

October 2024 Newsletter

Happy Fall!

It's official ... fall is here! Do you ever wonder "Why Do Fall Leaves Change Color"?

The main reason for the eye-popping color change is not autumn's chilly weather, but sunlight - or rather, the lack of daylight. Day and night are roughly equal in length on the autumnal equinox in late September, but afterward, nights are growing longer and days shorter.

As the autumn days shrink, the reduced daylight tells deciduous plants that it's time to stop gathering energy and get ready for the dormant season - winter.

All leaves have different types of chemicals in them; one of these chemicals, chlorophyll, is responsible for absorbing sunlight and gives leaves their green color. As chemical changes begin to take place inside the plant, it causes a corky wall of cells (called the "abscission zone") to form between the twig and the leaf stalk. This corky wall eventually causes the leaf to drop off in the breeze.

As the corky cells multiply, they begin to seal off the vessels that supply the leaf with nutrients and water and also block the exit vessels to some extent, trapping simple sugars in the leaves. The combination of reduced light, lack of nutrients, and less water trigger the trees to start the process of breaking down the chlorophyll and green color fades.

Because the green color was "masking" the other color pigments, we start to see the yellows and reds showing through and you see leaves change colors!

Once the waning hours of daylight trigger these changes and the green chlorophyll is gone, other pigments begin to reveal their colors:

- * Carotenoids give leaves their bright yellow and orange colors
- * Anthocyanin's are found in deep red and purplish leaves
- * The presence of tannins mean leaves will turn brownish or tan

OCTOBER MEETING:

Date: October 9, 2024

Time: 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Business Meeting

10:30 AM - 11:00AM - Social time and snacks

11:00 AM - Program - TBD

12:30 PM - Clean-up

Location: Our Savior Lutheran Church
745 Front Street South
Issaquah, WA

Program: Workshop by Lexie Davison - Waxed Amaryllis Bulbs

Our member Lexie will do a workshop for us and we will actually create waxed Amaryllis Bulbs. These bulbs are easy to care for and grow as they require no water or soil. Simply place the bulb in bright, indirect light. The flower stalk will emerge in 4 to 6 weeks (sometimes less) utilizing the stored carbohydrates in the large bulb. Rotate the bulb every few days to keep the stalk growing true and straight.

Horticultural Corner:

Gloria Woo will discuss Crocosmia

When it's your turn to do the "Horticultural Corner" presentation here are a few ideas to discuss:

- ** Latin name of the plant
- ** How to grow it
- ** Shade or sun
- ** Short history of the plant
- ** Where did it originate
- ** How best to use it in your garden
- ** Use in flower arranging (if any)
- ** Bring a sample if you have it

Snack Committee:

Hostess: Lois

Committee: Georgann

Karen

Joan H.

Attention coffee and tea drinkers - remember to bring your own cup - it saves on club provided supplies as well as recycling and/or garbage (THANKS)

SEPTEMBER MEETING SUMMARY:

NEW BUSINESS - DONATION REQUEST:

** Sandra brought up a local high school (Cedar Crest High School located in Duvall) Landscape Team that has won a contest beating 38 other schools that entered. Winning this contest has resulted in an invitation to a week long Future Farmers of America convention in Indianapolis. The cost per attendee is \$2500.00. The convention is the third largest in the country and about 85,000 members attend.

** After discussion a motion to donate \$200.00 was made by Karen and seconded by Georgann. The motion passed with only one "no" vote.

Horticultural Corner:

** Joan H. Presented about Gardenias

- * Developed in the 1700's in South Carolina
- * Part of the Jasmine family
- * For this area there is a "frost proof" variety available which will keep it's blooms through a freeze
- * Need moist soil but not too wet or too dry
- * Can be kept in doors but watch for spider mites
- * Deer resistant

Program:

** Amanda Werner-Davis from Countryside Floral and Garden presented

She brought a four arrangements and then showed us how each one was created. While doing the demonstration she shared many tips, tricks and reminders of how to be a successful flower arranger. She recommended a couple of tricks for making flowers last longer - use the packets of preservations that often come with bunches of flowers and another way to help flowers last longer is to cut the stem on an angle and dip them in Hydraquick which opens capillaries in the stems. Specifically for hydrangeas the stems can be dipped in allium powder before inserting them into the oasis.

