

# April 2009—Oklahoma Gardening Shows

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3543)

**OETA air date: April 25 and 26, 2009**

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

**Bustani Plant Farm** – In this segment we visit Steve Owen’s Bustani Plant Farm in Stillwater. Steve shares with us a variety of means by which he identifies and selects new plants to produce for the garden including foreign exploration, selecting unique traits among seedlings, and turning to old or heirloom varieties found in our own backyards. Together we explore a variety of plant groups that can be used in the garden, from native perennials to tropical annuals. Steve also shows off a few plants used for their magnificent foliage, including Golden Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare* ‘Isla Gold’) and Bronze Sea Berry (*Haloragis erecta* ‘Bronze’). Finally, we finish with a sneak peak at a few plants that will not be released until next season. Following is a list of plants explored at Bustani Plant Farm. For more information on these and other specialty plants, visit [www.bustaniplantfarm.com](http://www.bustaniplantfarm.com).

## Plant List:

Black Foot Daisy, *Melampodium leucanthum*  
Rock Pink, *Talinum calycinum*  
Roundheaded Dalea, *dalea multiflora*  
Pale Pink Poppy Mallow, *Callirhoe alcaeoides*  
Large Coneflower, *Rudbeckia grandiflora*  
Giant Coneflower, *Rudbeckia maxima*  
Yellow Cestrum, *Cestrum aurantiacum*  
Heirloom Dianthus, *Dianthus* sp.  
Green Ecboium, *Ecboium viride*  
Deep Blue False Vervain, *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*  
Dwarf Red False Vervain, *Stachytarpheta* ‘Red Compacta’  
Lion’s Ears, *Leonotis leonurus*  
Coral Bean hybrid, *Erythrina x bidwillii*  
Bowtie Vine, *Dalechampia discoriefolia*  
Golden Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare* ‘Isla Gold’  
Bronze Sea Berry, *Haloragis erecta* ‘Bronze’  
Orange Clerodendrum, *Clerodendrum speciosissimum*  
Native Honeysuckle, *Lonicera flava*

**Transplanting Tomatoes** – In this segment Kim plants out the remainder of our tomato plants.

We are growing several varieties in the studio garden; first we have an heirloom cherry tomato called ‘Riesentraube’. We are also growing the ‘Orange Fleshed Purple Smudge’ tomato which has a very unique coloration, watch for the purple fruits later this season. We will also be adding ‘Yellow Pear Grape Tomatoes’ and a determinant type tomato called ‘Silvery Fir’. Two main types of tomatoes are available, determinant and indeterminate types. Determinate types set all their fruit at one time, while indeterminate types produce fruit over a longer time period. We typically grow indeterminate types in the home garden; however, determinant tomatoes are ideal for small spaces and containers or if you plan to can your tomatoes for later use. When selecting tomato cultivars for the vegetable garden one consideration is disease resistance. Consider selecting varieties resistant to Fusarium wilt and nematodes since these are problems in all areas of Oklahoma.

The ideal tomato transplant should be six to eight inches tall and dark green, with a stocky stem and well-developed root system. Normally, six to eight weeks are required to produce this type of plant from seed. When selecting plants at the garden center, don’t be fooled into buying the biggest, tallest tomato plants, a short, stocky plant is a better choice. The number of plants needed will depend on your planned use. If your family is interested in having only fresh fruit, plant three to five plants per person. If you intend to can or freeze fruits, then five to ten plants per person should be grown.

Tomatoes should be set in the garden when the weather has warmed and the soil temperature is above 60°F. These conditions usually occur about April 5 in southern Oklahoma and about April 25 in northwestern Oklahoma. Temperatures below 50°F impair tomato growth.

Tomatoes will produce roots along portions of the buried stem. So to help increase the root system, I plant my tomatoes fairly deep. Pull off the lowest set of leaves or even two sets if the stems are very compact, and then set the plants to the depth of the lowest set of remaining leaves. This is much different than the way we plant most other plants, but is very beneficial for establishing a strong root system.

Sometimes the only tomato transplants we can find are long and leggy. To plant these, we will dig short trenches about four inches deep and lay the plants down in the trench. Set the plant in the trench and turn the top upward, leaving the top six inches of the plant exposed above the soil line as you fill the soil back in. This will allow roots to develop along the buried portion of the stem and you will end up with a much stringer plant than if you left the long leggy stem above ground.

