

# Dig In!

Canyon County Horticulture News for Master Gardeners & Friends

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<http://extension.ag.uidaho.edu/canyon/>

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## UPCOMING

- Canyon County Master Gardener Program begins January 7, 2009  
*See page 2 for details*
- Idaho Victory Garden Series begins January 22, 2009  
*See page 2 for details*
- Idaho Botanical Garden's Winter Garden Aglow dates: Nov. 27-30, Dec. 5-8, Dec. 10-Jan. 3, Feb. 6-13; 6-9 pm
- Stay tuned for Nampa Parks and Recreation classes on rose pruning and tree care!



## Mysteries of "Fall Cleanup" Revealed...



Most likely, you've heard the familiar phrase "fall cleanup" applied to gardening. Garden centers and national advertisements admonish us to purchase this or that, apply this or that *now* or we'll somehow be very sorry come spring. I don't know about you, but I've had often felt a vague sense of urgency looking out into the yard on Saturday mornings in late September... "I should really be out there doing my fall cleanup! If only I knew what to do and where to start!"

Then those first crisp days of fall find the entire neighborhood out of doors: mowing, raking, piling, fertilizing, watering, chopping, cleaning, spraying and doing any other number of seemingly urgent "fall cleanup" tasks.

But what should we be doing now? What absolutely has to be done in the fall? What can (or should) wait until spring?

To figure this out, we need to study how the plants in our landscapes grow. This gives us big clues into how they should be cared for and when.

### TREES

Deciduous trees begin going into dormancy in the fall. They conserve energy by slowing down their growth processes and shedding their leaves. That's why it's not a good idea to fertilize your trees in the early fall...instead of shutting down, the tree might send out new growth that would be damaged when the cold comes. It is ok to fertilize your landscape trees in late fall, when dormancy has begun, but only as long as *soil* temperatures are still above 40° F (an inexpensive soil thermometer will help you determine this!) and moisture is present.

Evergreen trees slow down growth in the fall but do not go into the same degree of dormancy. This is why it's important to send your evergreens into fall with a nice, deep drink. Prune any damaged or diseased wood.

### LAWNS

Our turf scientists at the University of Idaho recommend that you continue mowing late into the fall until the grass has stopped growing, sometimes as late as late November. This will remove excess debris and decrease the chance of snow mold. Some people recommend lowering the mowing height in the spring and

again in the fall, but this is not necessary.

It is necessary, however, to remove or finely chop the leaves remaining on the lawn. Cleaning up leaves is more than making the lawn look nice. If left on the ground during the winter, leaves become wet, mat down, and smother the grass during the winter. Fall is also a good time to fertilize your lawn for lush growth in spring.

Fertilize anytime between late August and early November with no more than one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet.

Fall is also a good time to put down a pre-emergent herbicide to protect against annual bluegrass. Some perennial weeds like dandelion, bindweed and others may be more susceptible to weed killers in the fall, too.

### VEGETABLE GARDEN

Some enterprising gardeners keep cool weather crops protected and growing late into the fall. Others like to put the garden to bed after the first frost. Either way, remove and compost dead plants. Remove any diseased plants and dispose of them, do not compost them! Fall is a good time to work in aged manures, compost, chopped leaves. Tilling in the fall is not necessary unless you plan on seeding a cover crop or getting a very early start in spring. Fall is also a great time to plant cold hardy garlic and shallots. Be sure your purchased seed is certified disease free and approved for planting.

### ANNUALS, PERENNIALS AND BULBS

Dead annuals should be removed and composted. Some perennials may be cut back at this time, but plants with interesting forms or attractive seed heads can also be left for winter interest and to provide food for wildlife. Fall is the time to plant spring bulbs. Work a little compost into your beds at the same time!

What should wait till spring?

- Fertilizing fruit trees
- Heavy pruning of trees, shrubs and fruit
- Rose pruning

So don't fret if you can't get all your cleanup done this fall. Take some time to enjoy the pace of autumn. Spring will come soon enough!

## New class this year...

### Idaho Victory Garden Series Enrolling!



This new, **six week program** will get you started saving money by growing nutritious, tasty fruits, vegetables, and herbs at home this year.

Local experts will fill **18 hours of instruction** on planning the garden, soil, botany and fertilization basics, hands-on composting, sustainable growing practices, gardening with children, safely managing pests, disease and weeds, and even harvest and food preservation tips with safety in mind.

Course participants will receive a collection of our favorite Extension books and publications to start their home gardening and food preservation library. Some class materials and lectures will be provided in Spanish, too! Whether you garden in a window box, big backyard or community garden, you'll learn how to maximize your space and capacity to produce food and minimize your costs.

Like the Master Gardener Program, this evening course will incorporate a service learning component of 10 additional hours. You will be offered numerous opportunities to offer service and participate in some of the extra-curricular Master Gardener tours and activities or work on a special project of your choice.

