

## April 2010—Oklahoma Gardening Shows

Scroll down to find earlier programs in April.

Please contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Office for more educational information on garden-related topics. If you need further information about this week's show, call (405) 744-5404 or visit our website <http://www.oklahomagardening.okstate.edu>. Thank you for your continued support!

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April 24 & 25

April 17 & 18

April 10 & 11

April 3 & 4

Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3643)

**OETA air date: April 24 and 25, 2010**

OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

**Planting Hardy Kiwifruit** – We are establishing kiwifruit in our orchard. Several weeks back we installed the trellis for the plants, today, we will set our vines in the ground. Kiwifruit need a site in full sun, and they should also be protected from wind if possible. Avoid areas prone to frost. If you have a number of spaces to choose from, a site with a slight slope to the north is preferred. This will help prevent spring frost injury and protect plants from southwest winds in summer.

A deep, well-drained soil provides the best planting site. Add plenty of organic matter to the soil to improve drainage of heavy soils. If soils drain poorly, raising the bed 6 to 10 inches can help improve soil drainage. As with most plantings, preparing the soil a year in advance can help with establishing proper nutrition and managing weeds, as well as adjusting soil pH when necessary. A pH between 5 and 6.5 is ideal for growing kiwifruit. Conduct a soil test several months in advance of planting and make adjustments as needed.

Before planting, prepare the soil by cultivating deeply. Work organic matter such as compost or composted cow manure to the top 3 to 6 inches of soil and allow rainfall to settle the beds, or use sprinklers.

There are four species of kiwifruit commonly cultivated for fruit. *Actinidia deliciosa* is the fuzzy-skinned, grocery-store kiwi. It requires a very long growing season, and it is not hardy in Oklahoma. *Actinidia chinensis* is closely related to *A. deliciosa*. Selections are being made for hairlessness, fragrance, and flavor. It is a small fruit and is suitable for southern Oklahoma, as current selections are hardy to U.S.D.A. hardiness zone 7. *Actinidia kolomikta* is an Arctic kiwi. The male is often used as an ornamental because of the pink and white variegation of its younger leaves. The fruit is small, very sweet, and very cold hardy (-30°F).

We are growing Hardy Kiwi, *Actinidia arguta* 'Ananasnaya' and 'Issail'. It has small fruit with smooth skins, as opposed to the fuzzy skins we find in the grocery store. Fruits ripen in late summer and keep for 2 to 3 months in storage. This species has no disease or insect problems.

Kiwifruit have separate male and female plants. A plant of each sex must be growing near each other for fruit production. They should also belong to the same species to ensure that they bloom at the same time. In order to get more, larger fruit, it is often better to have male plants that are a different variety from the female plants. One male plant should be planted for every 6 to 8 females to ensure good pollination.

Plants can be set in the ground when dormant, in late winter or early spring (from about February through March), space plants 10 to 15 feet apart in rows that are 15 to 16 feet apart. Set male plants in a location central to the females so that honeybees will have access to them among several female plants. Kiwifruit plants should be set at the same depth or slightly deeper than they grew in the nursery row. Do not allow the plants to dry out during planting. Unless rain is likely, water the newly set plants.

Kiwifruit are perennial woody vines (lianas). Kiwifruit benefits from a thick layer of organic mulch such as pine bark. We lay the mulch about 4 inches deep. Mulch helps control weeds, conserves soil moisture, and shades the soil to keep it cooler during the summer. Mulch also helps prevent winter injury to crowns, promotes growth of the extensive fibrous kiwifruit root system, and helps control unwanted suckers.

Very little commercial fertilizer is needed during the first year of kiwifruit establishment, but regular irrigation will be required to establish vines. We need to train our young plants up to the trellis wires. To do this we simply set bamboo poles beside each plant. Our vines will reach the wire this season, but will not produce fruit for several years. Kiwifruit bear crops after 3 to 4 years, but once they begin, they can remain active for up to 60 years. We will check back in on the progress of our vines later this season.

You can learn more about kiwifruit in OSU Extension Fact Sheet [HLA-6249 Kiwifruit Production in Oklahoma](#).

**Planting Elderberry** – Elderberries (*Sambucus canadensis* L.) are native to Oklahoma and other parts of North America. The fruit of this lesser known crop is often harvested from the wild and has a variety of uses, such as making jams, jellies, pies, juice, and wine. We have two elderberries planted in our small fruit garden. But unlike the other fruits, elderberries prefer shaded locations. It is best to choose a site that allows for good air circulation around the plants to reduce leaf and disease problems.

