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Your Indoor Outdoor guide to gardening **NOVEMBER**

Landscaping Septic Systems

(Turkey Mounds)

Using plants on and near mound septic systems needs to be done carefully to ensure that the integrity of the system remains intact. When installing a mound initially consider the landscaping, aesthetic considerations, lot size and orientation.

Ornamental plants can cover the turkey mound to reduce erosion problems.

Use gloves to avoid soil contact and minimize tilling to limit, respectively, potential health problems and soil erosion. Minimize compaction by avoiding walking or working on the mound.

Only use herbaceous plants on mounds; do not use trees or shrubs. Woody plants that are not "water-lovers" can be planted 20 feet from the edge of the mound. Water-loving trees such as willow, poplar, maple and elm should be no closer than 50 feet from the mound.

Select plants that will not need supplemental irrigation; and neither water, nor fertilize the area. Never plant edible plants on or near a mound or drain field. Use a mulch of clean straw until the plants become established. Other self-seeding annuals and perennials can be used; however, they should have short fibrous root systems. Plant much closer than for normal flower beds to prevent erosion and weeds.

Plants for septic mounds include: Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.), Flowering onion (*Allium* spp.), Pussytoes (*Antennaria dioica*), Artemisia (*Artemisia schmidtiana* 'Silver Mound'), Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvania*), Bachelor's buttons (*Centaurea cyanus*), Yellow cosmos (*Cosmos angustifolia*), Fleabane (*Erigeron* cvs.), Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium bourgatii*), Wild geranium (*Geranium macrorrhizum*), Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.), Blazing star (*Liatris scarrosa*), Wild bergamot (*Monarda didyma*), Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sylvatica*), Evening primrose (*Oenothera* spp.), Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.), Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*), Santolina (*Santolina* spp.), Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantine*), Verbena (*Verbena* spp.)

References: Minnesota and California State Extension.

by Linda Wiles, Penn State Extension Agent

PROVIDING FRUIT COLOR THIS MONTH

- ❖ Shrubs: beautybush, buffaloberries, coalberry, highbush cranberry, firethorn, spicebush, Virginia creeper (vine), winterberry.
- ❖ Trees: American holly, American mountain ash, choke cherry, crabapple.

SEASONAL

- ❖ For Thanksgiving, fill a cornucopia basket with seasonal fruits and vegetables from your garden and orchard.
- ❖ For the holidays, decorate window boxes and other outdoor containers with evergreen branches inserted into the soil. If the soil is frozen, soften with warm water. Balsam firs treated this way can hold their needles well into spring. Add bittersweet, red holly berries and strawflowers for color.
- ❖ Indoors, you can also have natural ornaments made from pine cones, sweet gum balls, and seed pods of many plants including redbud and milkweed. Late fall is a good time to collect these.
- ❖ Request your garden seed and plant catalogs. Many are mailed right after Christmas. Be sure to look catalogs that carry native and heirloom plants.

HOUSEPLANTS

- ❖ Do not fertilize most houseplants until late March.

- ❖ Plants may need to be moved to sunnier exposures (west or south) if they are dropping many leaves.
- ❖ Indoor heating tends to dry out plants, check watering needs and water more often. Avoid placing plants near heat registers or other heat sources.
- ❖ Cold drafts from poorly sealed windows can harm houseplants and increase your heating bill. Check for drafts around your windows.
- ❖ Jade, snake plant, and cacti will probably do well with a thorough watering once a month over winter. Check for moisture about an inch down in pots and water when soil feels dry.
- ❖ Leaf cuttings can be taken from Christmas begonias (winter flowering) and rooted in sand or vermiculite at 75F.
- ❖ Plant paperwhite narcissus in stones in a bulb pan in early November for Christmas.

BULBS

- ❖ Complete bulb planting before ground freezes.
- ❖ If you have pre-ordered bulbs from a mail-order source, then prepare the ground where you plan to plant them and apply a three to four inch mulch layer overtop to keep the ground thawed. Occasionally bulbs may arrive later than expected.