*Class limited to the first 60 participants registered*

**Dates:** January 22 – February 26, 2009;  
**Thursday evenings from 6:30-9:30 pm**

**Location:** Nampa, Idaho (exact location to be determined based on final class count)

**Class fee:** \$35 per individual  
\$50 per family

Register by contacting the Canyon County Extension office at 208-459-6003 or downloading the application from our website:  
<http://extension.ag.uidaho.edu/canyon/>

## KNOW THIS: Wood Boring Insects



By Sally Hanssen, Canyon County Advanced Master Gardener

Most plant health problems are not caused by biotic (living) factors (insects, diseases), but by abiotic factors (irrigation, environment, culture & care) The first step in problem solving is proper diagnosis. Your friendly Master Gardener volunteers are often available to help diagnose plant health problems. They can help you to access whether what you are seeing is a result of an environmental issue or a health problem caused by pests, insects or disease. Be prepared to answer some basic questions regarding your landscape maintenance practices. Samples of the effected plant material or photos are helpful in determining what course of action to take.

Borer damage to trees is caused primarily by the larval stages of certain beetle and moth species. Signs to look for would be exit holes on trunks or branches, tiny piles of sawdust near exit holes or at base of tree, or evidence of tunneling under the bark layers.

If your trees or shrubs are diagnosed with a borer problem, arming yourself with some basic knowledge can go a long way in turning your situation around. Why are borers on the increase? There are now more sources for these insects in old, weakened, neglected trees, as well as burn & firewood piles. More than ever, trees are stressed by drought, heat, winter injury and improper maintenance. Newly planted trees next to infested source can be especially susceptible.

There are some important points to remember about borer control. Borers generally cause little damage to healthy trees. Plants that are suffering stress from transplanting or improper watering (too little or too much) are prime candidates for borer infestations. Reducing stress by providing proper care to trees and shrubs prior to and after transplanting is important. Planting trees and shrubs into the right environment and providing proper care such as timely watering can go a long way in reducing stress.

There are some cultural controls for borers that should be standard practices in landscape plantings. Choose a tree species that is appropriate for your area and avoid planting trees known to have pest problems. Birch, poplar and ash are all know for having problems with borers in Idaho. The tree or shrub should be well adapted to your climate

and planting site. Water newly planted trees carefully to keep the soil ball uniformly moist during the first two growing seasons. Avoid mechanical damage to the trunks of new trees, wrap or paint them in the winter to prevent trunk sunscald, fertilize moderately and keep broadleaf herbicides away from tree roots.

Chemical control through systemic insecticides (products that are taken up by the tree's vascular system) may be effective when applications are timed correctly. Products containing **imidacloprid**, when applied to the soil in advance of borer insect infestation, may be taken up by the tree roots. Once inside the plant the insecticide offers some protection against intruding borer larvae but little control against existing infestations or adults. Some products, which contain **permethrin** as the active ingredient, can be applied directly to the tree trunk to give protection to specific insects such as the ash lilac borer when timed correctly. READ THE LABEL carefully on any chemical product to determine if the product is approved for the tree affected, the pest present, and. FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS for use exactly, including timing of spray, concentration and disposal and cleanup!

Some products may be applied in the fall. For the most current recommendations for a number of common wood boring insects, visit the Washington State University *Hortsense!* Pest Database. The web address is <http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense/>. Click on "ornamentals."

## Don't Miss It!

Our **2009 Canyon County Master Gardener** program is filling up fast! We will register the first 35 participants from our waiting list.

If you received your application by mail, please submit it to us by **Friday, December 12** to reserve your spot!

Didn't sign up for an application? We will re-open registration after December 12 if any seats are still available.

For questions call the Extension Office at 208-459-6003.



**NOW BLOOMING:****Amaryllis**

By Paulette Blaseg, Canyon County  
Advanced Master Gardener

*Colorful and dramatic, amaryllis typically bloom about 5-8 weeks after planting. But that doesn't have to be the end! I have had one bulb in my collection for 25 years.*

*Here is my formula for success:*

**Sunlight:** I keep mine in bright sunlight during the active growing season and may put it in indirect light when it is dormant. Quite often, I just leave it in the south window year round. In the summer, outdoor dappled shade is fine.

**Never let the bulb freeze!**

**Watering:** Water well once a week while the plant is actively growing and the leaves are shiny. When the leaves get a dull look, the bulb is "napping" and needs less water. Let the soil get quite dry between watering at this time.

**Pot size:** My bulbs seem healthier in bigger pots. 12" is the smallest size I would use for a mature bulb.

**Bulb depth:** Set the bulb into the soil so the widest part of the bulb is at soil level. Leave the papery scales on the bulb for protection.

**Fertilizer:** Do not fertilize while the plant is dormant. During the active growing season, fertilize as most houseplants. More and bigger leaves make more food for the bulb to produce bigger and better flowers. I read where a bulb stalk is formed after every 4th leaf grows. I haven't counted leaves for a year on a particular bulb, but it may be accurate.

