



The Bloomin' News

Sandhills Community College

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Spring 2011

The Sandhills Horticultural Society - dedicated to the support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens since 1987. Please help the Gardens grow by becoming a Society member.

Weather and Blooms

Johanna Westmen

I receive a lot of questions during this time of year regarding why a particular plant did not bloom well this spring. There could be a myriad of reasons why this happened. Sometimes the answer is as simple as an incorrect pruning practice or an infertility problem. We know that some cultural practices such as light, fertility and pruning can be controlled by the gardener; however, we cannot control factors like plant age and weather conditions.

Weather, particularly cold weather, is one of those factors that can have a huge impact on flowering. If we experience colder than normal temperatures in our regions, there is a good chance that flower buds can be killed, or in some cases, damaged. Either one of these situations can result in a flowering plant that produces no flowers. I have seen many cases where the buds on forsythia have actually been killed due to unusually

low temperatures in the winter. Another problem comes from late-spring cold snaps. I am sure many of us have seen this happen with flowering plants in our own garden. Even though these plant materials are cold hardy when dormant, the flower buds can become subjected to frost damage, especially as their protective bud scales start to separate and expose the more susceptible flower parts such as the petals. It seems that every year the native wisteria, which my husband has crazily planted but kept pruned into a tree form specimen, is hit by a late spring cold snap and does not bloom. In cases like these, sometimes it is good to look for a plant that offers a later bloom time, which can protect it against freezing temperatures in late spring. There has been a lot of plant breeding done in certain varieties of forsythia and wisteria to help offset this problem.

On the other end of the spectrum, we can actually

have a winter where we do not get enough cold weather to influence blooming. This can be evidenced with many spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips. We treat tulips as annuals in the gardens here at Sandhills, because we typically don't have cold enough winter temperatures to perennialize these bulbs. Any tulips that are planted here in the gardens are pulled up after they are through blooming and then replanted again in the fall to ensure blooming. Other plants, such as lilacs, have this problem as well; they need a prescribed period of cold to set flowers.

We have talked about cold weather; however, we haven't discussed warm weather and the detrimental affect it can have on blooming plants as well. We will leave that to another edition. Just know that there are certain things we can control in our garden, but weather is definitely not one of them. As gardeners, we take the good with the bad. If this past season's cold temperatures have adversely affected your blooms this spring, let's just hope that the insect problem has also been affected in the same way! Happy gardening, and here's to an early spring full of beautiful blooms and bountiful gardens.



This Winter's Good News/Bad News

Dee Johnson

The bad news is that this winter has seen more snow than usual in the Sandhills; however, the good news for most plants is that it has stayed consistently cold. This consistent cold has allowed plants to go into dormancy, stop growth, and stay in dormancy. Dormancy starts when the days begin to get shorter in the fall. Plants begin to produce colloids that thicken cell sap like anti-freeze to keep them from freezing. This is much of what determines hardiness, which can be defined as which plants can tolerate what degree of cold. Once this occurs the leaves drop, and the top portion of the plant goes into dormancy. Until temperatures drop below 40 degrees, the roots keep on growing. That is why it is recommended to plant in the fall in the southern climatic zones. Plants are able to establish themselves with a good root system in the fall. The consistent cold temperatures we have had are the good news, because sudden drops in temperature any time of the year can cause severe plant damage. Plant damage may even occur in the dead of winter if the temperature goes from high to low very quickly.

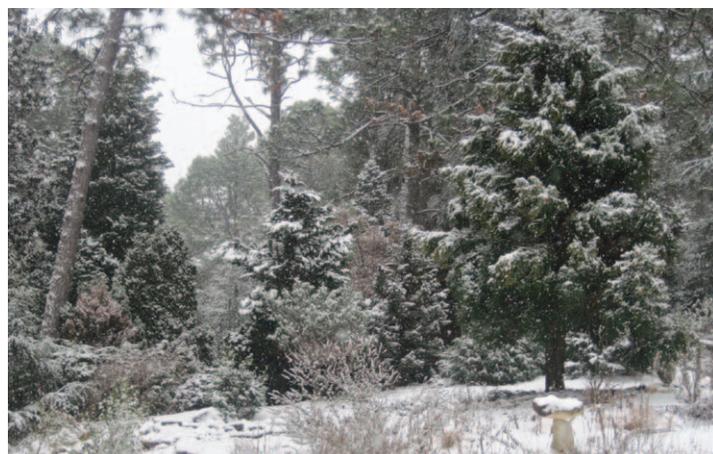
The consistent cold has also given some plants, especially the exotics, bad news. I am talking about those plants that so many of us like to experiment with even though the experts tell us they are marginally hardy for us. We see plants in the catalogs that are hardy in zones 8 and 9 and just have to try them. They might do well for a few years, but in a winter like this one you probably will lose them. Mulching early on and wrapping the

plant in burlap will help prevent some loss. Watering, especially evergreens, before the soil freezes will help prevent burning on the leaves.