Elderberry cultivars may be difficult to find due to rather limited demand. One-year-old plants are best; though older plants can be used but are often less vigorous. Elderberries are only partially self-fruitful. Two or more cultivars should be planted near each other to provide for cross-pollination. Recommended cultivars for Oklahoma include ‘Nova’, ‘York’, ‘Adams’ and ‘Johns’. The plants we have established are ‘York’ and ‘Nova’. We added a third elderberry to our planting because of its ornamental characteristics. It is Black Lace™ elderberry. It has remarkable purple black foliage that is deeply cut much like that of a Japanese maple. The plant also produces beautiful creamy pink flowers in spring that contrast with the dark leaves. Even though Black Lace™ is generally sold as an ornamental plant, the blackish red fall berries are edible.

Elderberries grow very large, reaching about 8 to 10 feet in height. They should be spaced accordingly, setting plants 8 feet apart. In the fall or early spring before planting, mix additional organic matter with the soil such as aged manure or compost. Dormant plants should be set in February or early March, as soon as they are received from the nursery. If plants are actively growing like our Black Lace™, set them when the threat of frost has passed.

Before planting, remove damaged or broken parts and cut back the branches to 8 to 10 inches. Set the plant with the lowest branch at or just below the soil line and water thoroughly to settle

the soil around the roots.

Elderberries will likely require yearly applications of nitrogen. Young plants should receive one to two tablespoons of fertilizers like ammonium sulfate, ammonium nitrate, or urea annually in the spring. Older plants should receive three to four tablespoons of fertilizer. Nitrogen can also be supplied by using compost or manures. Elderberries are not drought tolerant and irrigation is necessary during dry periods. Watering should be done weekly if rainfall is insufficient. Trickle (drip) irrigation works well and mulching will also help to conserve soil moisture.

For more information, turn to OSU Fact Sheet [HLA-6256 Growing Elderberries in Oklahoma](#).

**Tree Planting: Weeping River Birch** – When selecting and planting trees and shrubs in the landscape, a number of different options are available. Each has advantages and disadvantages, which dictate the manner in which they are handled and planted.

- Bare-root plants are shipped dormant during the winter months. They are planted between mid-February and mid-April or up to the end of the frost period. Other than seedling-sized evergreens, only deciduous plants can be transplanted with bare roots, and then only when dormant or leafless.

This time of year we are generally planting actively-growing trees and shrubs set in a soil medium. These include balled & burlapped, container-grown, and potted plants.

- Balled and burlapped (or B&B) plants are dug with roots and soil intact and covered with burlap. Despite the fact that they are dug with roots, up to 90 percent or more of the roots have been lost during the process. Evergreens and large trees are often sold B&B.
- Container grown plants are raised in containers. Less loss from transplanting occurs with container-grown plants since few to no roots are lost if the plant was grown in the container. Roots should not be growing out of container drain holes nor circling around the inside of the pot.
- Potted plants are bare-root plants that have been grown in the field, but they are put in a soil mix in papier mâché pots for ease of handling. This does not provide the same quality plant as a plant grown in a container. Roses, for example, are commonly marketed this way.

Planting time varies from fall to spring by plant type and method of growing.

- As I mentioned, early spring is best time for planting bare-root plants, but also for planting broadleaf evergreens, such as holly and Southern magnolia.
- The best time to plant balled and burlapped trees and pines, as well as container-grown plants, is in early fall. Plants planted in the fall have more time for the root system to become established before the onset of summer heat.
- However, many containerized plants can be planted any time if handled properly. We see heavy marketing of trees and shrubs in the spring, and this is also a good time for planting.
- Avoid planting during the heat of the summer. Plants installed during the growing season are susceptible to high transpiration rates leading to drying of plant tissues.

Preparing the planting area properly before planting is very important. Beyond climatic adaptation, soil drainage or percolation is the greatest limitation to successful transplants in urban soils. A poorly drained clay soil is either too wet or too dry for all but the most durable trees and shrubs. And most urban soils are abused during construction processes. Soil drainage and compaction problems must be resolved before planting is done. We address these problems by loosening a wide area of soil in and around the planting hole, not by amending the soil.

Dig the planting hole three times the diameter of the tree or shrub's root ball and no deeper than the root ball itself.

Careful handling during planting is important to minimize plant stress. Always handle a plant by the container, not by the trunk or stems. It is critical to keep the roots of all plants damp or moist until the moment of planting.

Regardless of container material, papier mâché, ridged plastic or burlap, remove as much of the container as possible at the time of planting. Strings used to secure the burlap to the base of the tree and the burlap itself should be removed from the root ball after placing the root ball in the hole. Be especially careful to remove strings from around the trunk. When planting potted plants, tear or cut the sides off the pot and handle carefully.

Since most Oklahoma soils are clay, plant trees and shrubs one to two inches above grade. In sandy soils, plant trees and shrubs at original grade. Backfill with the original soil and do not amend that soil. Studies have shown that amendments to the backfill often delay establishment of the tree or shrub, and may result in further complications such as root rot. Also, do not put crushed stone or gravel in the bottom of the hole! Gravel placed in the bottom of the hole will not improve drainage as many people think, in fact, it can hinder water movement, creating soggy conditions in the bottom of the hole. The best backfill around a new tree or shrub is native soil. Fortunately, many ornamental trees and shrubs grow well in a variety of soils.