Tomatoes are set two feet apart, and we will plant them in line to make it easier to stake the plants later. We are trying a stake and weave system which we will set up in a week or so. It is best to set out tomato plants in the evening or on a cloudy day to keep the plants from wilting and getting too dry. Mulching tomatoes is very important to provide even moisture and prevent fruit from cracking. Place a two to three inch layer of organic material such as compost, leaves or hay around the growing plants. We will start with compost, which is dark and will help keep the soil warm. Once the temperatures rise, we will cover the compost with straw, which has more of a cooling effect.

For more information on growing tomatoes refer to Extension Fact Sheet, [HLA-6012 Growing Tomatoes in the Home Garden](#).

**Vegetable Garden Chores** – This week in the vegetable garden we can continue to plant our solanaceous plants: peppers, eggplants, tomatoes and tomatillos. We can also put our okra in the ground and continue planting summer squash, cucumbers and beans.

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!

Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek  
Oklahoma Gardening Host

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3542)  
**OETA air date: April 18 and 19, 2009**  
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

**Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Affiliate Garden Showcase: Lendonwood Gardens** – Kim continues to highlight the OBGAA Affiliate Gardens with a visit to Lendonwood Gardens in Grove, Oklahoma. Leonard Miller, founder of Lendonwood, tells us about the garden's history. Lendonwood Gardens is a three-acre botanical garden near Grand Lake in northeastern Oklahoma. Grassy pathways meander through more than 1,400 different types of plants, including the largest collection of rhododendrons in the southwest, 500 varieties of daylilies and 25 varieties of dogwoods. The garden also houses large collections of Japanese maples, magnolias and tree peonies. For information on visiting Lendonwood, visit [www.lendonwood.org/](http://www.lendonwood.org/).

Plants featured at Lendonwood:

Deodar Cedar, *Cedrus deodara* 'Silver Mist'

Japanese False Cypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera filifera* 'Lemon Thread'

Maroon Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum* 'Bonfire'

Red Twinged Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum* 'Kiyohime'

Weeping Laceleaf Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Orangeola'  
Red Flame Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum* 'Otome Zakura'  
Tree peonies, *Paeonia suffruticosa*  
Rhododendrons, *Rhododendron yakusimanum* and *Rhododendron hyperythrum*

**Hilling Squash Seeds** – In this segment Kim plants summer squash seeds in our small space garden. Squash and cucumber seeds are often sown into hills – small mounds of soil about 6 to 8 inches high. Hilling helps warm the soil in spring, which hastens germination and promotes faster growth. Hilling can also help improve soil drainage. When planting in hills, set 4 to 6 seeds in a circle at 5-inch intervals. Plant seeds one inch deep and lightly tamp soil over seeds. Squash should be planted after all danger of frost has passed and soils have warmed to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Barb Cooks** – Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist, shows how to freeze strawberries.

**Vegetable Garden Chores** – This week in our vegetable garden we can continue to plant our cucumbers, summer squash, and beans, and we can add tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and tomatillos to the planting list throughout the warmer regions of the state. We also need to start our winter squash seeds indoors or in a cold frame if we plan to start our own transplants from seed.

**Announcements:**

The Everything Garden Festival of NE Oklahoma will be held Saturday, April 25 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday, April 26 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Claremore Expo Center. Hosted by master gardeners, this show has everything related to gardening: plant sales, outdoor kitchens, waterscapes, hypertufa leaf casings and educational presentations on a variety of topics. There will be a special Children's Backyard Area and Horticulturists and master gardeners will be on site to answer gardening questions. For more information contact: Denise Lamp, (918) 770-3229, [dlamp@everythinggardenfestival.com](mailto:dlamp@everythinggardenfestival.com). You can also visit the website: [www.everythinggardenfestival.com](http://www.everythinggardenfestival.com).

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Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek  
Oklahoma Gardening Host

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Oklahoma Gardening Information Sheet (#3541)

**OETA air date: April 11 and 12, 2009**

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

**Plant Highlight: Spring Bloomers in the Rock Garden** – You can find something blooming in the rock garden all season long, and right now there are a few fabulous plants in bloom. The first is the Myrtle Spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*).

Myrtle Spurge is also called Donkeytail, and is an evergreen perennial. It has showy, blue-green foliage that looks great all year and has a magnificent architecture. And right now, the plants are flowering. Spurges have interesting flower heads, and this one is no exception. The flowers are inconspicuous, but are housed inside these showy bright yellow, almost chartreuse, bracts or modified leaves. Myrtle Spurge blooms March through April. The plants reach only about one foot high and about as wide, but can spread by seed. In fact, in some places it is considered invasive, so you want to keep a watch on the plants and pull up seedlings that try to escape the garden. Plant Myrtle Spurge in mass for best impact. You do want to be careful when handling this plant. Like most euphorbias, it exudes a milky sap that can irritate the skin. Myrtle Spurge is drought tolerant and tolerates poor soils making it an excellent plant for Oklahoma.

