



**CLEVELAND COUNTY
EXTENSION**

THE NEW HORT THYMES

November 2020

Serving Cleveland County, Oklahoma with the most up to date gardening, lawn, landscaping, and horticulture information.



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What An Ice Storm

The end of October brought one crazy storm

Freezes in October are rare, but an ice storm is just crazy. If you're reading this, I hope that you and your family made it through the storm safely. Ice storms normally occur in the later winter months, when trees no longer have leaves. With leaves still attached to deciduous trees, the ice weight was too much for some branches. Many limbs snapped, bringing them down on our gardens and our power lines. Not only is the structural portion of the tree damaged, the breakage creates an entry point for diseases and other insects. I think that we will be seeing the effects of this ice storm for a few years. Only Oklahoma would end a drought with an ice storm.

Now brings the question – what do I do with my trees? This issue is focused on assessing storm-damaged trees and trees to avoid, should you have to replace any.

Assessing Storm-Damaged Trees

Severe weather is a normal part of life in Oklahoma. Whether it's tornadoes or winter storms, storm-related damage can be a major impediment to maintaining healthy trees. Wind and ice can snap large branches from the tree, creating safety hazards in the landscape. While it is impossible to control the weather, we can implement measures to manage storm-damaged trees. Here are some considerations for assessing storm damaged trees:

- Do not top trees. Topping can permanently ruin the structural integrity of the tree (Figure 1). This practice leads to epicormic shoots (Figure 2), which are weakly attached to the main branches. Not only does this have a negative impact on the form of the tree, it also creates a hazard in future storms.
- Tree wounds create entry points of infection for wood decay microorganisms (Figure 3). If significant bark has been ripped or loosened from the trunk, consider the potential attack from diseases.
- Proper pruning is critical to quick wound response by the tree. First, remove all broken or damaged limbs. Cut limbs back to a lateral branch that is nearly one-half the diameter of the removed limb. To avoid further damage to the tree, use the three-cut pruning method (Figure 4).
- Many storm-damaged trees are too large for homeowners to remediate themselves. In this case, a professional arborist should be consulted. Be sure that the arborist is certified by the International Society of Arboriculture. Check out www.treesaregood.org to find a local arborist. Many trees are salvageable, they just need a specialist.

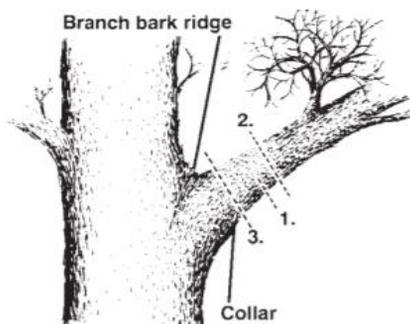


Figure 4. The three-cut method for removing heavy limbs. This prevents the limb from splitting at the halfway point and potentially ripping or peeling the bark, leaving a gap wound.



Figure 1. An example of “topping” or “dehorning”, an improper pruning method.



Figure 2. A tree that has developed weak “epicormic” shoots following severe pruning.



Figure 3. Large amounts of bark stripped from a tree can be points of entry for diseases.

Avoiding Undesirable Trees

Annual bedding plants provide color and excitement to the landscape. Perennial flowers bring stability and provide habitat for wildlife. Shrubs give form and structure to the landscape for all seasons. And trees? Trees can do all of these things. They are a tremendous asset to the landscape. Trees, however, require years of patience for them to reach their mature height. Because trees can sometimes be slow to have an impact, many homeowners and builders prefer fast growing trees. While it's understandable, this temptation should really be avoided.

The following trees, though common and often used due to their rapid growth, may not be the best choice for the typical residential landscape. Due to their fast growth, these trees are often more susceptible to diseases, insect attacks, and storm damage.



Cottonwoods

Cottonwoods are large, stately trees, but they grow too big for a typical landscape. Over time roots grow on the surface and become a maintenance issue. This tree is fast growing, weak wooded, and susceptible to diseases and insects. Male cultivars may be appropriate for certain situations. Consult with nurseries to make sure male trees are purchased. Female trees release the 'cotton', and can be very messy.

Photo from State Symbols USA



Silver Maples

Silver maples are easy to plant and hard to kill. It's one of the most commonly planted trees. It does, however, come with some maintenance issues. Silver maples have shallow root systems that can invade flowerbeds, vegetable gardens, and plumbing. Their fast growing nature results in weak, brittle wood that can break during storms. Silver maples were hit especially hard during the 2020 ice storm.

