

Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

Pick Up Those Leaves

If you have leaves falling on the lawn already, it's a good idea to bag them with the mower and put them in the compost pile or under shrubs or in perennial beds. Leaving leaves on the grass now traps moisture and actually invites fungal problems. Speaking of leaves, if some of the leaves on your deciduous shrubs and trees are demonstrating browned edges and/or spots don't worry about it. They're just getting ready to drop their leaves for the coming fall season.

Fireants

With all that rain last week, the fire ant mounds are coming up all over the place. This is a good time to treat the whole yard with Amdro. I like Amdro better because it's a bait with a poison in it (no, I'm not selling it). The ants take it back to the nest to feed the queen and when the queen dies, the nest dies. It takes a couple of weeks but they're gone and that's all that matters. The directions tell you to use about 1-2 pounds per acre and spread it with a hand-held spreader (the directions also tell you how much to use for 5,000 square feet). That's a pretty light application, but considering that the ants forage as far as 50 feet or so from the nest, it's enough to get rid of 90+ percent of them by next spring. Better them than me, I always say (well, almost always). But don't spread it right now. Wait until it dries out a little. As I write this on Tuesday evening, it's supposed to rain two or three more days, so I'm gonna wait until next weekend or even next week to apply mine. Of course, for those of you who are "organic" there's Anti Fuego from GardenVille. According to Malcolm Beck, it'll really do a number on these pests.

Did you know that doing gardening uses most of the major muscle groups of the body? The use of the hips, legs, shoulders, and arms in gardening burns the most calories and helps build bone density. Researchers at the University of Arkansas find that women aged 50 and over who garden at least once a week show higher bone density than those who perform other types of exercise. One of the researchers, Lori Turner, says that, "there's a lot of weight-bearing motion going on in the garden—digging holes, pulling weeds, pushing a mower. In addition, it's done outside which boosts vitamin D production and aids the body in calcium absorption. Also, since gardening is a pleasure rather than a "workout," more people are likely to stick with it." Of course, like any exercise program, there should be a warm-up period first.

Disclaimer

I was told last week that some of our readers look upon me as an EXPERT in gardening because I write this column and that the stuff I write is taken as gospel by them. If you're one of those readers, you may wanna sit down because I'm about to break your bubble.

I've been called lots of things, but gardening expert isn't one of them. I leave that to the people that I learn from; i.e., Dr. Jerry Parsons, Dr. Calvin Finch, Mark Peterson and a whole bunch of others like them who have many years of formal education in the subject. My college degrees are in education and that's why I write so much and teach gardening classes when I can. BUT, I very seldom, if ever, come up with something new on gardening. I don't have time to do that kind of experimentation and research...and working with Jerry Parsons shows me exactly how much work it is.

Lemme tell you about me and my gardening. I finished the Master Gardener training program in 1995. Since then, I have been involved in lots of other gardening classes and activities as well as continuing education things to keep my certification up to date. I'm a voracious reader and have quite a collection of gardening books, pamphlets, etc., which I've read and re-read and re-read. I've been doing some serious gardening since 1995 and have learned a helluva lot and kept journals and calendars to help remind me of when I should do certain gardening things. That's where and why my monthly gardening calendars came to be.

The things I write about in this column are things that I have either personally experienced or read about recently (and I do give credit where it's due as you well know). My purpose in writing these things is to pass on

what knowledge I have to as many people as possible so that they, too, may experience the joy of gardening that I do.

Please keep these things in mind when you read this column. When you have questions, I try to answer them to the best of my ability. Many times, though, I don't have the answer and, after a search of my reference materials, if I don't find the answer, I'll just tell you that I don't know. I can, however, usually refer you to someone who CAN give you the answer. That's just being honest, I think.

Thus endeth sermon #26, methinks.

By the way, I picked my first fall tomatoes yesterday. How about you?

Send your ideas, questions, or comments to gardener@gvtc.com