



White County Horticulture

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Arborvitae Decline Due to Drought

We're experiencing issues with Arborvitae, especially Green Giant. The recent heat (sustained 100-degree heat index) coupled with drought was a major stress event these trees cannot tolerate. Furthermore, many of the samples we've analyzed had previous stressors including Seiridium or Cypress Canker and Phytophthora Root Rot, both fungal pathogens.

Phytophthora is everywhere but doesn't really harm plants unless the soil is poorly drained, boggy, or plants are overwatered. Seiridium is a serious disease of Leyland and Arborvitae and moves twice as fast in drought years and the year following. This is often characterized by single limbs turning, oozing along the main trunk, and canker wounds. Canker is not treatable and once on the main trunk is typically a lost cause.

This is a good example of what we see very often with tree decline... multiple stress factors. In the case of the arborvitae, many were already limping with seiridium, root rot, or both when the heat and drought arrived. This amplified those stresses. Furthermore, many arborvitae struggled to replace the rate of water being lost from transpiration. Imagine this being intensified when half the roots aren't functional due to root rot.

All this to say, it's a shame to see and there is little to be done. In my opinion, with warming temperatures and more extreme weather events becoming more common, arborvitae may not be the best choice in our region especially if they are to replace arborvitae that did not survive due to disease.



It is rarely recommended to replace a species with the same species if a known pathogen is present. This severely limits plant options for those who want an evergreen, fast-growing, deer-tolerant, disease-tolerant, non-invasive, screening plant. It is difficult to find all these factors. I would likely start researching holly species.

Honey Bee-Friendly Plants and Flowers



Beekeepers often ask, "What can I plant for my bees?" Unfortunately, the answer is "Not enough!"

- Honeybees are generalist feeders and will visit most any type of flower that rewards them with nectar and/or pollen.
- A single bee colony may forage as far as *three miles away from its hive for food*, giving a colony a potential territory of more than 28 square miles, or a little over 18,000 acres.
- Because honeybees cover such a vast area in search of food, it is rarely economical trying to plant an area to improve one's honey flow unless the beekeeper is also growing a commercial crop.
- Many wild and cultivated plants are extremely attractive to honey bees.
- Bees will scout the territory around their hives and report back to their nest mates where the best floral sources can be found.

September Gardening Calendar

Who knows what the fall and winter will be like, but we are heading into the fall season in better shape than expected. Lawns have greened up again, plants are perking up and vegetable gardens are still producing. September usually brings us a first taste of fall-like weather, but overall, we are typically still hot and dry. Last year, September marked the beginning of a dry spell. Pay attention to what the weather throws at us and be prepared to water as needed. Keep in mind that spring blooming plants are finishing up setting blooms for next year now, and we want them healthy and happy as they head into winter.

Vegetable gardens are often also in flux. Some gardeners are still harvesting with regularity while other gardens have totally played out. If your garden is still good, keep harvesting and gradually begin to fill in the blanks with fall vegetables. If your garden is a lost cause, practice good sanitation and clean it up and begin to replant for fall. Many edible gardeners are now gardening year-round with limited winter protection, including high tunnels or just moderate frost protection. We should see vegetable transplants arriving at local outlets soon. If you can find some new tomato plants, they can also continue to bear until a killing frost. You can seed carrots, lettuce, spinach, kale, and other greens now. Mulch any new plantings and be prepared to water. Recent rains, following dry conditions have caused some disease issues on some ornamentals. Leaf spot diseases and mildew have been a common problem on many plants late in the season. I doubt you will find many hydrangeas without a spot here and there, or peonies dying back, or spots on dogwood leaves. Don't worry and don't start a spray program this late in the season. For now, rake up any fallen, damaged leaves, cut back perennials as they die back, water if dry and mulch. Perennials that have started dying back are heading into dormancy and will return next spring. That includes peonies, lilies, and bleeding hearts. Trees and shrubs with damaged foliage should be monitored for leaf fall. Once that begins, rake it up and clean it up and start fresh next spring. Don't prune trees and shrubs now, especially spring bloomers, as they have set their flower buds for next spring.