When backfilling, be sure to bring soil up to the top edge of the root ball so that roots are not left exposed. Planting above grade leaves soils susceptible to desiccation; therefore, it's necessary to immediately mulch plantings.

Fertilization is not recommended at the time of planting because a new tree or shrub has a very limited capacity for utilizing fertilizer until it becomes established. Excessive fertilizer in the root zone can be damaging, so do not add fertilizer to the backfill or dump it into the bottom of the hole. Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered well at the time of planting. Natural rainfall is usually not adequate to provide the moisture needs of recently installed landscape plants. Young plantings need an equivalent of one inch or more of rain per week. Newly planted trees and shrubs may need to be watered two or three times a week in extremely hot, dry, windy weather because their root systems cannot take up the amount of water needed to replenish the water lost through leaves. Watch for signs of wilting as one indicator that the plant needs water. But also be aware that some plants in chronically wet sites may also wilt. Feeling or probing in the soil around the root ball is also another way to monitor soil moisture. Apply water slowly at the base of newly installed plants, such as through a trickle irrigation system.

Keep a four to six foot, grass-free circle around young trees and shrubs the first two to three years. Benefits of mulching to create a weed and turf-free area include reduced plant competition for water and nutrients and even soil temperature and moisture. Keep the grass-free

circle filled with two to four inches of organic mulch, such as leaf mold, compost, bark, grass clippings, or straw. Do not mound mulch up against the trunk of trees or shrubs. Keep the mulch two to four inches away from the trunk; this is particularly helpful in preventing rodent damage during winter months. Excessive mulch against a trunk may also result in an environment favorable to disease and insect attack.

DO NOT use plastic under the mulch to prevent weeds. Roots are drawn to the surface and may be damaged by summer heat and winter cold. Also, rock mulches that transfer heat directly to the roots or limestone chat that releases calcium into the soil are not recommended.

When transplanting woody plants, the only necessary pruning is the removal of broken or damaged branches. Excessive pruning at planting reduces leaf area, which decreases the amount of plant energy generated that is needed to create a healthy root system. Another common practice when planting trees is to stake the tree. Stake young trees only when they are top-heavy or planted in windswept areas. Prolonged staking can have detrimental effects on the development of the tree. Too often, staking materials end up injuring or girdling a tree. If staking is necessary, leave stakes in place very briefly.

Trees are a large investment for the landscape, but can greatly increase the value of a home, as well as create a desirable living environment. Take special care to establish trees properly. OSU Extension Factsheet [HLA-6414 Planting Trees and Shrubs](#) provides more information to help you be successful.

**Cooking with Barbara** – Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist, makes an Italian garbanzo soup.

**This Week in the Vegetable Garden** – This week we can continue to transplant tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and tomatillos into the vegetable garden. And if you haven't done so already, start your okra and winter squash seeds if you are planning to grow your own transplants. We are finally out of the cold weather and should not have to worry about frosts, but we can keep our row covers out and use them for insect protection. Summer squash and cucumbers are often inundated with insect pests. Some of these, such as the squash vine borer can kill plants outright. A row cover will help prevent squash bugs, vine borers, and cucumber beetles from reaching plants. But cucumbers and squash are insect pollinated, so we will have to remove these in a few weeks when flowers develop.

### **Announcements:**

The Oklahoma Horticulture Study Group, Inc. will hold an Heirloom Tomato, Veggie and Herb Sale on Saturday, May 1 from 9 AM until 4 PM at the Tulsa Garden Center next to the Linnaeus Gardens. Over 60 varieties of heirloom tomato will be available along with sweet potato slips, and many more vegetables and herbs. For more information and a complete list of plants, e-mail [OKHortStudyGroup@aol.com](mailto:OKHortStudyGroup@aol.com) or call 918-827-6455.

The Fred A. Barkley Branch of the American Begonia Society will hold its annual plant sale from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturday, May 1, at the Will Rogers Garden Center, 3400 NW 36th Street, in Oklahoma City. For more information please call (405) 390-4228.

The Tulsa Perennial Club Perennials and More Plant Sale will be held Saturday, May 1 at the Tulsa Garden Center Auditorium, 2435 S. Peoria, from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM. Perennials, annuals, herbs and craft items will be for sale. For more information visit: [www.tulsaperennialclub.com](http://www.tulsaperennialclub.com).

Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek, *Oklahoma Gardening* Host

## Italian Garbanzo Soup

- 2 cans, 15 ounces, garbanzos or chickpeas, rinsed and drained
  - 2 large cloves garlic, peeled
  - 2 cups fat free, reduced sodium chicken broth
  - 2 teaspoons olive oil
  - 2 cups cold water
  - 1 medium onion, chopped
  - 2 tablespoons tomato paste
  - 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
  - 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
  - 2-1/2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
1. In large saucepan combine garbanzos, garlic, chicken broth and water. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat, simmer, covered, 20 minutes or until beans are very soft. Let cool at least 10 minutes.
  2. While beans cook, heat oil in small skillet over medium –high heat. Add onion and cook 5 minutes, stirring often.
  3. Transfer both/bean mixture and cooked onion to a blender in two batches. Add tomato paste and rosemary. Blend to desired smoothness.
  4. Return soup to large saucepan, add salt and pepper and heat to desired temperature for serving. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice. Garnish with parsley.

Serves 6.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Servings per recipe: 6		
<b>Calories 196</b>	Calories from fat 27	
	% Daily Value	
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g		5%
Saturated Fat	trace	2%
<b>Cholesterol</b>	trace	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 649mg		27%
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 35g		12%
Dietary Fiber	7g	28%
<b>Protein</b> 8g		15%
Vitamin A: 5%	Vitamin C: 20%	Folacin: 26%
Calcium: 6%	Iron: 12%	Potassium: 10%

Modified from original source: American Institute for Cancer Research, <http://www.aicr.org>.

Barbara Brown, Food Specialist

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3642)

**OETA air date: April 17 and 18, 2010**

OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

This week on *Oklahoma Gardening* we visit TLC Florist and Greenhouses in Oklahoma City to take a peek at new plants for the 2010 season.

Annuals and Groundcovers – April Enos joins us to present new annuals for the garden.

Euphorbia, *Euphorbia hypericifolia* ‘Hip Hop’  
Scaevola, *Scaevola* hybrid ‘Bombay Dark Blue’  
Lobularia ‘Snow Princess’  
Scaevola, *Scaevola* hybrid ‘Topaz Pink’  
Scaevola, *Scaevola* hybrid ‘Topaz Blue Bicolor’  
Euryops, *Margarita amarilla* ‘Sonny’  
Ribbon Bush, *Homalocladium platycladium*  
Mexican Petunia, *Ruellia brittoniana* ‘Chi Chi’  
Salvia, *Salvia elegans* ‘Dancing Flame’  
Ornamental Pepper, *Capsicum annuum* ‘Purple Flash’  
Shrimp Plant, *Justicia brandegeana* ‘Hollandica’  
Salvia, *Salvia* hybrid ‘Cervina’  
Orange Sedge, *Carex testacea*  
Variegated Scented Geranium, *Pelargonium citronella*  
Joseph’s Coat, *Alternanthera* hybrids: ‘Raspberry Rum’, ‘Red Carpet’, and ‘Mai Tai’  
Millionbells, *Calibrachoa* Mini Famous™ hybrids: ‘Compact Orange’, ‘Compact Yellow’, and ‘Red’  
Lisianthus, *Eustoma grandiflorum* ‘Sapphire Pink Rim’  
Sun Coleus, *Solenostemon scutellarioides* cultivars  
Piggyback Plant, *Tolmiea menziesii*  
Ground Covers: *Sedum* species  
Juniper Thyme, *Thymus leucotrichus*  
Silver Carpet, *Dymondia margaretea*  
Hens & Chicks, *Sempervivum tectorum*  
Variegated Pennywort, *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* ‘Variegata’  
Echeveria, *Echeveria nodulosa*

Woody and Herbaceous Perennials – Cindy Townsend brings us the best in new perennials for 2010.

Columnar Plum Yew, *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* ‘Fastigiata’  
Spreading Japanese Plum Yew, *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* ‘Prostrata’  
Dwarf Golden Japanese Yew, *Taxus cuspidate* ‘Nana Aurescens’  
Coral Bells, *Heuchera* hybrids: ‘Midnight Bayou’, ‘Miracle’, and ‘Electric Lime’  
Cranesbill/Hardy Geranium, *Geranium pratense*: ‘Hocus Pocus’ and ‘Cheryl’s Shadow’  
Endless Summer Hydrangea, *Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Twist & Shout’  
Columbine, *Aquilegia chrysantha* ‘Denver Gold’  
Hellebores/Lenten Rose, *Helleborus* hybrids: ‘Onyx Odyssey’ and ‘Splashdown Strain’  
Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea* ‘Candy Mountain’  
Fernleaf Bleeding Heart, *Dicentra formosa*: ‘King of Hearts’ and ‘Burning Hearts’

False Spirea, *Astilbe chenensis* Vision series: 'Visions in Pink', 'Visions in Red', and 'Visions in White'

Itoh Peony, *Peonia x hybrid* 'Sequestered Sunshine'

Hydrangea, *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Incrediball™' and 'Invincibelle Spirit'

Dianthus/Sweet William, *Dianthus barbatus* 'Heart Attack'

Scent First™ Dianthus, *Dianthus* hybrid 'Tickled Pink'

Scent First™ Dianthus, *Dianthus* hybrid 'Passion'

Salvia, *Salvia* hybrid, 'May Night'

Salvia, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'

Mealy Cup Sage, *Salvia farinacea* 'Cathedral Deep Blue'

Mullein, *Verbascum* hybrids: 'Summer Sorbet' (raspberry color), 'Blue Pixie' (purple/blue),

'Jackie' (light peach color), and 'Flower of Scotland' (dark peach color)

**This Week in the Vegetable Garden** – This week in the vegetable garden we transplant our solanaceous crops – the tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and tomatillos. Remember to set a stake or cage for your tomatoes and tomatillos at planting time to help support the plants as they grow.