Photo from NCSU Plant Database



Callery Pear Cultivars

Callery pear cultivars, including Bradford pears, are tolerant of many soil types, easy to grow, and have showy spring flowers. However, branching structure is poor and storms can easily damage the trees. Cross pollination of cultivars results in fruit, creating issues with invasiveness. Callery pears are also susceptible to several diseases, such as rust and fire blight.

Photo from UW-Madison Extension

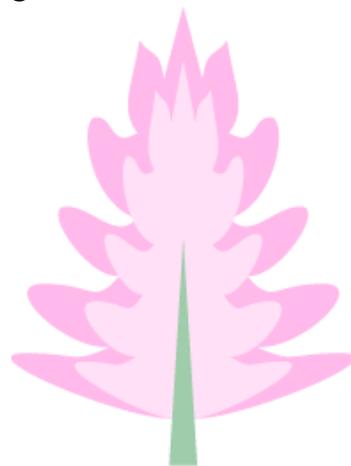


November Plant of the Month: Pink Muhly Grass

Airy, pink plumes to brighten your fall landscape

Muhlenbergia capillaris, often called pink muhly grass or pink hair grass, is an attractive perennial grass that adds a whimsical touch to the garden. It is native to prairies and open woodlands throughout much of the southeast. Blue-green, thread-like leaves form an attractive clump that gives way to wispy pink plumes in the fall. The plumes fade to tan to provide additional winter interest. Mass plantings of pink muhly grass are especially impactful. It can also be used in cottage gardens or native plant areas. Plants grow to about 2' x 2', but expand to 3' x 3' when in flower.

Pink muhly grass does best in full sun, but can tolerate light shade. It can be grown in sandy or rocky soil and must be well-drained. To maintain vigor, divide every few years.



Plume: a large, flexible panicle of inflorescence resembling a feather, often seen in ornamental grasses

Garden Tips for November

- If you haven't already, bring in all tropicals or tender perennials to a dry, warm spot in the home
- Prune deciduous trees in the early part of winter; prune only for structural and safety purposes
- Wrap young, thin-barked trees with a commercial protective material to prevent winter sunscald
- Apply dormant oil to scale infected trees and shrubs before temperatures fall below 40°F
- Tulips can still be successfully planted through the middle of November
- Leave foliage on asparagus, mums, and other perennials to help insulate crowns from harsh winter conditions
- Leftover garden seeds can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer until next planting season; discard after three years
- Gather and shred leaves – add to compost use as mulch, or till into garden plots
- Cover compost piles so that nutrients do not leach during the winter precipitation
- Continue fertilizing cool-season grasses like fescue with 1 lb of nitrogen per 1000 sq ft
- Continue to mow fescue as needed and water during dry conditions
- Control broadleaf winter weeds like dandelions
- Keep falling leaves off fescue to avoid damage to the foliage
- Now is the time to force bulbs, like paperwhites, hyacinth, and amaryllis, for the holidays
- Clean and store garden and landscape tools; coat with a light application of oil to prevent rusting
- Drain hoses and bring indoors

Eat Seasonally

In-season produce is fresher, cheaper, more nutritious, and better for the environment. These are some of the seasonal crops for November:

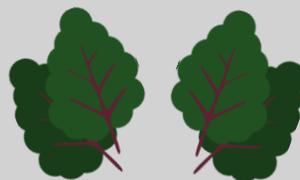
Beets



Brussels Sprouts



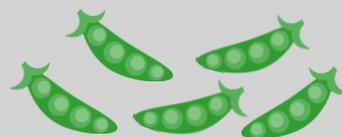
Collard Greens



Kale



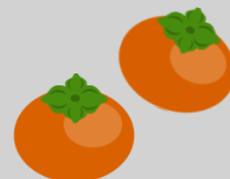
Peas



Pecans



Persimmons



Pumpkins



Sweet Potatoes



Upcoming Events

To see all OSU Extension events, please visit
www.calendar.okstate.edu/oces

Use the County/Department filter for events unique
to **Cleveland County**.

Use the Program Area filter for events that are
specific to **Agriculture and Natural Resources**.



About the editor...

Courtney DeKalb-Myers has been the Cleveland County horticulture educator since August 2018. Her position handles homeowner inquiries, master gardener advisement, and other horticulture education programming throughout the state. She is originally from Norman, Oklahoma and developed a passion for gardening at a young age. She went onto study horticulture at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater with an emphasis in entrepreneurship. After graduating from OSU, she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to attend NC State for graduate school. Her research was heavily focused on vegetable production, specifically processing tomatoes for a local salsa product. The emphasis on local products motivated her to move back to Oklahoma and she is so excited to now serve the town that raised her.

