Heads UP!

From the
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in King County

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READY, SET, HARVEST!

Glorious fall is coming! It's the time of year when we can enjoy some of the bounty of our gardens, or maybe our neighbor's garden, or whoever is growing zucchini and keeps leaving gifts of it on your front porch! Harvesting can be a satisfying activity when done with knowledge and confidence, so some homework is always helpful before you venture out, basket in hand. Realize that not everything grown is as simple and cooperative as raspberries or blueberries that will tidily fall off in your hand when given a gentle nudge. For many tree fruits there is an abscission layer* between the fruit's stem and the branch. That spot gets weaker as the fruit ripens, allowing the fruit that is ripe to easily release from the tree. If you have to tug and yank the fruit, it is probably not quite ready for harvest.

Most things you harvest this fall will be ripe and ready to eat. Then there are the problematical things that require some planning and foreknowledge. I'm speaking of pears. As luscious as homegrown pears can be, they can also be frustrating and at times disappointing because of their harvesting requirements. First of all, know your variety. European pears fall into two groups: fall pears and winter pears. Fall pears like Bartlett, Clapp, Favorite, and Orcas do not need a storage period before they are ready to eat. They can sit on a shelf until their yellow color develops and the fruit begins to soften. Winter pears like Bosc, Comice, and Highland ripen later and will not mature properly unless given a resting period in cold storage—40 degrees in a box with loose newspaper for at least 3 weeks. After that they will need to sit at room temperature for a few days to soften. As counterintuitive as it seems, all pears should be picked while they are hard and green. The one exception (Isn't there always an exception?) is Asian pears. Treat them as you would apples. When the pears are fully developed and the fruit comes off easily at the abscission layer*, the pears are ready to harvest. If left on the tree to ripen they will rot having ripened out of sight and from the inside out.

Successful pear-growing is an art and can be a hassle, but the taste of a fresh, juicy pear is something to look forward to and one of the joys of glorious fall.

**Abscission layer: cells that lie between the fruit stem and fruiting spur. As the fruit ripens, cells in the abscission layer weaken allowing the fruit to release from the spur. The same effect is found in the fall when leaf stems release from twigs and branches, leaving you with piles of leaves to rake.*

Is it ripe or is it not?
Should it stay or should it go?

Western Washington Tree Fruit & Alternative Fruits - Tree Fruit Harvest & Storage Tips

Bold Gaillardia aristata 'Oranges and Lemons' herald in the song of fall.

Last issue for this season. Happy gardening!!!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Weather Station
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WEATHER STATION

Until the first week of September, there was good news for western WA on the wildfire front: there were fewer fires in BC, less-than-normal WA acreage burned, and the CA smoke had remained to our south.

Here's some good news for our gardens: 2018 research in wildfire-ravaged CA suggests that wildfire smoke could actually increase plant productivity. Researchers found that rather than blocking the sunlight, smoke scattered it allowing the sun's energy to reach further into dense, leafy canopies that would otherwise have been shaded. Tall crops, like corn, benefitted from the diffuse light using it nearly twice as efficiently!

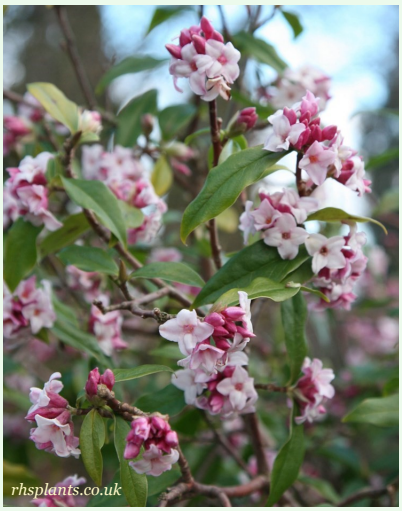
This time last year, September's average temperature was 62.3°. Total rainfall was 3.86 inches, with normal rainfall being 1.52 inches—a pretty wet September!

Weather resources:
http://www.climate.washington.edu/
https://cliffmass.blogspot.com/

NERD'S CORNER:

The Nepalese Paper Plant – Daphne bholua (pronounced 'blew-ah')

Years ago, I received a tiny cutting of an evergreen daphne from Nepal, *Daphne bholua*. It promptly grew 13 feet tall! After I screwed up my courage and cut it back to six feet, it stays at that height with minor pruning in late spring. This daphne has reliably-fragrant pink flowers from Christmas through the end of February in Seattle. In perfect succession, it stops blooming just as my *Daphne odora* starts blooming in early March. *Daphne bholua* is now available in local nurseries. The cultivar 'Jacqueline Postill' is desirable!



Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill'

FALL TURF CARE

September and October are excellent months to enhance your lawn's health, especially if you've slowed the watering during summer. The general rule for ideal lawn watering is to apply an inch of water per week, applied slowly once a week (or ½ inch twice a week) to allow water to penetrate deeply. Measure that inch of water by putting out shallow saucers and keep track of how long it takes the irrigation system to apply water an inch deep in the saucers. If rain comes, then include that amount of rain in your measurements. Deep but slow watering means that roots grow deeply and are better able to survive droughts.

September is the ideal month to plant a new lawn or overseed an existing lawn. Cooler temperatures and more rainfall mean both roots and shoots can grow vigorously before cold weather steps in.

Fertilizing in September stimulates grass roots to continue to grow during the dormant winter months. Apply a pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn when you do fertilize. If September stays hot and dry, you can postpone these actions into October. Turf fertilizers for established lawns do not have phosphorus in their formulations because this nutrient is already abundant in Western Washington soils.

For more information on lawn care in western Washington, link to this website: http://gardening.wsu.edu/lawns/

THE BIRDIE DID IT!

The remarkable and somewhat bizarre damage on this birch tree is the result of sapsucker feeding. Sapsuckers are birds in the woodpecker family with three varieties calling this region home. These birds peck holes in the tree bark, in very orderly rows, so that they can feed on the tree's sap. They will also not be above feeding on the occasional insect attracted by the sap. Thin-barked trees such as Birch are a favorite, but conifers, with their thicker bark, are also on the menu. Extensive sapsucker damage can cause a tree to decline, but most of the time those orderly rows of holes in a tree's bark are one of the mysteries of nature now explained.

The victim.

The culprit.

ANOTHER TROUBLE-MAKING SAWFLY

Has this ever happened to your Mugo pine: a wad of what looks like pellets held together by webbing amongst the branches of your pine? This is the work of the Pamphilid sawfly larvae. Pamphilid sawfly varieties are either leafrollers or webspinners. Unfortunately for your pine, this particular variety is a webspinner and needle muncher. All those "pellets" are actually frass from the larvae's feasting on your pine needles. You might notice the older frass is the color of long dead needles and more recent frass the color of fresh, but soon to be colored dead, needles. As you can imagine the insect larva that produced such a sizeable collection is a pretty sizeable bug that is doing its best to eat every pine needle it can before it's time to pupate.

So that's the story of the innocuous little sawfly and its trouble-making offspring. Check your pine trees.

A telltale sign that the Pamphilid sawfly larva has visited your pine tree.

The Pamphilid sawfly larva.

I saw a sawfly
Spinning a web,
Munching along
As I scratched my head.

AUTUMN PRUNING FOR WOODY PLANTS—DON'T!!

The best time to prune woody plants is in the dormant season when you can see their structure. The second best time is in mid-summer after the spring growth flush. Prune in mid-summer if your goal is to minimize regrowth. Pruning in autumn is not recommended because it stimulates regrowth and new shoots can be killed by early-winter freezes.

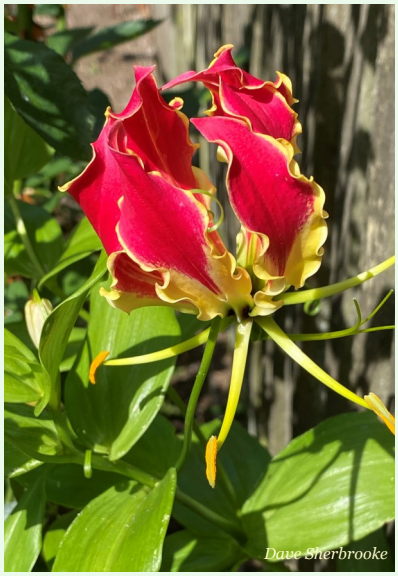
FALL FOR FALL PLANTING

There is wisdom to sliding into muck boots, throwing on a jacket, and getting down and dirty in fall: cooler temperatures, increased rainfall, and longer root development.

While it may seem counterintuitive, plant roots thrive and grow during the cool fall, giving the plant a hearty head start on spring growth. This all aids in helping plants thrive during drier and warmer summer months.

Fall often brings rain; however, there can be dry spells, so it is imperative that the new plants receive regular deep waterings to ensure good root development.

Even if temperatures are still hovering above freezing, plants, just like you and me, enjoy an extra layer of warmth—so mulch those plants! Mulch not only provides a nice cover for the root zones of new and established plants, it also feeds the soil which in turn feeds the plants.

