastures a three-week vacation between grazing periods is a great way to produce more forage for livestock and produce a more nutrient-rich pasture. This vacation, better known as rotational grazing, allows a “rest” period for pasture grasses and legumes to recover and rebuild plant vigor. There is, therefore, more leaf area to capture sunlight, and thus more solar energy converted to plant energy.

As you rotate and rest pastures, the number of pasture plant species will increase and create a more diverse plant population. This will result in more pasture productivity throughout the grazing season.

Confining animals to a smaller pasture area for a shorter time will encourage animals to graze a higher percentage of the available forage in each pasture. It will also allow the remainder of the pasture to recover from grazing and hoof damage and to regrow at a faster rate. Animals, especially horses, are notorious spot grazers if not forced to eat all species in the pasture.

Electric fencing can make light work of subdividing grazing areas into paddocks so that pasture plants can rest and recover. Making water available to all paddocks can be expensive.

Using temporary watering systems (heavy duty garden hose or plastic pipe above ground) can make providing water for each paddock a workable option. Be creative. Don't let current water resources or current fences limit your efforts to divide pastures into paddocks and rotationally graze.

A rotational pasture design should fit your land resources and your management style. Pastures don't need to be uniform in size. Fences should be placed by topography as much as possible. Low wet areas should be fenced separately from hilltops. Similar vegetation should be fenced together. The rate of rotation per paddock will vary, but the main goal is to provide a three-week rest period per paddock, before returning to that paddock to graze. Pasture rotation will need to be faster in the early spring when growth is lush.



Another goal is to not graze plants too short. Begin grazing cool season grasses (orchard grass, brome grass) at 8-10” height and don't graze below 4” height. Begin grazing bluegrass at 6-8” height and don't graze below 2”.

Pasture plants that have begun to flower or head out are done growing. Those plants should be mowed to stimulate new plant growth.

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Winterizing Your Landscape

By Bill Denton, Master Gardener



Many of us spend a considerable amount of time in the spring and summer months working on our home landscape. Trees are pruned and sprayed, lawns are fertilized and neatly mowed and gardens hoed and weeded. A neatly manicured home landscape is not only beautiful to see, but tends to reflect on the personality and pride of the homeowner. However, we cannot work all summer to keep our landscape in the best health and appearance only to neglect it during the harsh winter months.

A basic principle we should always follow when speaking of winter hardiness is to always select trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, and vegetables that are recommended for growing in your region of the state. Once you have selected a hardy variety, there are a few basic steps to winterize your home landscape from the harsh effects of Iowa weather. In Iowa, winterizing is usually done from late October through late November.

TREES. Dead branches on shrubs should be pruned so that

heavy snows do not break down weak areas. Young trees that are still fragile can be protected from winds by a lean-to made from stakes and burlap. A chicken wire cylinder or burlap wrapped around the trunk can keep rabbits and deer from chewing on the bark. It can also prevent the bark from cracking due to large temperature changes between daytime sunlight and nighttime freezing.

Trees and shrubs should be allowed to acclimate somewhat to the cold fall nights and then watered thoroughly before the ground freezes for the winter. This is especially true if we have not had a lot of fall rain. The entire canopy should be given a slow, gentle soaking including the root area.

LAWNS. We can winterize our lawns by cutting the grass shorter. The last mowing should be about 2 inches. The fallen leaves should be raked to prevent any damage to grass from being smothered by leaf piles or diseases introduced to grass from the dead leaves. This is also a good time to help your lawn's root system by fertilizing. Check out pm 1447e, Responsible Use of Nitrogen Fertilizers on Lawn, available at your local Extension office.

VEGETABLES. Vegetable gardens should be cleaned thoroughly and all healthy plants and vines put in the compost pile. Any

diseased plants should be destroyed. The garden should be tilled to help discourage plant diseases and overwintering insects. Tilling the garden in the fall also makes the soil easier to work in the spring.

PERENNIALS. Perennial gardens should be cleaned thoroughly and all dead plants and leaves raked up and discarded or composted. Any diseased leaves should be destroyed so the health of good plants will not be affected. The plants should be mulched with about three inches of straw or leaves that are free from any disease or fungus. The main reason for winter mulch is to protect plant roots from heaving due to warming and cooling of the soil. The mulch should be put on after the ground freezes.

These few measures can go a long way toward saving your home landscapes from the damage that can be caused by winter harshness. Hopefully, all of your favorite plants will be healthy and ready to greet you come spring!

References used for this article can be found at:

www.extension.iastate.edu/newsrel/1999/oct99/oct9919.html,
www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/preparingforwinter.html

Lingo Lexicon

By Shawn Shouse, ISU
Extension Ag Engineering
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Warm Season Grasses *n*: grass species that are well adapted to climates where summer temperatures are high, especially nighttime temperatures in July.

Many warm season species are native to the great plains of north America. For this reason, the term “native grasses” is sometimes (incorrectly) used interchangeably with warm season grasses. There are warm season grasses that are not native (crabgrass) and there are native grasses that are cool season (wheatgrass and wildrye).

Common examples of warm season grasses include big bluestem, little bluestem, indiagrass, switchgrass, sideoats grama, blue grama, and buffalograss.

Compared to cool season grasses such as bluegrass, fescue, and bromegrass, warm season grasses tend to have less growth early in the cool spring and very late in the fall, but significantly more growth during the hot late summer and early fall.

Warm season grasses tend to have deeper root systems, often making them more drought-tolerant than cool season grasses.

(This article will appear occasionally to define common environmental terms)

Understanding Planning and Zoning: Part II

By Terry Finnerty, ISU Extension
Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist

The *Code of Iowa*, section 335.8, gives county boards of supervisors the authority to create planning commissions for most county land-use issues. Only a planning commission can conduct planning and zoning studies.

County planning commissions, also called planning and zoning commissions, are advisory committees appointed by boards of supervisors to make planning and zoning recommendations. Service is voluntary; in Iowa, members typically serve three to five-year terms. No previous experience is required. Most commissions meet monthly, and members are expected to read and analyze plan proposals in advance. Typical activities for planning and zoning commissions include:

- developing and maintaining a comprehensive plan to guide the future development of a community or county,
- developing zoning ordinances and zoning districts,
- holding public hearings on proposed zoning plans,
- hearing subdivision matters,
- determining if proposed projects are consistent with the comprehensive plan,
- consulting with people about implementing changes to the comprehensive and other specific plans, and
- providing information to the governing body about how to implement the comprehensive plan.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment, another voluntary body appointed by county boards of supervisors, is responsible for reviewing the county planning commission’s actions based on how it interprets zoning ordinances and planning regulations. Appeals to zoning ordinances are made to this board. If the board of adjustment’s decision reverses the original decision by the planning commission, the matter is submitted to the board of supervisors. The board may accept the decision of the board of adjustment or remand it back for further study. If the applicants are dissatisfied with a decision at this level, they may take the matter to the district court.

For more information about planning and zoning, visit your county government offices or contact Stuart Huntington, ISU Extension Planning and Development Specialist, at (515) 294-2973.

Publications in Iowa State University Extension’s land-use series are available at www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs or from your local Extension office:

The Local Planning Commission: Roles and Responsibilities, PM 1868d

The Comprehensive Plan, PM 1868f

The Zoning Ordinance, PM 1868g