Amanda then gave away all of the arrangements ...

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (GMM):

A General Membership Meeting (GMM) was held on Monday, September 30. Here are a few of the fun things you missed ...

The meeting started at 10:00AM with 62 garden club members in attendance. Paid memberships for East Lake Washington District is currently 234.

Dawn Rubstello, Master Gardener as well as a school teacher (chemistry) teacher presented about "Fire Resistant Landscaping". She discussed three zones surrounding our homes that need to be considered when planning landscaping that will make our homes more fire resistant. Zone 1 is the first 5 feet from the walls of your house. This area needs to be cleared of plants and materials that are flammable (such as flammable mulch, BBQ's, wooden fences and gates that attach to your house and woodpiles).

Zone 2 is the next 30 feet - shrubs prone to burning (ones with lots of dead and dry wood/leaves inside of the bushes) need to trimmed or removed. Zone 3 is 100 feet from the walls of your home. Many of us in the PNW have trees in all of these areas that we need to think about how best to manage.

Next came a brief business meeting where 24 garden club members of 40 years or more were acknowledged with a certificate and a solitary pink rose in a vase. The rose signified gratitude and admiration. June Ann (who was not present) was the sole representative from the Issaquah Garden Club ... Congratulations to June Ann!

Lunch followed the business meeting. By the way, Issaquah Garden Club gets a GOLD STAR! Not only did we have a small herd of members in attendance but Shadi and Jean knocked it out of the park with the lunch they provided ... great food, highly organized ... made our club proud!

The afternoon Design Presentation was Lisa Libby, the Gourd Lady who presented "Celebrating Nature's Gourd-geous Canvas". Lisa started by sharing about the shapes and sizes of gourds and passed samples around. She also discussed the many uses of gourds from bowls, drinking cups, birdhouses to medicinal uses (including curing insanity). Lisa has been successful at growing some gourds but since they like hot dry weather and a long growing season to grow and dry they are challenging to grow in the PNW. And FYI, the reasons the gourds we buy at the grocery store and fruit stand rot is because "they are picked too soon". In order the dry they need to be left on the vines until the vine is dead and dry.

SAVE THE DATES:

October Work Day at the Issaquah Post Office - Watch your email for an announcement of the date to work at the Post Office to renew the trough plantings and do some weeding and pruning. This will take place on a Sunday since the Post Office is closed on that day. Email will be from Georgann ...

October 18, 2024 - Work Day at Bellevue Botanical Gardens. Remember that in order to volunteer to pull weeds you need to have completed the required paperwork and the background check! See notes from Board Meeting for more information regarding this requirement and other volunteer opportunities.

February 24, 2025 - General Membership Meeting

May 18, 2025 - General Membership Meeting

EDUCATIONAL CORNER:

12 Plants You Should Never Cut Back in Fall

Help your garden thrive next year by being judicious with your pruning now.

Fall may feel like an obvious time to do some serious trimming and pruning of your landscaping and gardens. As the weather tiptoes towards winter, you may have the urge to cut back plants so everything looks tidy in the spring. But wait! While trimming away old growth and pulling down spent foliage is just fine for some plants after summer, it isn't such a good plan for others. Below, our experts weigh in on which plants you shouldn't cut back in the autumn.

Meet the Expert

Christine Froehlich, horticulturist and owner of [Gardening With What You Have](#), where she offers landscape design services to home gardeners

Laura Irish-Hanson, extension horticulture educator at the [University of Minnesota Extension](#)

Lorraine Ballato, a garden and hydrangea expert and author of [Success With Hydrangeas: A Gardener's Guide](#)

Roses

Some members of the *Rosa* family are still nicely in the fall, adding a nice splash of color with the rest of your late-season blooms. Should you trim them back as the temperatures drop? No, not at all—you need to leave them alone to set them up nicely for winter, says horticulturist Christine Froehlich. "Depending on the harshness of winter, roses can experience a lot of dieback," she says. "Pruning them in the fall opens their tissues and exposes them further." She recommends waiting until spring, then pruning after temperatures rise above freezing.