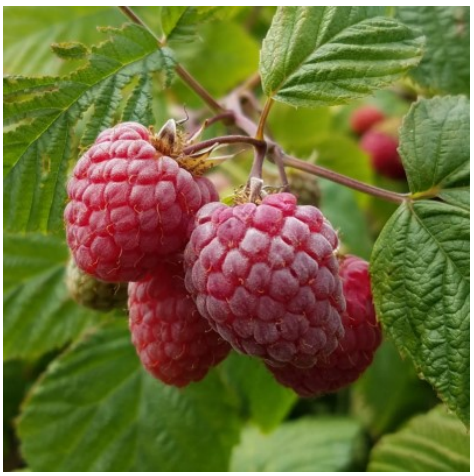


It's a glorious time to plant!

USEFUL WEB SOURCES!

- http://gardening.wsu.edu/
- https://pnwhandbooks.org/insect
- https://pnwhandbooks.org/plantdisease
- http://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Home/HortsenseHome.aspx
- http://pestsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/Home/PestsenseHome.aspx
- http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/diagnostic-resources/
- http://www.mgfkc.org/
- Puget Sound Gardening Tip Sheets
- Ask a Master Gardener Online

RASPBERRIES: THE SIMPLY WONDERFUL FRUIT



Raspberries are simple plants and live for many years. The roots are perennial, but the canes are biennial. The fruits develop on the canes. First year canes are called "primocanes," and the overwintered ones become "floricanes." Some varieties develop fruit on the primocanes and are called primocane-fruiting or fall-bearing raspberries. In our state, most successful varieties are summer-bearing raspberries (ex., 'Cascade' varieties) and fruit on floricanes.

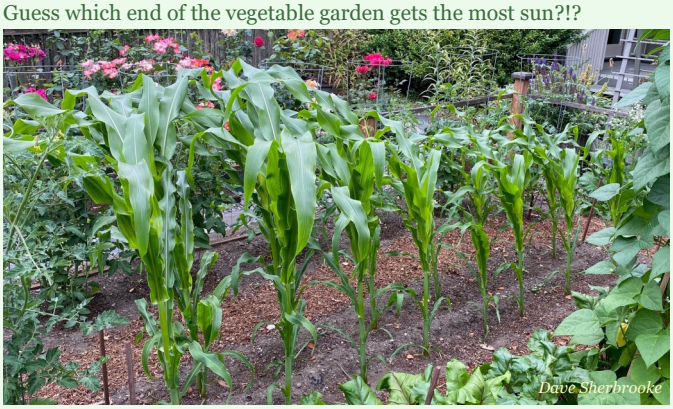
Summer-bearing raspberry primocanes grow rapidly beginning in early April. They can grow up to 13 feet by late summer. Buds that form at each node along the cane are vegetative in year one, fruiting in year two. To support the canes, provide trellising or bend canes over the top trellis wire (called arc training) as individual canes or in bundles. In late summer flower buds for the second year's berries begin to develop at the tip and then progress back down the cane to the base. Any fruit on these primocanes forms in late summer at the tip of the cane and occasionally along any lateral branches. If the tips produce berries it dies, so just cut the tip off at the end of that first year since it will not produce more berries. Floricanes do not elongate in year two but expend all their growth into lateral fruiting shoots. In year two, berries develop along nodes on floricanes. Once that cane has fruited, it too will die, and, at the end of year two, cut the cane to the ground. Reducing the number of canes per foot of row in winter may improve the size of the crop. Root growth occurs from mid-summer into fall, and shoot buds develop randomly along roots to become next year's primocanes. Canes from the crown are suckers in this type and should be removed.

Primocane-fruiting raspberries can be grown free-standing because their canes are usually shorter. They produce their best fruit in the first year, but fall frosts and fruit rot may limit fruit yields in short-season locales. Flowers develop at the tip of the cane in late spring and move down the cane over the summer. The flowers open in July and the canes will fruit until fall depending on the cultivar. Weather will affect this timing. These fruiting canes will die by the following spring, so pruning involves removing the spent canes every year. Any buds remaining on the canes that did not fruit in year one will produce fruiting laterals the following year in early summer. Buds at the base in year one will become the primocanes in the following spring. Pruning these plants involves removing damaged and very thin primocanes that are too short to train. Do this during the dormant season. A second option is to remove all canes to 1 to 2 inches during dormancy, but this may reduce yield.

Don't cut back canes too soon in the fall because nutrients may still be moving from the leaves to roots. Once the weather has cooled below 45 degrees, consider cutting back canes. Knowing your cultivar and its needs is key to doing this at the right time.

References: Several resources are listed on the WSU Mt. Vernon Small Fruit webpage: https://smallfruits.wsu.edu/raspberry/ including suggested cultivars for our area.

Guess which end of the vegetable garden gets the most sun?!?



TWIGGA MORTIS

DEPARTMENT REPORT

When things go awry in the veggie patch . . .

Extreme heat... Reduced pollination... Poor zucchini!