**Reblooming:** If you do nothing but the steps above, your bulb may re-bloom for Christmas, Easter, 4th of July or Labor Day! To accurately force the bloom time, start the next steps about 16-20 weeks before you want the amaryllis to bloom. Cut the foliage off just above the bulb, and store it dry in a cool (55°F), dark place such as a basement for 8-10 weeks. Then pot (or repot) the bulb and water it in. Thereafter, keep the potting mix almost dry until new growth emerges, and then follow the general care instructions above.

**Master Gardener**

The University of Idaho (UI) Extension's Idaho Master Gardener Program gives gardeners an opportunity not only to improve their horticultural knowledge and skills but also serve their communities.

Our Canyon County Beginning Master Gardener course is held once a year from January to April. Participants receive about 30 hours of expert classroom instruction and pledge to complete another 30 hours of service to the Extension office and community. Service includes answering plant problems over the phone and in person at Farmers' Markets and other events and working on community service projects.

Canyon County Advanced Master Gardeners are an ongoing group that meets once a month for continuing education and pledges to complete at least 12 hours of volunteer service per year.

For more information or to sign up, please contact the Extension office at 208-459-6003.

**Project Updates****INTERFAITH PANTRY GARDEN AT TRINITY**

Canyon County Advanced Master Gardener Dale Anderson and his volunteers continued to amaze us through the end of season. From the raised bed garden plots at the Trinity Lutheran Church and two plots of land donated by local farmers yielded a total of 13,433.3 pounds of fresh produce with an estimated market value of \$8,902 distributed to the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen and Food Bank, Valley Crisis, Lighthouse Mission, Syringa House, the Ronald McDonald House, Caldwell Senior Center, St. Vincent DePaul and the Idaho Food Bank. Dale, Idaho's hungry thanks you and so do we.

**University of Idaho  
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**Holiday Gift****Ideas**

In 2007, the Canyon County Advanced Master Gardeners began compiling helpful garden hints and tips to share with you!

The result is now a beautiful, full color calendar style compilation, currently available on CD-Rom for \$8.00. Copies are available at the Canyon County Extension Office or mail order.



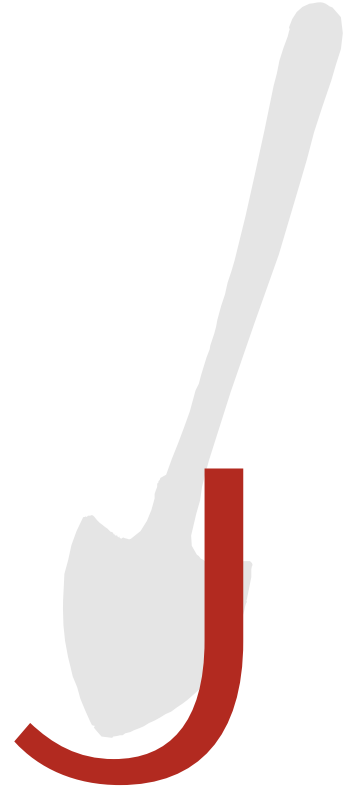
When you purchase seeds year round through Botanical Interests, the Canyon County Master Gardeners will receive 15% of all sales. That's money they'll use to make a difference for the people and gardens in our community!

To order, talk to a Canyon County Master Gardener or visit:

[www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php](http://www.botanicalinterests.com/nonprofits.php) & click on "Canyon County Extension." What great holiday gifts for that special gardener in your life...or yourself!



*All proceeds from CD and seed sales directly support Master Gardener volunteer activities including funding scholarships, community service projects and horticulture education for youth, adults and seniors in Canyon County. Thank you!*



## “Green” your green spaces: recycling yard waste and Christmas Trees



### Curbside Leaf Recycling Program

Rumor has it, curbside leaf recycling will be offered annually in Nampa and Caldwell starting at the beginning of November and running through the beginning of December. Leaves left at curbside must be placed in special compostable bags. Allied Waste Services will make special circulations to pick-up leaves and transport them to the landfill. Once collected, the leaves will be placed in a separate area of the landfill and ultimately used for mulch.

### Christmas Tree Recycling

Recycling a Christmas tree is a great way to be environmentally responsible. Recycled Christmas trees will be turned into mulch. The mulch from the trees will be used throughout Nampa’s local parks and placed in tree wells to

retain moisture. The mulch will also be placed on walking paths to make for better a walking surface.

Christmas trees may be dropped at a location to be announced. Only trees free of lights, flocking agents, ornaments, tinsel or other objects will be accepted.

Curbside pickup for recycling Christmas trees and tree branches will be offered to City of Nampa and Caldwell residents starting at the end of December and running through the beginning of January. For curbside pickup, branches must be bundled and cut into four-foot lengths or less. All trees and braches will be transported to the landfill and then turned in to mulch.

For details on these programs, call Allied Waste at 208-345-1265 and tell them you want to go green!