### **Cooking with Barbara Brown**

#### **Baked Oatmeal with Fruit and Nuts**

- 1-3/4 cups low-fat milk
  - 2 teaspoons unsalted butter
  - 1/8 teaspoon salt
  - 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
  - 1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped
  - 1/4 cup dried cranberries, raisins or other small dried fruit
  - 1 tablespoon lightly packed brown sugar
  - 1/2 sweet apple, peeled and cored
  - 2 tablespoons lightly packed brown sugar
  - 3 tablespoons chopped pecans or walnuts
5. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 2-quart microwaveable, ovenproof casserole with nonstick vegetable spray.
  6. Heat milk and butter in casserole dish in microwave oven on HIGH until milk steams, 1 to 2 minutes. Mix in salt and oats. Set aside.
  7. Mix chopped apricots, dried cranberries and 1 tablespoon brown sugar into oats. Shred apple into oats and mix to combine.
  8. Bake, uncovered, 15 minutes. Stir oats then top with 2 tablespoons brown sugar and nuts. Bake, uncovered, 15 minutes longer, until oats are chewy. Serve at once.



Serves 4.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Servings per recipe: 4		
<b>Calories 250</b>	Calories from fat 32	
	% Daily Value	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	12%	
Saturated Fat 2g	12%	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 9mg	3%	
<b>Sodium</b> 126mg	5%	
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 32g	39%	
Dietary Fiber 5g	16%	
<b>Protein</b> 9g	17%	
Vitamin A: 18%	Vitamin C: 4%	Folacin: 4%
Calcium: 16%	Iron: 9%	Potassium: 12%

Modified from original source: AICR's Weekly Health-e-Recipe email from: [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org), 3/2/10, Issue No. 285.  
 Barbara Brown, Food Specialist  
 Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

3/10

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Sincerely,  
 Kim Rebek, *Oklahoma Gardening* Host

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*Oklahoma Gardening* Information Sheet (#3641)  
**OETA air date: April 10 and 11, 2010**  
 OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

**Pruning Winter-burned Boxwoods** – Wide fluctuations in temperature, prolonged dry periods, drying winds and bright sunshine can cause winter damage to many of our broadleaf evergreens such as boxwood. Boxwoods or *Buxus sempervirens* are rather susceptible to winter injury, especially if the health of the plant is compromised entering the winter. Various types of winter damage can occur. Most commonly, we see winter burn on foliage that has been desiccated. Water loss occurs in winter when high winds or temporary warm weather causes a plant to give

off an unusually high amount of moisture. When this occurs during periods when the ground freezes, plants are unable to take up moisture from the soil. Such winter-burned foliage may appear reddish brown yellowish or grayish green, in color, or may completely lose color.

Another type of damage occurs from temperature fluctuations. During warm periods, the plant begins to come out of dormancy and water moves through the plant stems. When the temperature drops below freezing, the water freezes and expands, splitting plant tissues. With severe damage, we may see entire branches dieback, especially in the middle and apical parts of the crown. We may also see cracks develop in the stem.

Dead and damaged tissue will not recover and needs to be removed. This raises the question of how to prune boxwoods, should they be sheared or pruned? Shearing is the uniform removal of all or part of the latest flush of plant growth. Plants are sheared to increase compactness or to maintain a specified size or shape. During the first few years after planting, boxwoods should be sheared after each flush of growth to encourage additional branch development. After the first few seasons, boxwoods should only be sheared to maintain a desired shape or form. It is important to note that continuous shearing causes a thick outer shell of foliage that produces dense shade on the interior branches. Continuous shading of the inner branches results in foliage drop from those shoots and we end up with a plant that is bare beyond a thin, dense outer layer of foliage. This can have a negative impact on the overall appearance of the shrub.

Pruning is the removal of selected branches or plant parts. Plants are pruned to remove diseased, injured, dying or dead branches. We can also remove unwanted branches by pruning. Boxwoods are best pruned, rather than sheared, to maintain a natural shape and to keep plants at a desired size so that they do not outgrow their landscape value too quickly. Boxwoods usually require some pruning in spring to remove any branches that have been killed during the winter. Also, as plants get older, some of the older branches may have to be removed so that light can get to the inner shoots.

