



May 2019

# THE NEW HORT THYMES

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



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## May Showers

*If April showers bring May flowers, what do May showers bring?*

It's a shock to no one – May brings rain, thunderstorms, hail, and tornadoes to Oklahoma. It seems that almost every day in the forecast has a lightning symbol. What does that mean for gardeners? Rain is always welcome, but the turbulent weather can cause some frustration. Hail beating down on the garden can take out newly planted transplants. Wind can damage weak wooded trees. Heavy rains can turn low areas of our yard into swamp. It's enough to make a gardener pull their hair out. Weeds can sprout and spread like wildfire in the moisture. All the while, it's too muddy to get out and do garden work.

Not to worry – the extra moisture in the soil will come to good use when the heat of the summer sets in. Our patience will pay off and we can reap the rewards in June. Working with Mother Nature is half the fun of gardening.

# What is Rose Rosette?

Roses are a staple in every garden. Their large, multi-petaled blooms are recognized all over the world. Yet, there is a disease that questions their place in Oklahoma. Rose rosette has spread across the state and taken many roses in the process.

Rose rosette is a virus vectored by the microscopic eriophyid mite. The virus exists within the mite, and as the mite feeds on the rose, the virus is then transferred to the plant. The mites move from one rose to the next by wind.

Symptoms vary depending on rose cultivar. Some of the more common symptoms include elongated shoots, leaf distortion, red or yellow mottling (Figure 1), excessive thorns (Figure 2), witches' broom (Figure 3), flower distortion, and succulent stems. Diseased roses are more susceptible to winter injury and other diseases, like black spot and powdery mildew.

If symptoms appear in a localized area, prune the affected branches quickly. This will slow the spread of the disease to the rest of the plant. If rose rosette is present in the surrounding area, treat with a dormant oil after pruning in late winter. Also avoid using leaf blowers, as it may inadvertently spread the eriophyid mite.

There is no cure for rose rosette. Affected roses should be removed (Figure 4). Leaving these roses in the landscape increases the risk of spreading the disease to healthy plants.

With rose rosette being as widespread as it is, will roses still be a popular landscape plant? Hopefully – researchers are working to develop resistant cultivars and screening currently available cultivars for partial tolerance.

If rose rosette is recognized early, it's possible to prune out that section and slow the progression of the disease throughout the plant. Remember to sanitize pruners with a 10% bleach solution in between cuts. Here are some of the classic symptoms of rose rosette:



Figure 1. Elongated shoots, leaf distortion, and an unusual red or yellow mottling of the leaves.



Figure 2. An excessive number of thorns on shoots.



Figure 3. Shoots emerging from nearly the same point on the stem, resulting in a witches' broom appearance.



Figure 4. A severely affected rose that needs to be removed.

Photos are from OSU's Fact Sheet "Rose Rosette Disease". For more information, see [EPP-7329](https://www.oregonstate.edu/depart/ohd/extension/fact_sheets/rose-rosette-disease).



# Plants for Pathways

One of the classic landscape design principles is to create rooms within the garden. One of the easiest, and more literal, ways to accomplish this is using pathways. Whether they be of bricks, concrete pavers, or stone, paths can guide visitors through the segmented areas of the landscape. It also allows gardeners to get more up-close and personal with the plants. This can become an asset for tasks like weeding or harvesting, in the case of edibles or cut flowers.

Adding plant material between the stones adds a whimsical element to the garden. These plants need to be low growing and able to handle some foot traffic. Thankfully, there are some great options gardeners can use in their pathways.



## Creeping Thyme

*Thymus praecox* and *T. serpyllum*

Low to the ground and slightly woody, creeping thyme is a great plant to use in pathways. It has small, evergreen leaves and grows to only one inch tall. The plant creeps along the ground, putting out roots at the nodes. This creates a mat-like appearance that is well-suited for light foot traffic. The foliage has an herbal, lemony scent. Creeping thyme also produces small purple flowers throughout the summer. There are several available cultivars, including 'Purple Carpet', 'Elfin', and 'Coccineus'.

## Moneywort

*Lysimachia nummularia*

Also known as creeping jenny, moneywort is a low growing perennial with rounded leaves. It spreads rapidly by rooting from the stems and prefers damper soils. Moneywort can be an aggressive grower, so consider using edging for the pathway. Otherwise, it might spread to areas where it is unwanted. Moneywort is very hardy and can survive temperatures as low as -30°F. 'Aurea' is a golden cultivar that can brighten up a shadier part of the garden. It is also considered to be less aggressive.