Anytime I want to complain about the plants I lose during a winter like this, I look at all the beautiful blooms that were produced on so many other plants because of their need for this cold period to produce blooms. As winter becomes a dim memory, remember to take time to smell the flowers and enjoy the spring. Old Man Winter helped make it happen.

<http://gardens.uncc.edu/Plant-Dormancy-in-the-Southeast/plant-dormancy-se.html>

http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/news/story/winter_mulch111909.aspx



Upcoming Sandhills Horticultural Society Events

Growing Hostas

Wednesday, March 2 • 10 a.m.

Bob Solberg of Green Hill Farm, a nationally known lecturer on the subject of hostas as well as a hosta hybridizer, will give the presentation on growing hostas. Bob has introduced more than 60 hosta varieties including hosta of the year in 2002 "Guacamole." Bob will have hostas for sale after the lecture. The workshop is free. Space is limited. For reservations, call Tricia Mabe at 695-3882.

Art in the Garden Sculpture Exhibit

March 27 - May 27

Art in the Garden and Steed Hall Tour

Sunday, March 27 • 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

This event is part of the Palustris Festival. Stroll the gardens and view sculptures by North Carolina artists scattered among the spring flowers. Take a tour of the new Landscape Gardening building - Steed Hall, and join us for refreshments and an awards ceremony at 2:30 p.m. First, second and third prizes will be awarded for the winning sculptures.

Horticultural Society & Landscape Gardening

Student's Annual Plant Sale

Saturday, April 16 • 8 a.m. - noon at Steed Hall.

Landscape Gardening Student's Annual Bedding Plant Sale

Pre-order Pick-up

Friday, April 29 and Saturday, April 30

Friday: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. • Saturday: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.



Expecting Company?

Spring brings so much excitement to the garden. The short-sleeve weather, the smell of blooming flowers, and stunning colors from new growth all result in getting this horticulturist's blood pumping. However, I am not the only one. Critters with six and eight legs are starting to get excited as well.

Here are a few examples about how to contain insects and other spring garden pests:

🐞 Japanese Beetles arrive in May and forage on roses, crape myrtles, fruit trees and many other leafy hosts. Treating lawn areas July through September best controls them. The adult beetles overwinter as larva in the ground from last year. Traps can cut down on the ones you see now, but the larva must be killed to prevent further damage.

🐛 Aphids appear on early season vegetables, crape myrtles, roses and tender perennials. Infestations can be removed by hand or treated with insecticidal soap. Some people have success by blasting them off with water.

🕷️ Mite damage appears on hollies and junipers during the spring season. Mites pierce the plant cells and remove chlorophyll and other juices. Warm season mites begin their attack on crocosmia, daylilies, and other perennials as weather warms. They are best controlled with horticultural oil that should be applied during temperatures less than 75 degrees.

🐜 Ants become active with the most destructive and annoying being the fire ants. A mound drench with the appropriate pesticide has shown great results in our gardens.

🐛 Whiteflies begin to appear on gardenias now. They can be controlled by chemicals with a low volatility but need repeat applications. If installing annuals and perennials, buy sanitary flats for best control.

🐛 Azalea lace bugs make their first appearance from eggs partially inserted into the midribs of the leaves. A granular insecticide is easiest to apply and provides residual control.

🐛 Many scale insects hatch during these months on peach trees, hollies and euonymous. These "crawlers" are best treated with a chemical spray. Horticultural oil is used during winter months to suffocate the adults hiding in their armor.

🐛 You will notice the control methods do not include harsh chemicals. People using a blanket treatment of one harsh chemical often kill the beneficial insects that work with us to keep insect populations in check. Consider properly identifying the insect and focusing your treatment.



Aphids



Lace Bugs



Scale

Q&A

How do I properly prune Knock-out Roses?

These plants have a bulletproof reputation compared to traditional roses, thus they have gained great popularity in landscapes and patio containers. Fortunately, the pruning methods can vary and the plant continues to grow and bloom profusely. Pruning is best done using hand pruners to make selective cuts of unruly or excessively tall branches. The timing of these cuts can occur from March until September at the gardener's discretion.



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- ✂ If you do not already have a compost bin, build one before spring chores keep you too busy in the garden.
- ✂ Prune spring flowering shrubs, like forsythia and spirea, after they bloom and hybrid roses in mid-March.
- ✂ After danger of frost, interior plants may be placed outside in a shaded location.
- ✂ In March, prune your ornamental grasses to 12"-18" in order to allow the new growth to emerge.
- ✂ To control summer annual weeds like crabgrass, apply a pre-emergent herbicide in March and again in May.
- ✂ Inspect your irrigation system for possible winter damage.
- ✂ Clean ornamental ponds, and repot any hardy aquatic plants.
- ✂ Sod or sprig warm season grasses in April or May. Remember to adequately prepare the soil before planting.



Holiday Flower Arranging Workshop

On December 1, the Ball Visitors Center was filled with 34 people that participated in the Sandhills Horticultural Society's Holiday Flower Arranging workshop led by Maggie Smith of Maggie's Farm. Everyone had fun creating an arrangement to take home for the holidays.