Envision the natural shape and selectively cut back out-of-place branches. A compact plant results when branches are pruned back to a lateral within the plant canopy. This will also hide the stub and extend the time between prunings. It is best to be slow and deliberate when pruning. Step back from the plant frequently to look at the overall shape, identify individual branches that need to be removed, and cut them to a lateral within the canopy. Don't remove too much at once without rechecking the overall shape and appearance.

Now that we have a better idea of pruning methods, how do we deal with winter damage? Winter burn or tip burn is quite minor and only affects the tips of branches. Simply remove the dead tips with pruning shears or hand pruners. The plant will recover quickly.

Winter damage can cause one or more branches to die out completely. When we look closely at these damaged limbs, we find bark splitting which can often continue all the way to the base of the branch. Prune these branches back to the point where the splitting stops. Full recovery can take several years.

Winter burn of the total plant is the most devastating. In this case the whole shrub will turn a pale yellow and every branch will have splitting bark. For these plants, the only chance for recovery is to severely prune the plant. In spring after all chances of severe frost are past cut all branches back to a twelve to eighteen inch mound, depending upon the size of the plant. This

method is not always successful; be prepared to completely remove the plant if it does not recover.

Maintaining the health of the shrub throughout the growing season will help make it more resilient to winter damage. Water shrubs during dry periods throughout the year to maintain plant health. It is also important to fertilize plants at the proper time of year. Make all applications before July, as applications late in the year encourages new growth that does not have time to harden off before the winter. The same is true of pruning. Heavy pruning late in the season can cause excess growth of tissues that will enter the winter tender.

Resources:

- OSU Extension Factsheet [HLA-6409 Pruning Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, and Vines](#)
- NC State University Horticulture Information Leaflet “Growing Boxwood in the Landscape”: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8628.html>
- Virginia Cooperative Extension Bulletin “Boxwood in the Landscape”: <http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-603/426-603.html#L5>

**Planting Brambles** – Blackberries are among the easiest of all fruits to grow. Few fruits produce more dependably. Properly maintained, irrigated plantings of good varieties may produce crops for 15 years or more. Blackberry fruit has a range of distinctive flavors which vary from sweet to tart. Blackberries and their hybrids have either an erect, semi-erect or a trailing growth habit. Semi-erect and trailing blackberries require trellises. While erect blackberries do not require a trellis, it is recommended to grow them with a trellis system to aid in plant maintenance and to help protect plants against wind damage.

When selecting blackberry cultivars, choosing several varieties with different maturation times can extend the harvest season considerably. Several good varieties of erect blackberries have been released by researchers in Arkansas. These seem well adapted to Oklahoma conditions and include a number of varieties named for Native American tribes, such as Navajo, Arapaho and Choctaw. When selecting cultivars, another consideration are the thorns. Some cultivars are thornless, which makes training and harvest a bit easier.

Raspberries are grown in many of the northern states, but are not very well adapted for Oklahoma. Buds often break during warm periods in January and February, making the plants very susceptible to cold damage from late frosts. Raspberries also are not heat tolerant. If you choose to plant raspberries, locate plants where they will receive afternoon shade or dappled shade all day. Cultivars vary considerable and produce fruits ranging from yellow to red to black. One cultivar that has demonstrated good performance in Oklahoma is ‘Heritage’. Raspberries generally require trellising.

Raspberries and blackberries are planted in the same way. Dormant plants are set in the ground during February or early March. Actively growing plants should not be planted outdoors until after the average frost-free date for your area. Space plants 3 to 4 feet apart in rows that are 6 to 8 feet apart. Plants should be set at the same depth at which they grew in the nursery row. Unless rain is likely, water the newly set plants.

During their first growing season after planting, erect blackberry plants often produce prostrate to semi-erect canes that sprawl over the ground. Erect canes will be produced in the following

years. First-year plants are allowed to produce as much growth as possible without pruning or training to a trellis. This season, our only maintenance concern is to keep our plants well irrigated and weed free, next winter I'll return to start training the canes.

You can find more information on growing brambles in OSU Fact Sheet [HLA-6215 Blackberry and Raspberry Culture for the Home Garden](#).

**Gardening with Kids: The Bean Tepee** – In this segment, 4-H and Youth Horticulture Programs Extension Associate Shelley Mitchell joins us to demonstrate a garden activity that is sure to bring children into the garden. We build a bean tepee that will support beans (or any vine) and create a fort for children to play inside.

Start by digging a shallow trench in a circle 3 to 5 feet in diameter, depending on the size of tepee you wish to build. To build the structure we used long linear branches from a crape myrtle, though any type of branch will work. Branches should be 6 to 10 feet, depending on the height you wish to build your tepee. Either tie all the branches together and set the tepee upright, or as we did, tie three branches to create your base. Then, stand the base up in the trench; this will act as your base for building the rest of the tepee. The base of the branches should be set in the dug trench. Place the remaining branches against the base until you have created a full circle. Be sure to leave a door for kids to enter the tepee.