Creeping Phlox (*Phlox subulata*) also known as Moss Pink, is an herbaceous perennial that produces an abundance of small flowers in the spring. These plants look excellent planted in large masses, where they make a very powerful

statement. Creeping Phlox grows to 6 inches high, with a spread about 2 feet. It makes an excellent ground cover, tolerates dry soils, such as those found in our rock garden, and they also look fabulous on a slope or spilling over a retaining wall. After the plants flower, pinch back the foliage to encourage denser growth. You can propagate Creeping Phlox by dividing plants in spring after the bloom.

Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*) is another prolific bloomer and a classic rock garden plant. It is a broadleaf evergreen that becomes nearly completely covered in white blossoms in the spring. Candytuft is a wonderful groundcover, growing 12 inches high and spreading to three feet.

Bulbs are a wonderful addition to the rock garden as well. Look for dwarf cultivars and a variety of species that bloom at different times of the year. One bulb that stands out in our rock garden in spring is the daffodil cultivar 'Pheasant's Eye'. It is also called the Poet's Narcissus. It is one of the last daffodils to bloom in spring and has a remarkable coloration, pure white petals with a yellow cup and bright red fringed rim.

**Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Affiliate Garden Showcase: Woodward Park** – In this segment Kim visits with Grounds Supervisor Jack Beighle about the park. Tulsa's most popular horticultural attraction is located at 21st Street and Peoria in the heart of historic Mapleridge. In 1909 the isolated tract of land, accessible only by wagon trails, was condemned by the city for a park site. At that time it was considered "too far out in the country" and early Tulsans considered the purchase price of \$100 per acre a foolish move and doubted that the 45-acre site would ever be a valuable asset.

Known as the Perryman's Pasture, it had earlier been a portion of a 160-acre allotment given to Helen Woodward, a Creek Indian, by the Five Civilized Tribes Indian Commission. In 1909 the City of Tulsa acquired the property from Helen's father, Herbert E Woodward. Helen was a minor, age fourteen, when the land deal was made. Herbert had acted as her guardian and sold the property without her consent. In 1925 Helen Woodward Slemp (Mrs. S. H. Slemp) decided to test the sale of her allotment. It became the subject of litigation in the Oklahoma Supreme Court. After four years of court battle, Mrs. Slemp lost her case to the City of Tulsa.

Today the 45-acre park boasts a wide variety of horticultural delights, including rock gardens, an English herb garden, a terraced Italian Renaissance rose garden, a Victorian conservatory (Lord and Burnham), a three-acre arboretum and an azalea garden with over 15,000 azaleas. The park provides a haven for citizens and visitors alike.

Plants discussed are Azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.), Roses (*Rosa hybrid*), Hybrid English floribunda 'Mr. Lincoln', 'Chrysler Imperial', 'Knockout', Pink Pintas (*Penta lanceolata*), *Lantana trifolia* 'Popcorn', Beefsteak Plant (*Perilla magilla*), English Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus* 'Otto Luyken') and Prickly Ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*).

**Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Affiliate Garden Showcase: Honor Heights Park** – In this segment we feature Honor Heights Park in Muskogee. Honor Heights Park (122 acres) is a botanical garden and arboretum located at North Honor Heights Drive in Muskogee, Oklahoma. It is a public park operated by the City of Muskogee. In 1909, the City of Muskogee purchased the original 40 acres of Honor Heights Park for \$4,500. Agency Hill was officially named Honor Heights Park in 1919 in honor of the soldiers of World War I.

Honor Heights Park is known for its azaleas. It also includes the Conard Rose Garden, the C. Clay Harrell Arboretum, Art Johnson Memorial Dogwood Collection, Elbert L. Little, Jr. Native Tree Collection, floral gardens, white garden, and the Rainbow Division Memorial Amphitheater. It also features three trails: the Henry Bresser Nature Trail, the Audubon Trail, and the half-mile Stem Beach Trail, as well as picnic areas, a shelter, a pavilion, a gazebo, and public restrooms. The park is home to sports areas such as fishing lakes, a playground, open play areas, three tennis courts, and volleyball courts. In the winter, the park becomes the Garden of Lights when the azaleas, with trees and other shrubbery, are covered with over one million lights.

**Barb Cooks** – Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist, gives us information on canning jars and lids. For more information, please visit with following website - <http://www.fcs.okstate.edu/food/food> (Scroll down to Lessons, Canning Jars and Lids).

