



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Enjoy Iowa's natural landscapes fishing rivers and streams this fall

Fall is a great time to catch fish in Iowa's rivers. A unique angling challenge is hidden around every bend.

"You are never far from one of Iowa's many rivers," said Greg Gelwicks, Iowa DNR interior rivers research biologist. "Fall is a great time to give them a try."

Fish become more active and hungry when the stream temperature drops. "Look for actively feeding fish where riffles enter pools or rocky areas," Gelwicks said. "They sit there out of the current and wait for food to come by."

Many fish in Iowa's rivers search out deep pools with very little current to spend the winter. Fish start to move to overwintering areas in October, and most fish will arrive by November.

"Anglers willing to brave chilly temperatures can be rewarded if they also seek out these areas," Gelwicks said.

Channel catfish will move to the deepest holes they can find in larger streams, often with depths greater than 15 feet, if available. Walleyes can be found in these same pools, but will also use slightly shallower areas with little current. Look for smallmouth bass in deep holes with boulders or woody structure.

When fish first move to wintering holes, deep running crankbaits and jigs with plastics work well. As water temperatures drop, switch to a jig and minnow fished slowly for best results. Try the upper Wapsipinicon River (Buchanan and Linn counties) or upper Cedar River (Black Hawk and Bremer counties) for smallmouth bass. The Shell Rock River (Butler and Bremer counties) or upper Cedar Rivers (Black Hawk or Bremer Counties) are a great choice for walleye.

An extensive list of Iowa's rivers, with information on access points and native species, is available on the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Interior-Rivers](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Interior-Rivers).

**Media Contact:** Greg Gelwicks, Interior Rivers Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.

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## Fall is a great time to plant shade trees

It's not too late to plant some varieties of shade trees before winter sets in. Fall is an ideal time to plant new trees with mild temperatures and adequate ground moisture.

"Properly planted trees will have a better opportunity for a long healthy life," said Iowa DNR district forester Mark Vitosh. Improperly planted trees more easily succumb to wind and storms or may look otherwise healthy, but then suddenly die in just 20 years.

Properly planted trees should have a long, healthy life. The keys to a successful shade tree planting include selecting a species that matches your site's growing conditions (i.e. soil type, soil drainage, available growing space, full sun or shade, etc.), proper planting, and quality tree care and maintenance throughout the tree's life. Always call Iowa One Call-811 before you start digging to locate any underground utilities.

A new five-minute video produced by the Iowa DNR provides tips on how to properly plant a tree from a container and avoid very common mistakes. Go to <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry> to view the video. Key tips from the video include:

- Before digging the planting hole, pull any additional soil away from the top of the root ball to identify the first main lateral root.
- Measure the distance just above the first lateral root to the bottom of the root ball; that is the depth that you should dig the planting hole. Proper planting depth is key to long-term tree survival. If the hole is dug too deep the tree can settle over time which can cause long-term health issues.
- Once you remove the root ball from the container, look for roots that seem to be growing around the root ball. Remove these roots to improve the long-term health of the tree. Use a hand saw to sever those encircling roots a half inch to an inch deep into the root ball. Shave off the encircling roots on all sides of the root ball. Also remove any encircling roots on the bottom of the root ball.
- Attempt to dig the planting hole at least twice the width of the root ball. If the sides of the planting hole are smooth, use the sharp end of the shovel to add texture to the sides of the hole to allow the new tree roots to penetrate the soil profile.
- Avoid any kind of soil amendments in the planting hole; instead use the soil from the original hole to refill around the roots of the tree. The final soil level should cover the first main lateral root. As you refill the hole gently pack the soil around the root ball with your hands.
- Once the tree is planted, slowly water the planting hole (focus water in the location of the root ball) to settle the soil. As the tree grows be sure to water the expanding root system further away from the initial root ball.

In the first year or two after planting, timely watering, mulching, and in some cases, staking, can be critical for success. Once a tree is well established, structural pruning can help maintain a quality tree into the future. Learn more about proper tree care after planting at <https://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/5096>

**Media Contact:** Gabriele Edwards, Urban Forestry Program Specialist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-822-1031.

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## Bowhunters encouraged to practice the ABCDs of treestand safety

Treestand incidents can happen to deer hunters regardless of skill level or experience and result in serious injury or even death. Unfortunately, in nearly every case, these incidents were preventable.

To help prevent injuries, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with Tree Stand Safety Awareness, is encouraging hunters to practice the ABCDs of treestand safety.

- Always remove and inspect your equipment
- Buckle on your full-body harness
- Connect to the tree before your feet leave the ground
- Destination: share the location of your treestand for each hunt

“Hunters should take treestand safety seriously. As hunters, we become comfortable, even negligent at times and can fail to follow the ABCDs of treestand safety. By performing these three simple steps, treestand users can virtually eliminate their risk of falling to the ground as the majority of falls occur outside the stand,” said Jamie Cook, hunter education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In Iowa last year, there were eight treestand incidents, all resulting in injury, many of them serious or life-threatening.

“In each of these cases, hunters had not secured their harness or had not carefully inspected their equipment prior to climbing into the stand. Unfortunately, most of these would have been prevented if the hunters had followed the ABCDs of treestand safety,” said Cook.

Since 1960, the Iowa DNR has provided hunter education programs for hunters across Iowa that teach safety, responsibility and ethical behaviors while in the field. Anyone born after Jan. 1, 1972, must complete the course in order to purchase an Iowa hunting license. To find a course, visit [events.gooutdoorsiowa.com](https://events.gooutdoorsiowa.com).

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Jamie Cook, Hunter Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-650-8091

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## Duck hunters encouraged to use safe boating practices while on the water

Duck hunters who hunt from a boat are encouraged to include boating safety as part of their hunting plan. Waterfowl hunters use boats on some of the coldest days of the year. Not only is the water deathly cold on these days, but the hunter is likely wearing enough layers to make themselves heavy and clumsy, and if they go into the water, they are in serious trouble.

“Safety on the water, regardless of the time of year, always begins with wearing a life jacket,” said Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “This is a situation where a life jacket or a float coat can mean the difference between life and death.”

Iowa law requires a readily accessible, wearable, U.S Coast Guard-approved life jacket for every person on the boat, including duck boats. Boats 16 feet and longer must also have one U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type IV throwable device on board. Life vests come in a variety of styles and types developed specifically for hunters that allows hunters to shoulder a gun while still offering protection from cold water.

Duck boats are painted to blend in to the background and often have netting or dead vegetation attached to their craft to enhance the camouflage effect. It’s important to keep the red and green navigation lights and the all-around white light in the stern visible from sunset to sunrise, as required by law.

Hunters should also be aware of how much gear they are bringing in the boat.

Stocker advised hunters to review the amount of gear they bring to avoid exceeding the maximum weight for the craft. The vessel’s capacity plate states the total amount of weight the boat is designed to hold and includes the passengers, fuel, dog, decoys, everything.

“It’s important to distribute the weight evenly around the boat, taking care to avoid loading too much in the back,” she said.

Overloading the boat can create a dangerous situation by reducing the amount of space between the waterline and the top of the boat. The less space between the water and the top of the boat, the greater the chance that water will swamp the boat.

“Duck hunters recreate in difficult conditions – they go out before the sunrises, its cold, the wetlands are nearly frozen, its most likely windy,” Stocker said. “These factors are important considerations when going through the hunting plan. We’re encouraging them to include reviewing their on-boat gear along with making sure they have a lifejacket in usable condition as part of that plan because the goal at the end of the day is for everyone to return home safely.”

**Media Contact:** Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439.