Push the base of each branch into the soil as far as possible. Then, pull the soil back into your trench and around the base of each branch. This will help stabilize your tepee until the beans begin growing. Once the plants grow, the root system will further help in anchoring your tepee to the ground.

Tie all the branches together at the apex of the tepee. Use a strong twine or string and make sure to secure the branches well against the wind. Now, you are ready to plant. Any type of light-weight vine can be grown on the tepee, but to encourage children to eat more healthy vegetables, we are planting beans. Place 3 to 4 seeds at the base of each pole. Once the seedlings emerge, we will thin back to 2 plants per post.

**This Week in the Vegetable Garden** – This week we can transplant our cucumber and summer squash seedlings to the garden. I like to plant a few summer squash every other week for several weeks, so that the plants do not mature all at one time. We can also direct sow corn and bean seeds into the garden this week.

Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek, *Oklahoma Gardening* Host

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*Oklahoma Gardening* Information Sheet (#3640)

**OETA air date: April 3 and 4, 2010**

OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

**Types of Evergreen Plants** – Today, David Hillock and I will demonstrate pruning techniques for evergreens. First, I am going to take a look at the different types of evergreen plants found in the landscape. Evergreens may be divided into two groups: broadleaf and narrowleaf or coniferous evergreens.

The term broadleaf evergreen is somewhat misleading since it includes evergreen shrubs with large leaves such as aucuba, but also includes evergreens with small leaves such as boxwood. The term broadleaf is used to include all evergreens having relatively broad or wide leaves rather than the needle- or scale-like leaves of conifers. Broadleaf evergreens include plants such as:

- Aucuba, *Aucuba japonica*
- Camellia, *Camellia speciosa*
- Boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens*
- Cherrylaurel, *Prunus caroliniana*
- Holly, *Ilex speciosa*
- Mahonia, *Mahonia speciosa*
- Nandina, *Nandina domestica*
- Photinia, *Photinia* hybrids

In contrast, the term narrowleaf evergreen refers to coniferous plants with needle-like or scale-like leaves. These are the plants that we more readily associate with the word evergreen. The narrowleaf evergreens can be further divided into two general classes: needle-leaf and scale-leaf. The proper time and methods of pruning depend on which of the classes the evergreen belongs.

The pine tree is a good example of a needle-leaf evergreen. Trees and shrubs in this class bear branches that radiate from the trunk in whorls, like spokes from a hub. There is a length of bare trunk between the whorls. This class includes:

- Pine, *Pinus* species
- Yew, *Taxus* species
- Fir, *Abies* species
- Spruce, *Picea* species
- True cedars, *Cedrus* species

Arborvitae and junipers are good examples of the scale-leaf class of coniferous evergreens, which bear their branches irregularly, somewhat like deciduous plants. This class can be pruned just before new growth begins in the spring and again in May, June, or July to shape or control growth. David Hillock is going to demonstrate proper pruning techniques of scale-leaved evergreens. Examples of scale-leaved conifers:

- American Arborvitae, *Thuja occidentalis*
- Junipers, *Juniperus* species
- Cypress, *Cupressus* species
- False-cypress, *Chamaecyparis* species
- China fir, *Cunninghamia lanceolata*
- Incense-cedar, *Calocedrus decurrens*

**Pruning Needs of Broadleaf Evergreens** – Most broadleaf evergreens require a limited amount of pruning. When pruning is necessary, it is generally done just before new growth starts in the spring. This will allow the evergreen to grow and reform itself, and cover pruning scars. Evergreens that flower in early spring such as camellias and azaleas should be pruned immediately after they finish flowering.

Pruning before new growth begins is especially important for evergreens that have only a spring burst of growth, such as photinia. For these plants, leafy growth will not cover any pruning cuts made after the spring growth period until the following year. Generally photinia is pruned to control plant size; however with proper plant placement in the landscape and careful cultivar selection, photinia will form well-shaped plants without pruning. The same is true of many other broadleaf evergreen shrubs, camellia, as long as the plant is given enough growing space. Taking the time to select the right plant for a location will reduce your maintenance needs in the long run.

Certain broadleaf evergreens like hollies have a major burst of growth in spring and fall while others like abelia and elaeagnus grow all summer. Many of these produce long, vigorous shoots that extend well beyond the natural canopy. These should be cut back severely within the canopy in late winter or early spring before new growth begins. Cut far into the canopy, but leave a few leaves on the stem.

Mahonia and nandina plants sometimes develop leggy branches with foliage only at the top. These may be removed at ground level or at any height desired. New shoots will develop just below the cut. The best time to prune is after berries drop in the spring. Usually, only a few of the tallest and oldest branches should be cut back to achieve a layered look. New growth will help fill out the lower portions of the plant.