COMPOST

- ❖ Start, or maintain, a compost pile. It should be kept moist through late fall additions. Fertilizer can be added to speed up the process. Mix the pile thoroughly.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

- ❖ Completely harvest cool-weather crops.
- ❖ Test garden soil every three to five years. Soil tests are available from most garden centers.
- ❖ Fall tilling helps improve soil structure and allows crops to be planted earlier in the spring. It also exposes insect eggs to weather and reduces insect populations for next year. This also a good time to add organic matter to the soil.

SMALL FRUITS

- ❖ Apply mulch to strawberries when plants are dormant, but before they drop below 20F.
- ❖ Rake up leaves from grapes and discard.

TREE FRUITS

- ❖ Clean and remove all fallen fruit and harvest fruits remaining on trees to reduce insect and disease problems next year.
- ❖ Prune apple trees.
- ❖ Paint tree trunks of stone fruits white.

HERBS

- ❖ Use herbs to make herbal wreaths for gifts or all some to a purchased wreath for fragrance.
- ❖ Prepare potpourri for use in holiday decorating.
- ❖ Create special gifts by making your own "house blends" of kitchen herbs for cooking and baking.

LAWNS

- ❖ Rake leaves from lawns to prevent damage to the grass over winter.

PERENNIALS, BIENNIALS, ANNUALS

- ❖ Continue dividing over-grown perennials
- ❖ Peonies, chrysanthemums, and other hardy perennials should be cut back to 3-6" above the ground if not already done.
- ❖ Continue watering plants until the ground freezes in late November.
- ❖ Apply 2-3 inches of mulch for winter protection.
- ❖ Cold frames should be winterized using a light covering of leaves over the perennials and biennials inside to protect them from frost.
- ❖ Reduce peony botrytis blight and hollyhock rust by removing and destroying all old stems this fall. Do not compost diseased or infested material.

TREES & SHRUBS

- ❖ These can still be planted if rainfall is around normal levels for the month. Keep plants watered until the ground is frozen. Mulch plants properly, keeping mulch pulled away from the trunk or main stem.

- ❖ Hardwood cuttings can be taken from many trees or shrubs. Wrap them in damp burlap and bury outside below the frost line, or place them in damp sand or peat moss in a cool cellar. This will help them to develop a callus and be rooted in the spring.
- ❖ Prevent feeding damage from rabbits and rodents by using physical barriers. Metal ¼" hardware cloth around the trunk can help. Pull mulch a few inches from the trunk to reduce the chances of feeding.
- ❖ Prevent frost cracking and sunscald of young trees or thin barked trees (ash, honeylocust, maple) by wrapping trunks with a commercial tree wrap. The wrap can be removed in early April.
- ❖ Prune out dead, diseased or damaged branches only. Other pruning should be done in late winter for many trees and shrubs (except for spring flowering ones which should be pruned after flowering).
- ❖ Soft-wooded plants such as silver maples are easily damaged by heavy freezing rain or winter snows. The broken branched should be cut back to a healthy branch or crotch angle as soon as possible after the damage occurs.
- ❖ If you will be ordering live, balled and burlapped, (B&B) Christmas trees to replant in the yard, prepare the hole before the ground freezes and mulch the area heavily.
- ❖ Fallen leaves can be used in a compost pile after a chipper/shredder or lawn mower is used to chop them up.
- ❖ Remove fallen leaves gutters and drains to prevent water damage this winter.

ROSES

- ❖ Aerate soil around established roses.
- ❖ Mulch using leaves and straw.

WATER GARDENS

- ❖ Drain garden pools before water freezes. Tender aquatics should already be indoors; however, hardy plants can be overwintered by covering the with two to three feet of leaves or straw at the bottom of the drained pool.

GARDEN TOOL CARE

- ❖ Sand wooden handles, then paint or oil them.
- ❖ Use fine sandpaper or steel wool to clean and smooth steel parts or cultivators, hoes, shovels, and other tools. Rub them down after sanding with an oiled rag to prevent rust.
- ❖ Drain garden hoses and sprinklers and store indoors. If no storage area is available indoors, unscrew them from the faucets.

WINTER WILD BIRD CARE

- ❖ Bird feeders should be set up and stocked with treats for the birds. Provide fresh water as well.

HOUSE PEST PREVENTION

- ❖ Check all openings to your home that would allow squirrels or mice to enter: attic vents, building joints, loose siding.
- ❖ To prevent problems next summer, caulk and plug all entrances around your home that were used by wasps this year.