**Starting Sweet Potato Slips** – Sweet potatoes aren't started by seed like most other vegetables, they're started from what we call slips. Slips are shoots grown from a mature sweet potato. Slips can be ordered from a catalog or you can start slips from a sweet potato bought at the store or left over from last year's garden.

To start your slips, you need several healthy, clean sweet potatoes. Each sweet potato can produce up to 50 slips, but will likely produce far fewer under indoor conditions. Wash your potatoes and cut them in half. Place each section in a jar or glass of water with half of the potato below the water and half above. Use toothpicks to hold the potato in place. This is an excellent activity to do with your children or grandchildren, and hopefully a way to get them to try a new vegetable. Kids are always more willing to eat something they have grown themselves.

The slips will grow best if they are kept in a warm location, a window ledge or on top of a radiator is perfect. In a few weeks your potatoes will be covered with leafy sprouts on top and roots on the bottom. Make sure to change the water regularly to keep your slips healthy.

**Hardening Off Tomato Seedlings** – Next week we will begin to plant out the tomato and pepper seedlings that we started in our greenhouse. Any time we move plants from an indoor location, whether a greenhouse or the windowsill, to an outdoor location, we need to take measures to avoid shocking the plants with the drastic change in climate. It is much windier, brighter, and the temperatures fluctuate more outside than indoors. So we need to toughen our plants up for the outdoor conditions. We do this through a process called hardening off. Start hardening plants off two weeks before transplanting out into the garden. We started this process last week. We stopped fertilizing plants and also started watering less frequently. This week, we need to start exposing the plants to outdoor conditions during the day by placing them in a protected location, out of direct sunlight and wind. We will leave them out for just an hour the first day, then 2 hours on the second day, and so on, until they are adjusted to being outdoors the full day. By the end of the week we can leave them out overnight. Be sure to keep watering the plants regularly. They will need more water outside as the wind and higher temperatures will cause the plants to use more water. We will demonstrate how to transplant tomatoes in a couple weeks.

**Vegetable Garden Chores** – Throughout much of the state we can finally start planting our warm-season vegetables later this week! Be sure the threat of frost has passed for your area before planting. If so, you can start to set out your cucumbers and summer squash, and plant those bean seeds. Also, if you plan to start your melon seeds indoors, now is the time to start sowing. And don't forget to start those sweet potato slips.

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Sincerely,  
Kim Rebek  
*Oklahoma Gardening Host*

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*Oklahoma Gardening* Information Sheet (#3540)  
**OETA air date: April 4 and 5, 2009**  
OETA airtime: Saturday 11:00 a.m., Sunday 3:30 p.m.

**Plant Highlight: Spring Blooming Trees and Shrubs** – In this segment Kim shares a few eye-catching plants putting on spring floral displays. First we look at the fragrant *Viburnum 'Sarcoxie'*. 'Sarcoxie' is a hybrid of *Viburnum carlesii* and

*Viburnum burkwoodii*. It has semi-snowball type flowers that have a delightful fragrance. The flower buds are set at the end of every branch, making this shrub a prolific bloomer. The plant has semi-evergreen foliage that turns red-purple in fall. The short internode lengths result in dense foliage. The shrub fills out very nicely with little pruning.

Pearlbush (*Exochorda serratifolia*) is a low growing tree that can reach up to 20 feet, though in heavy clay soils 15 feet is probably a more reasonable expectation. It often grows with a multi-stemmed habit, though it can be trained as a single trunk. Due to its short mature height, it can safely be used around power lines. What caught my eye with pearlbush are the abundant, white flowers growing in dense clusters. It also produces interesting five-valved capsules in the fall. Pearlbush has relatively pest-free foliage and is a fabulous addition to the landscape.

One of our native fruit trees, the Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is not commonly grown in the landscape, though is certainly an interesting fruit tree. The fruit has a flavor that is something of a cross between a banana and a mango, and is very high in protein. What I am interested in today are the unique flowers. The flower buds themselves are interesting, with this very dark, woolly covering. The flowers must be viewed from below. They are quite large and have such a rich, purple-red coloration. They do not smell particularly well, and are pollinated by flies. It is not the showiest tree in the landscape, but the flowers are certainly unique. Interestingly, the common pawpaw is the only larval host for the zebra swallowtail butterfly, which can be found in the eastern half of the state.

**Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Affiliate Garden Showcase: Northern Oklahoma College** – In this segment we feature the gardens and grounds of Northern Oklahoma College in Tonkawa. Horticulturalist Kelley Conaghan is the dedicated and delightful grounds manager who shows us special plant collections around campus. A friend of the students, Kelley has worked to create cozy and secluded spaces for students and faculty to retreat and study. These patios include collections of tropical and other rare plants including: *Philodendron selloum*, *Plumeria*, *Pereskia* Cactus, Pencil Tree (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) and a magnificent Texas Ebony Bonsai (*Pithecellobium flexicaule*). Another special collection of roses honors veterans in a memorial garden. In cooperation with Extension Specialists at OSU, Kelley trials a number of unique shrubs on the grounds to test their suitability for Oklahoma climates.

**Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum Affiliate Garden Showcase: Washington Irving Park and Arboretum** – In this segment we visit Washington Irving Park and Arboretum in Bixby, Oklahoma. Named in honor of American writer, Washington Irving, who camped in the area in October 1832, the park includes 32.5 acres of public park and arboretum. The park contains a wooded walking trail, the Laci Dawn Griffin Hill butterfly garden, and memorials to the children of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing and to the September 11, 2001 attacks. It also contains a statue of Irving seated on the porch of a replica of his home, Sunnyside at Tarrytown, New York. The arboretum contains an extensive collection of rare and unusual trees and shrubs. Walter Gund, President of the Friends of the Irving Foundation, shares with us a few of his favorite trees in the arboretum, including Quince Tree (*Chaenomeles obovatus*), Stenolobum Maple (*Acer pikosum* var. *stenolobum*), Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*) and a seedling from the Survivor Elm (*Ulmus Americana*).

**Simple Tools for Planting Vegetable Seeds** – With the intensive bed system, placement of seeds and plants is very important in establishing proper plant spacing that will help to optimize production. And when we intend to plant in succession or use intercropping, it is important to have each plant in its assigned place. When we sow seeds individually, we want to place the seed exactly where we want the plant to grow. To help with the challenge of placing seeds individually, we have put together a few very simple tools.

For tight spacing of peas, leeks, beans and onions, we will use simple wooden frames built out of 2 by 1 boards with chicken wire stretched across. The frame should be as wide as the planting bed, and about 2 feet long. The regularly spaced openings in the chicken wire gives you perfect square spacing. Most chicken wire has 2-inch spacing between openings, and can be used to easily space plants at 4 inches. We simply stapled the wire onto the frame. To plant, we start at one end of the bed and lay out the frame. For 4-inch plant spacing, we put a seed in every other opening. When using a wire frame to plant, our plants will be set at 4-inch by 4-inch square spacing. You can also look for 3-inch wire for planting tighter spaced plants like peas or leeks.

If you cannot find the right sized wire for 3-inch spacing, or if you want to use 4-inch equidistant spacing instead of square spacing, you can make a simple planting board. This is simply a piece of plywood with holes drilled in where we want to drop seeds. Cut a board the width of your bed and 2 feet long. Then drill holes at the proper plant spacing. To obtain 3-inch equidistant spacing, we want to stagger our rows, with 2 ½ inches between rows. To plant we simply place

the board over the soil and drop seeds through the openings. Remove the board and push the seeds into the soil to the proper depth.

Another method for obtaining proper plant spacing with larger plants is to use triangles cut to the proper dimensions. We made wooden triangles for 9-inch, 12-inch and 18-inch spacing. To plant, we simply place the triangle at one side of the bed with the corner at the location of the first seed. For the corn seeds I am planting, we use 18-inch spacing so the first plant will be set 9 inches in from the corner of the bed. I lay a flat edge of the triangle parallel to the edge of the bed, and place a seed at each corner. When planting smaller seeds that are difficult to handle, you may wish to use the triangle to simply mark where the seeds will go and then come back and plant after all the marks are set. After you set out the seeds or make your marks, flip the triangle across the bed, placing a seed at the unplanted corner. Continue down the row. To start the next row, simply flip the triangle down the length of the bed and continue as in the first row.

Make sure to always water your seeds in after planting. To avoid washing the soil away from the seed bed, use a watering can or very light stream of water until your seedlings emerge. It is also a good idea to mulch the bed, especially around transplants. Straw and seed-free hay are ideal vegetable garden mulches. The key is to make sure that the mulch is free of seeds, which will cause more problems in the garden than it is worth.

**Vegetable Garden Chores** – This week in our vegetable garden we can set out our last planting of radishes and we can continue to plant out sweet corn. The threat of frost has not yet passed, so we want to be sure to monitor the weather and protect plants as necessary. If you plan to start your melon seeds indoors, now is the time to start sowing. Warm weather is coming soon, and in a couple of weeks we will be able to start transplanting out tomatoes into the garden, so we need to start toughening them up for the outdoors by watering less frequently and holding back on the fertilizer.

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