

IN THE DIRT

Fruit Cultivars for Home Plantings

Many people ask for tree or small fruit cultivar recommendations. Selecting the right cultivars in the beginning can save a lot of headaches, money, and maintenance in the long run. Disease resistance, harvest dates, winter hardiness and plant size are important considerations.

Ask your local Extension Office for a copy of "Fruit Cultivars for Home Plantings" from the University of Missouri or visit:
<http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/agguides/hort/g06005.pdf>

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

Use the shrub's bloom date to decide when it should be pruned. If the shrub blooms in spring, then prune it after it blooms. If it blooms in summer or fall, or doesn't bloom much at all, prune it in early spring.

Spring Bloomers - Forsythia, Lilac, Viburnum, Dogwood, Flowering Quince, Deutzia, Pearlbush, Witchhazel, Japanese Kerria, Flowering Almond

Summer/Fall Bloomers (and non-bloomers) - Mockorange, Rose of Sharon, Winged Euonymous (burning bush), Barberry, Allspice/Spicebush, Cotoneaster, Hydrangea, Privet, Honeysuckle, Shrub Rose, Spirea, Weigela

Prune for size reduction, rejuvenation or renovation.

- Size reduction – use heading back cuts, removing branch length to an outward facing side shoot at least 1/3 diameter of the branch removed
- Rejuvenation – begin with 2-3 year old plants. Remove 1/3 of the shrubs thickest, woodiest stems as close to the crown as possible. Repeating this process every year results in a shrub that is shorter, fuller and has more flowers.
- Renovation – cut down the entire shrub down as close to the crown as possible. Works well with many spirea.



How Do I Plant Asparagus?

Because asparagus are perennial plants in the vegetable garden, you want to take the time to prepare the soil deeply and add a lot of organic matter. Choose your site in the garden carefully as well; pick one at the north or west side so you don't shade your shorter vegetables. We get a lot of questions about how to get weeds out of asparagus, so make sure the planting area is as weed free as possible to begin with.



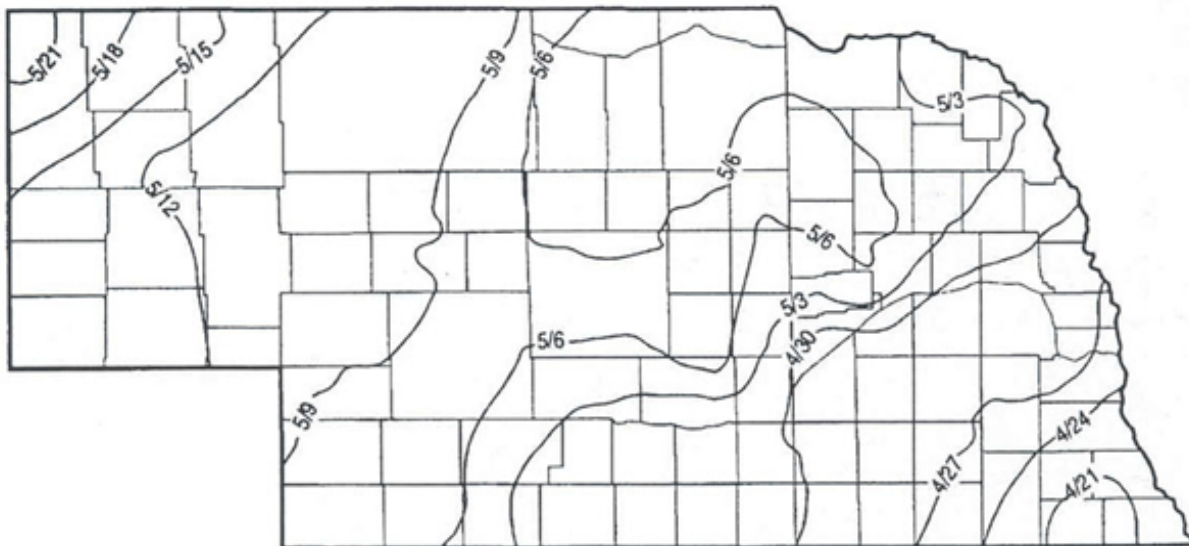
Select one-year old crowns of the newer male varieties like Jersey Giant, Jersey Prince, or Jersey Knight. You will probably need to mail order them; make sure the company you select will send the crowns at the right time for planting. You shouldn't plant until the soil is at least 50 degrees and you don't want to have to hang on to the crowns for too long and risk them either drying out or rotting.

When the time is right for planting in April or May, dig a trench around 6 inches deep. You can add more compost at this time or phosphate. Place the crowns in the trench about 1½ feet apart. Rows should be a good 5 feet apart. Traditionally, the crowns are then covered with 2 inches of soil. When the shoots emerge, 2 additional inches are added being careful to keep some of the new growth exposed. This process is repeated until the soil is filled to the top of the trench. While most people still plant asparagus this way, new studies have shown that this is not necessary. Either way, do not compact the soil over the crowns.