Sometimes evergreens become too large for their location and severe pruning is required. Healthy, broadleaf evergreens such as hollies, camellia, and mountain laurel can be cut back to a stump and regrow. Others like photinia and boxwood may die or recover very slowly if pruned severely. This severe type of pruning is called rejuvenation pruning, and is successful when done in late winter or early spring before new growth begins. Cut back stems just above ground level, or up to four feet. It will take the plant 2-3 years to recover.

There are also a number of broadleaf evergreen trees common in the Oklahoma landscape such as live oak and Southern magnolia. The southern magnolia responds poorly to heavy pruning. Do not remove the lower limbs when a magnolia is young, or the bark may sunscald. It also causes a great deal of maintenance in removing the thick leaves when mowing. It is better to allow the trees to grow to the ground, where the leaf litter is hidden and the canopy creates excellent wildlife habitat.

**Pruning Deciduous Shrubs** – Most deciduous shrubs are pruned in the late winter or early spring. But like our spring-flowering evergreens, deciduous plants that produce flowers in the spring should be pruned after they complete blooming. Forsythia (*Forsythia* hybrid) is a good example. If it is pruned during the dormant season, the flower buds will be removed and the plant will have a poor floral display.

Hydrangeas (*Hydrangea* species) are typically cut back to the ground in early spring before new growth emerges. However, many of the buds on aerial shoots can survive the winter. Old shoots can be left on the plant to provide additional height to the plant. Simply cut back the tips of the shoots to an outward facing bud that has some green coloration, indicating it is living. The plants will have a much taller appearance and a layered look, as new lower growing shoots fill out the bottom portion of the plant

There is much confusion on the pruning needs of Crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*). Crape myrtles require very little pruning. Often they are cut back uniformly to a height around

three feet above ground level. This is unnecessary and results in the production of numerous, weak, upright shoots. These shoots are often brittle and susceptible to damage. Crapemyrtles left to grow naturally produce a beautiful vase-like form. Minor pruning to removed broken, crossing, or rubbing limbs is all that is generally necessary to maintain a healthy shrub. Also, there is a misconception that removing last year's spent flower buds will increase floral production in the current season. But because crapemyrtle flowers are produced on new (current season) wood, the presence or absence of last season's flower heads has no bearing on flower production. Most commonly, crapemyrtles are pruned to control size, but a better way to manage plant size is through cultivar selection. Many small-growing and dwarf cultivars of crapemyrtle are available commercially. Choose from these if you wish to place a crapemyrtle in a confined area.

### **Horticulture Tips for April with David Hillock**

- Spring is the time for foliar diseases. Cedar apple and hawthorn rust, fire blight, Diplodia tip blight of pine, powdery mildew and leaf spots. Selecting and planting disease resistant varieties should be the first step in controlling diseases. Apply fungicides as preventative spray as buds break or leaves form on susceptible varieties.
- Be alert for insect pests and their predators. If sufficient predators are present, don't use an insecticide. Hand pick if possible. Watch for cut worms and cabbage loopers and dust with Bt. Don't spray insecticides during fruit tree bloom or pollination may be affected.
- Do not cut back foliage of spring flowering bulbs until they yellow.
- Planting of summer annuals and summer bulbs can begin after danger of frost, which is generally around mid-April in most parts of Oklahoma. This is also a good time to plant perennials and groundcovers to take advantage of their burst of growth. Warm-season annuals should not be planted until soil temperatures are in the low 60s.
- Put soaker hoses in place; inspect and repair drip and in-ground irrigation systems.
- The first application of fertilizer can be applied to warm-season grass this month, usually in mid-April. Apply 1 pound N per 1,000 sq. ft.
- Mowing of warm-season grasses can begin now as well. Cut height for bermuda and zoysia should be 1 to 1½ inches. Mow buffalo at 3 inches.
- Spring dead spot disease in bermudagrass reveals itself this time of year. Do not spray fungicides at this time; instead, perform practices to encourage rapid recovery.
- Warm-season grasses can be established from sprigs, plugs or sod beginning late April.

**Vegetable Garden Chores** – Despite the cold spring we've had, the weeds are growing vigorously. Make sure to cultivate regularly to keep on top of this chore. As the weather warms they can easily get out of control. This week we are starting seeds indoors for our melon transplants that we will plant out into the garden in early May. Our peas are coming up and we will need to think about what type of trellis to use to support the vines. Also, remember we are not yet safe from frosts, so keep those row covers or sheets handy and watch the weather report.

### **Announcements:**

OSU Extension will host a Native American Horticulture Conference on Thursday, April 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Payne County Expo Center in Stillwater. Featured speakers include head horticulturalist from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, experts from Indian Nations across the state, as well university specialists. Registration is \$100 and includes lunch. For more information contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404.

The Central Oklahoma Hemerocallis Society (Daylily Club) will hold its Spring Daylily Sale on

Saturday, April 10 from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the Will Rogers Garden Center in Oklahoma City. For more information call Brenda Jindra at 405-433-2217 or Faye Ramsey at 405-603-2225.

Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek, *Oklahoma Gardening* Host