



# Acreage Answers

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## Do Your Tree A Favor, Mulch It!

by Mary Ann deVries, Polk County Horticulturist

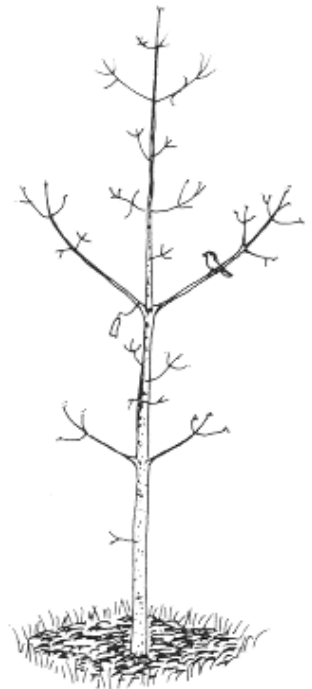
Iowans know that trees are valuable assets. In fact, if your home is surrounded by cornfields, the comfort trees provide on hot summer days is absolutely priceless. That's why it's worth a little extra time and effort to mulch the trees you care about. The benefits are many.

During hot weather, a layer of organic mulch around a tree conserves moisture and significantly lowers soil temperature – both essential factors for good root growth. As organic mulches go through the natural process of breaking down, they add slow-release nutrients to the soil, as well as soil microbes, which are the sustaining food sources for any plant.

Mulches are just as important for what they take away from underneath a tree. Turfgrass and weeds with their dense root systems rob trees of soil moisture, especially during dry periods. By removing turfgrass, you eliminate a tough competitor. Also, a mulched zone around a tree protects it against injury too often caused by lawn mowers.

One common misconception about trees is that their roots are deep. Actually, feeder roots exist within 12-18 inches of the soil surface where they absorb both air and water. For this reason, grass clippings are not a good choice for mulching because they may mat and smother tree roots. A 3-4 inch layer of tree branches and leaves is always best.

And remember: Apply mulch close but never directly against the trunk of your tree. For more information on mulches, Iowa State University Extension Publication SUL 12 - *Using Mulches In Managed Landscapes* can be picked up at your local extension office.



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Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

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Acreage Answers is available  
on the web at  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag)

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

## Summer Bird Feeding

by Ann Burns, Jackson County Conservation Naturalist

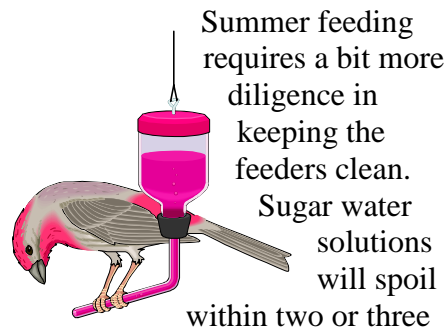
extending your bird feeding enjoyment into the warmer months?

Expanding the menu selection in the summer will add the colors and songs of Baltimore orioles, hummingbirds and catbirds to your yard. Orioles as well as ruby throated hummingbirds will use nectar feeders. Orioles will need a larger perch, since they do not hover.

You can purchase hummingbird mixes at many discount and specialty yard stores. Or, you can make it yourself. Add one part cane sugar to four parts boiling water. Let the mix cool before filling the feeders. Red coloring is unnecessary since most feeders have red feeding tubes or holes.

Grape jelly in a small bowl and orange halves will also attract Orioles, catbirds, red-bellied woodpeckers, robins, house finches, and other birds. Oranges can be cut in half then pierced on long nails that have been driven through a piece of wood.

A few less welcome guests such as bees, wasps and ants may show up at your "sweet" feeders. Avoid placing these feeders near doors or sidewalks you regularly use.



Summer feeding requires a bit more diligence in keeping the feeders clean. Sugar water solutions will spoil within two or three days. Regularly clean your nectar, jelly and orange feeders by soaking them in a dilute solution of chlorine bleach for one hour. Allow the feeders to completely dry before refilling

For more information about bird feeding contact your local county conservation board or nature center. Information is also available at [www.birdwatchersdigest.com](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com) or [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu)

## Lamb and Ewe Lamb Owners

By Beth Grabau, County Executive Director, Dallas County FSA Office

Owners of market lambs or ewe lambs could be eligible for payments from their local Farm Service Agency office. Those eligible are lambs marketed between August 1, 2001 and July 31, 2002 and August 1, 2002 and July 31, 2003. Ewe lambs that are purchased or retained for breeding purposes between August 1, 2001 and July 31, 2002 and August 1, 2002 and July 31, 2003 are also eligible.

Contact you local FSA office or go to USDA's website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) for more program information.

## Call Before You Dig

by Joy Rouse, Warren County Extension Education Director

Anytime you plan to dig a hole in your property, even if it is a small project, call **Iowa One Call** 48 hours prior to excavating. (The 48-hour notice does not include weekends or holidays.) Iowa One Call will notify the owners/operators of underground facilities who participate in Iowa One Call.

These operators will send "locate" personnel to your property to mark the underground locations with flags and paint markings, showing where service lines are located so the excavator can avoid damage and interruption in service.