For some reason hot, dry conditions don't seem to hurt our weed crop like they do desirable plants. In the lawn, it is too late to worry about herbicide usage, but mowing can help prevent seed set. In flower beds and vegetable gardens, attack with a good sharp hoe. If allowed to grow unchecked, the seeds they leave behind will cause problems for years to come.

Summer annuals and flowering tropical plants may need a bit of fertilizer now to keep blooming until frost. All the rains we had, cut down on our watering duties, but they still leached out the nutrition in the soil and particularly in containers. Fertilization will

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keep them blooming better. If your summer annuals haven't survived, it is a bit too early to plant pansies and violas, but you can plant marigolds, ornamental peppers and begin planting ornamental (and edible) kale, mustard, and cabbage.

Annuals aren't the only way to add flower color. Summer perennials are still going strong with Echinacea, rudbeckia, and gaillardia, but to add to the mix the fall perennials are starting a show with Chelone (turtlehead), Tricyrtis (toad lilies) and Japanese anemones, for the shade and goldenrod, asters and salvias for the sun. We are beginning to see good plumes on ornamental grasses as well. Chrysanthemums will soon be available at garden centers. While they are perennials, many gardeners do grow them as annuals. Pumpkins and gourds are also popping up and spring blooming bulbs for fall planting are beginning to make an appearance. You can buy your bulbs now, but let it cool off a bit before planting. Large, firm bulbs will give you the best display next spring. If you have room in your refrigerator, you can pre-chill the bulbs before planting, but that isn't a requirement.

Okra Seed Harvesting



Did you miss a day or two of harvesting your okra? Are you wondering what to do with Okra when it gets too big? My friend, Marilyn, saves it for seed for next year! You can too!

Read more here: [Timing on okra seed harvesting depends on whether you are growing okra seed pods to eat or collecting okra seeds. An okra plant flowers a few months after planting, and then it produces](#)

seed pods. Gardeners raising seed pods to eat should pick them when they are about three inches (8 cm.) long. Those collecting okra seeds, however, must wait a while longer and allow the okra seed pod to grow as big as it can. For okra seed harvesting, the seed pods must dry on the vine and beginning to crack or split. At that point, you can remove the pods and split or twist them. The seeds will come out easily, so keep a bowl nearby. Since no fleshy vegetable matter clings to the seeds, you don't need to wash them. Instead, dry the seeds in the open air for a few days, then store them in an airtight jar in the refrigerator. Although some okra seeds can remain viable for up to four years, many do not. It's best to use collected okra seeds the next growing season. For best results, soak the seeds in water for a day or two before planting.

Fall Gardening

Gardening is a great way to supply your family or others with fresh vegetables. Gardening is also a



source of stress-lowering physical activity. By preserving any yield not consumed during the growing season, you can build up the home pantry and enjoy produce year-round. July through September is a great time to plant a fall garden!

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Here are some common vegetable crops for fall harvest:

- Collards, turnips, and mustards should be planted between August 1 and September 15.
- Swiss chard and beets should be planted between August 15 and September 1.
- Kale, lettuce, and radishes need to be planted between August 20 and September 15
- Spinach between August 25 and September 15

County Fair Horticulture Exhibits

Are you wondering how you can be a part of the county fair? Bring a cut flower for the horticulture exhibits. We have 54 classes of cut specimens to choose from - You can bring one in each class if you bring your own vase too (can be a recycled water bottle). We also have categories for potted plants, hanging plants, fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Check it out on the fair website:

<https://www.whitecountyfairgrounds.org/>

Bring your items for entry on Friday, September 9 (8 am - 6 pm)

Or Saturday, September 10 (8 am - 10 am)!

Sherri Sanders

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sherri Sanders'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

County Extension Agent-Agriculture

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