## Irish Moss

*Sagina subulata*

Irish moss is a low growing perennial with fine, feather foliage. It forms a dense mat that will fill in around rocks and pavers quickly. White, star shaped flowers appear in the spring. Irish moss does not do well in heat and would be better suited in an area that receives afternoon shade. If placed in too warm an area, Irish moss may turn brown in the heat of the summer. The cultivar 'Aurea' has golden foliage and is often times referred to as Scotch moss in the industry.



## May Plant of the Month: Texas Star Hibiscus

Consider this hardy plant for the low, wet areas of the garden

May is a good time of the year to consider the low areas of our yard for rain gardens. Utilizing plants that can handle standing water is a great strategy to alleviate those areas. Texas Star Hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) is a great plant for that purpose.

The perennial plant is slender and tall, reaching up seven feet. It can spread to three feet wide. The crimson flowers, appearing from June to September, are an excellent choice for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. 'Alba' is a white cultivar. The leaves are palmate and serrated; the leaflets are slim creating a wispy appearance. It is best planted in full sun areas. Too much shade will decrease the amount of blooms.



**Palmate** /palmāt/: resembling an open hand, where leaflets radiate from a common point



## Garden Tips for May

- Annual bedding plants can be planted for summer color
- Soak newly planted bedding annuals and trees, unless rainfall is abundant
- Plant summer bulbs, like cannas, dahlias, colocasia, caladiums, and gladiolus
- Continue planting warm season vegetables, like watermelon, cantaloupe, cucumber, eggplant, okra, and sweet potatoes
- Keep harvesting cool season vegetables
- Cover new transplants with buckets or milk jugs when hail is in the forecast
- Ensure containers have adequate drainage before filling with plants
- Use mulch to reduce weed pressure and increase moisture retention in the garden
- Begin scouting for insect activity in the garden
- Keep an eye out for fungal issues, which can be common in wet springs
- Prune and fertilize azaleas immediately after blooming
- Be conscious of storm damage to trees and rehabilitate as needed
- Fertilize cool-season and warm-season lawns
- Bermudagrass, buffalograss, and zoysiagrass can be over-seeded in Mid-May; do not over-seed if a pre-emergent herbicide was recently used
- Check the irrigation system for leaks and effective coverage; this could save money later in the summer
- Dollar spot disease and spring dead spot symptoms begin to appear in lawns – consider revising fertilizer programs if these diseases are prevalent

## Eat Seasonally

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

Apricots



Artichokes

Asparagus



Beets

Cherries



Lettuce

Peas



Spinach

Strawberries



# Upcoming Events

## May 4<sup>th</sup> – Oklahoma Proven Plant Sale

Oklahoma State is celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oklahoma Proven plant selection program by partnering with local nurseries to offer 10% off select water-smart plants (limited to 5 gallon or smaller plants). Oklahoma Proven is a plant evaluation program designed to help consumers choose the best plants for Oklahoma.

Participating locations (selections and hours vary by store):

- Lowe's Garden Center (Yukon location)
- Marcum's Nursery (Norman and OKC)
- Plant Wisdom Garden Center
- Prairie Wind Nursery
- Precure Nursery and Garden Center
- Ross Seed Company (El Reno location)

## May 11<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am to 11:00am – The Beauty of Prairie Gardening

Cleveland County OSU Extension Office, Classroom "C", 601 E. Robinson St., Norman, OK 73071

This class will explain prairie gardens and how to accomplish creating one in the home landscape. Want less lawn to mow? Then this class is for you. Afterwards, Master Gardeners will be available to provide tours of the Demonstration and Teaching Gardens. This program is presented by Master Gardeners Judy Kautz and Marilyn Solomon.

This class is free and no reservations are required.

## June 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm to 8:00pm – Tips and Tricks for Homegrown Tomatoes

Cleveland County OSU Extension Office, Classroom "C", 601 E. Robinson St., Norman, OK 73071

2018 was a difficult year for Oklahoma tomatoes. If you're looking to have better luck this year, come join Cleveland County Horticulture Educator, Courtney DeKalb-Myers, to learn tips and tricks for better tomatoes. Varieties, trellising systems, and troubleshooting will be discussed.

This class is free and no reservations are required.

### 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.