Iowa law applies to professional contractors as well as homeowners, and covers a wide array of outdoor projects including:

- \* Installing a fence
- \* Planting trees or shrubs
- \* Building a patio, addition, deck, garage, outdoor shed or any similar structure that requires any form of digging
- \* Putting in a new driveway
- \* Installing a septic system or water drainage system
- \* Terracing or landscaping

The next time you plan a project remember to call Iowa One Call, 1-800-292-8989. That call could save you and your neighbors a "headache" or a tragedy.



## Food Preservation

by Linda S. Nelson, Dallas County Extension Education Director

Acreage living offers a great opportunity for homegrown fruits and vegetables. What you can't eat you can preserve for future consumption by freezing, drying or pressure canning.

You may have acquired a dial-gauge pressure canner from a relative, at a garage sale or possibly you have one in your basement that you have not used for a number of years. Before the canning season starts, give your extension office a call to see where you can have your canner gauge tested.

To preserve food safely, it is very important that food is processed for the appropriate time at the appropriate pressure. This will ensure that the food you preserve is safe to eat, and will keep for an extended period of time. A dial pressure canner that is not reading the correct pressure means that bacteria will not be killed and the food will spoil quickly. Which means all your work is lost, or that serious illness may result.

The Home Economics Answer Line (1-800-262-3804 or [answer@iastate.edu](mailto:answer@iastate.edu)) recommends that dial-gauge pressure canners be checked

ever year. For more information on preserving food safely, stop by your Extension

office or check out the web at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs>, then click on food

and nutrition and scroll to food preservation.

## Keeping Horses Cool

by Carl Neifert, ISU Extension Livestock Specialist

Heat and humidity do affect horses. Under normal conditions, the horse is able to cool itself by sweating. Sweat evaporates from the surface of the skin, heat is lost, and the body cools.



This cooling mechanism works well until the sum of the air temperature and humidity reaches 150 degrees. As that sum climbs, the horse will need assistance in cooling itself. Overheating can result in cramps, heatstroke, collapse, and even death in severe cases.

To prevent heatstroke:

1. Limit riding or transporting to cooler parts of the day such as late evening and early morning.
2. Adequately ventilate stalled horses.
3. Use fans in barn or stall areas.
4. Clip long hair.
5. Provide plenty of fresh water.

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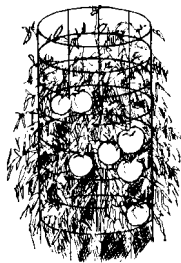
6. Consider using electrolytes in feed to make sure body electrolytes are being maintained.

How to treat overheated horses:

1. Spray entire body of horse with water to reduce temperature.
2. Move to a shady area with plenty of natural airflow or fans.
3. Allow horse to consume a few swallows of water every few minutes.
4. Call your vet for assistance.

## Keeping Tomato Plants Healthy

by Judy Terry,  
Johnson County  
Master Gardener



Keeping your tomato plants healthy is important if you want to have plenty for eating or canning. When buying plants look for the code after the name that indicates the ability to resist diseases and pests. One or more of the letters VFNT will tell you whether that cultivar is resistant to Verticilium (V), Fusarium (F) wilts, nematodes, (N) or tobacco mosaic (T).

Wilts cause the leaves to curl up, yellow and drop off. N refers to nematodes, tiny, worm-like creatures that attack the root system, stunting the growth. Tomatoes are related to the tobacco plant, as are

eggplant, peppers and potato, the T is for the tobacco mosaic, a viral disease that turns the leaves patchy green and yellow. Rotating your crops each year, keeping like family members separate and pulling up and destroying infected plants keeps diseases and pests to the minimum.

Septoria blight will turn leaves yellow causing them to die. Early blight makes dark sunken areas on the leaves just as the tomatoes begin to mature and late blight makes black irregular spots on the fruit. These diseases happen during cool, rainy weather. The best defense is to remove affected plants to avoid losing the entire crop. Blossom drop occurs during this kind of weather, too, but also when it is hot and dry.

Blossom-end rot is dark brown, leathery area due to calcium deficiency, caused by uneven watering. Mulch helps keep the soil evenly moist. Check out ISU publications PM 1266 - *Tomato Diseases and Disorders* and PM 230- *Insect and Disease Management in the Vegetable Garden* for more information.



## Tree Planting Practices

by Beth Grabau, County Executive  
Director, Dallas County FSA Office

Do you want to establish a tree planting to reduce erosion or help with snow control during Iowa's winter? A USDA program may be the place for you to start.

Shelter belts, field windbreaks, and living snow fences are belts of trees or shrubs planted in single or multiple rows. These tree rows and hedges reduce wind erosion, protect growing plants, manage snow, and provide habitat for wildlife. They can also shelter structures and wildlife. Under the Conservation Reserve Program, these practices can be established. Participants receive cost share for installing the practices as well as annual payments for 10 to 15 years on the acres involved in the tree planting.

Now is the time to start thinking and planning for this program. The dates recommended establishing fall tree plantings is October 20 through November 25.

People that are interested in learning more about these programs and other tree planting programs should contact their local FSA office for more information or to sign up, or go to USDA's Web site at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) to learn about these and other programs you may be eligible for