OK, you've chosen a site, prepared the soil, and planted your crowns. Now comes the hard part: you can't harvest this year. You have to wait until next year and even then, do not pick every spear. This patience will reward you with a strong, healthy, long-lasting stand of asparagus.

For more information visit: <http://byf.unl.edu/asparagus>

Nebraska average last spring freeze (32° F) dates indicate that half of all final spring freezes will occur before the dates shown and half will occur after, based on 47 years of data from 1949-1995. In southeastern Nebraska that average last spring freeze date is approximately April 30 and May 21 in the northwest corner of Nebraska's panhandle. These dates are guidelines only. Freezing temperatures may occur after the dates listed below. Also remember that local microclimate conditions can significantly affect the occurrence of frost in your landscape. These dates can be used as guidelines for gardeners planting early spring crops. Frost sensitive plants will not tolerate freezing temperatures and must be protected if freezing temperatures occurs after planting.



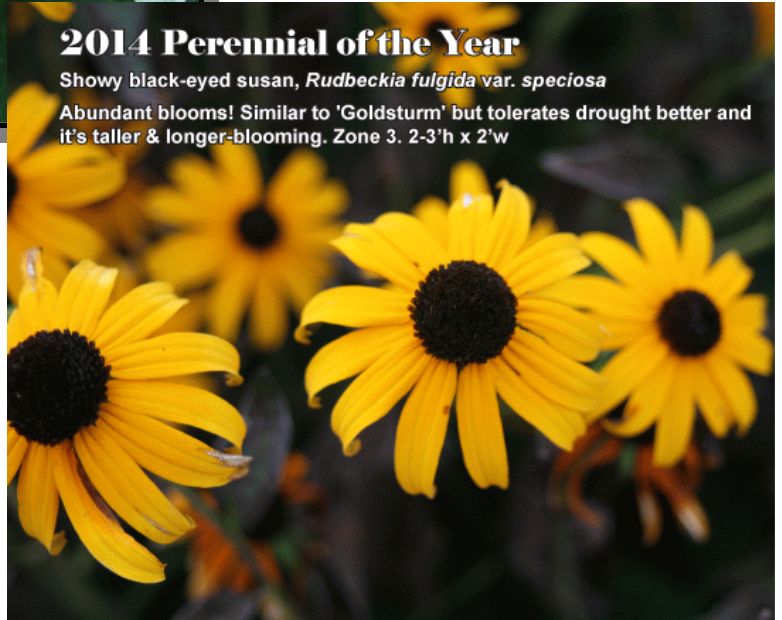


2014 Tree of the Year

Tuliptree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*
 Yellow-green flowers with orange base bloom May into June; cone-shaped fruits persist into winter. Leaves & flowers are large and tulip-shaped. Foliage turns bright yellow in fall. Prefers moist, fertile soil in full sun. Zone 4. 60-90'h x 30-50'w

Backyard Farmer Is Back!

It airs live Thursdays on NET1 at 7 p.m. CST from April through September. Join us for another great season, answering your lawn & garden questions.



2014 Perennial of the Year

Showy black-eyed susan, *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *speciosa*
 Abundant blooms! Similar to 'Goldsturm' but tolerates drought better and it's taller & longer-blooming. Zone 3. 2-3'h x 2'w

April Garden Activities

- Plant cole crops, lettuce, onions, spinach, and parsnips as soon as the ground is dry and workable.
- Plant successive crops of cool season vegetables.
- Plant dormant strawberry and asparagus crowns.
- Watch for grape flea beetles damaging expanding grape buds. Spray if necessary.
- Begin dividing fall-blooming perennials, such as chrysanthemums and asters, as soon as new growth begins.
- April 1-30, aerify Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns that are in high traffic areas and/or on compacted soil to alleviate compaction, improve rooting, and increase irrigation efficiency. Power rake or aerate Kentucky bluegrass lawns if the thatch layer exceeds 0.5 inches. Apply leafspot fungicide to common Kentucky bluegrass lawns after power raking. Thatch is seldom a problem on tall fescue lawns.
- Overseed thin Kentucky bluegrass lawns from April 1-30 with improved cultivars at .75 to 1.0 lb. seed per 1,000 sq.ft. Spring overseeding can be accompanied by an application of siduron to prevent crabgrass competition.
- April 15 to June 15, overseed thin tall fescue lawns with improved turf-type cultivars at 4-6 lbs. per 1,000 sq.ft. When seeding, apply a starter fertilizer at 1 lb. N/1,000 sq.ft. Spring overseeding can be accompanied by an application of siduron to prevent crabgrass competition.
- April 10 to June 15, control leafspot on common Kentucky Bluegrass lawns. Apply according to label directions. Diseases are seldom a problem on tall fescue lawns. Leafspot susceptibility is often related to spring fertilization (April & May) and the use of fast release fertilizers.