Azaleas

As you prepare your garden for fall, you'll want to research which of your plants prepare their future buds in the autumn. This *Rhododendron* family member is one of them. "Azaleas and other broadleaf evergreens should not be cut back in fall," says Froehlich, noting that if you cut back azaleas in the fall, you will prune off next year's buds. "Pruning promotes new growth as well, and in fall, it will not have time to harden off, so you risk foliage burn when cold weather sets in," she says.

Sunflowers

Even though *Helianthus annuus* makes the most of its days in the sun, it quickly wilts when the frosts set in. Your initial thought might be to cut them back at this point, but why not wait? Winter songbirds (like chickadees) absolutely love harvesting sunflower seeds, and in addition to feeding your neighborhood flocks, the faded stalks can give your landscape a touch of visual interest in the winter.

Red Hot Pokers

Gardeners in southern climates might try growing the brilliant and eye-catching *Kniphofia*: red hot poker flowers. If these beautiful blooms grace your garden, plan on waiting until spring to cut back the stalks and faded foliage. The idea is to help the crown of the plant stay protected from cold temperatures, as the plant isn't very hardy.

Lilacs

It's easy to love *Syringa vulgaris* with its sweet spring fragrance and beautiful blooms. The flowering stage lasts only a few short weeks, but the shrub remains attractive throughout the rest of the growing season. But lilacs grow quickly and have a way of spreading fast, ultimately blocking views and windows. Fall might seem like a fine time to cut back overgrown lilacs, but if you do so, you'll actually cut away next year's

already-set flowers. If you do decide to cut back lilacs in the fall, be aware that you won't get blossoms for one year. To preserve buds, opt to trim back unwieldy branches just after the spring flower show is over—the plants will have time to reset during the summer growing season.

Oak Trees

You should also hold off on pruning your oak trees (*Quercus*) during the autumn months. "[At this time of year] we want to make sure no pruning is happening on oaks because of oak wilt (*Bretziella fagacearum*)," says extension horticulture educator Laura Irish-Hanson. She suggests marking dead limbs, so you know which need to be strategically pruned later on when the oaks are dormant in late winter.

Rhododendrons

As with its cousin azalea, rhododendron should not be pruned in fall. "Rhododendrons, beloved spring-flowering shrubs, form their flower buds for the next year after they finish flowering in spring," says Irish-Hanson. "This means if you prune in summer, fall, or winter, you will remove the flower buds for the following spring." She notes that if rhododendron pruning is required throughout the year because of storm damage or similar issues, you can go ahead and prune those damaged stems in fall. "Typically, pruning is done just after the rhododendrons finish blooming in spring before the next year's flowering buds have formed."

Caryopteris

A stunning flowering shrub with delicate blossoms, *Caryopteris* can develop thicker, somewhat woody stems as it matures—so you'll want to be careful not to overdo the pruning in the fall. "Woody shrubs are best left until spring unless they need rejuvenating," says Froehlich. "By fall, flower buds are set—so if you prune, you won't have flowers." She adds that butterfly bushes and *Caryopteris* are particularly susceptible to winter dieback, so she recommends waiting to prune them until spring.

Oak Leaf Hydrangeas

You really have to do your research with hydrangeas because different varieties require pruning at different times. "Oak leaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) flower on old wood, that is, growth they put on in the prior year," says hydrangea expert Lorraine Ballato. "If you garden in the Northern Hemisphere, those buds have already been formed. Late season/fall pruning will result in fewer or no flowers in 2025."

Russian Sage

Salvia yangii can benefit from the insulating protection its old growth offers its crown over the winter. "I don't cut back Russian sage," says Froehlich. "Again, too much risk of dieback and damage to future flowers." (Russian sage was formerly classified as *Perovskia atriplicifolia*.)

Peonies

Paeonia can be cut back very late in the fall, once freezing temps have set in, and all growth is stopped. If you cut back too early in the fall, you might deny the peonies some energy from light harvesting. Be careful; too much trimming down by the ground level can do more harm than good.

Coneflowers

There's nothing especially wrong with trimming back your spent *Echinacea purpurea* plants in the fall, but you can always leave them—as well as many other perennials—for nature to enjoy. "I hardly cut back any perennials," says Froehlich. "I leave the seed heads and stalks for birds and insects."