

Local gardener/writer offers tips for fall yard care

“When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.”
—Ben Franklin

BY SALLY D. KETCHUM
Special to the Record-Eagle

Finding excuses to get out in Michigan’s fall color is easy. There are the fall gardening chores — raking, clean-up of debris, turning the compost and mulching plants. Garden advice seems to be everywhere — new ideas and old — for every season.

NECESSARY YARD CHORES

Among the autumn gardening tips from local master gardeners and nurseries, one piece of advice is common to all: Water, water, water, everywhere — and water often.

Because of the drought this summer, even after a the September rains, watering the yard through October — which makes the timing for those with sprinkler systems to be blown out an issue — is critical prepa-

ration for winter. The new “Farmer’s Almanac” predicts an early, frigid bout of winter weather for northern Michigan, so the advice is both timely and sensible.

Pine Hill Nursery’s Sandy Naples said that trees, including conifers and broad leaf evergreens, should be watered heavily until frost is in the ground. Trees and shrubs might be sprayed with wilt-proof solutions available at garden centers to protect from desiccation. Naples said that covering shrubs and evergreens also prevents mice and voles from feasting on the greenery during the winter.

Jeri Megill of Barker Creek Nursery near Williamsburg agreed that watering is the most important element of autumn care. She also suggested protective wraps, but cautions against wrapping plants too tightly; she advised leaving some space for air circulation. Plants other than trees and non-

blooming shrubs, too, especially ornamental plants like rhododendron and holly, benefit from wraps.

Proactive defense against winter problems saves trouble and worry. Determining usual wind directions and placement of snow fences may be smart for larger yards or those near shores or farming acreage. Animals, especially northern Michigan’s huge deer population, attack much vegetation during winter, but new, improved liquids and sprays to deter deer are now widely available.

LAWNS

Water frequently, evenly and deeply, at least twice a week during dry autumn weeks. Scott’s Lawn products make lawn care comprehensive for even non-gardeners.

Outline a four-step program involving seasonal fertilizing specifically directed at the seasonal needs. Early spring — crabgrass prevention; Spring — weed control;

Summer — insect control; and Step 4, fall, is specially formulated to promote strong, deep healthy roots in lawns to help survive the winter and encourage early greening-up next spring and a healthy start the lawn.

All professionals caution cutting ONLY one-third or less off the top grass blade; yet many folks still think that “a good, close cutting” will encourage growth. Not so. Too-short mowing will only encourage weeds to overtake the lawn.

PRO-ACTIVE PLANNING

Fight future droughts by considering the use of soaker hoses. Traverse City master gardener Karen Braun believes that the use of soaker hoses — often made of recycled tires — can remain in the ground for years, and points out that they are self-draining in the fall.

In planning for next year, consider Xeriscaping, methods of gardening to conserve water which use drought-

resistant plants and grasses and plan thoughtfully to place plants. These methods dramatically reduce water needs. Help to use this method is available at libraries, garden centers, and online.

Rain gardens can be effortless if well-planned. These are gardens of native plants with deep root systems. Rain gardens are planted in depressions which collect water and absorb the run-off from adjacent areas. Purple Coneflower, Garden or Lance-leaved Coreopsis, and Showy Gaillardia (Indian Blanket) are among Michigan’s native plants. Wildflower seed catalogs are good browsing for ideas.

October is still good planting time. Cindy Fobes of Barker Creek Nursery says that planting perennials, shrubs, and trees is fine right up until frost is in the ground.

DOCUMENT PROGRESS

Garden writing, keeping

notebooks with garden information, weather, growth and variety success records is both enjoyable and useful. Garden journals are rewarding, noting weather conditions, for instance, and how to respond to them, a thought-provoking remark on nature, or getting garden dreams on paper.

Photographing the autumn garden can be helpful. Often, gardeners are so accustomed to their own yards that they do not “see” defects and more importantly, possibilities. The focused eye through a viewfinder and the resulting photographs can give new ideas.

Shakespeare wrote in “As You Like It” that there is no enemy “but winter and rough weather.” Some thought, planning and a few completed chores during autumn’s colorful display can conquer both.

Sally Ketchum is a local freelance writer and avid gardener.

What’s new for household gutters

BY DAVID BRADLEY
The Associated Press

Gutters have been around for as long as homeowners have wondered what to do with water cascading off their roofs.

Until now, the world of gutters was simple: the actual gutter, downspouts, plus regular cleaning. For those who dread the latter, there is good news — gutter covers.

Gutter covers — aka gutter guards, gutter protection systems or leaf guards — act as a shield to stop debris from accumulating and clogging the gutter. The gutter system effectively blocks debris while easily handling several inches of rainwater per hour.

“Gutter covers are a great thing,” says Mike Turner of The Home Service Store, a national firm that locates reputable contractors and manages home-improvement projects for consumers. “This is one of the first new breakthroughs in gutter technology in a long, long time.” He says gutter covers are a particular boon to elderly or disabled homeowners who cannot otherwise clean or wash out gutters. Gutter covers are included in about 20 percent of gutter systems installed today.

Gutter covers encase the entire gutter. Water flows over the top of the gutter into a series of narrow slots. Debris tumbles over the gutters’ edge to the ground below. The slots are too small for leaves, twigs and sticks to enter. Water goes in, debris does not. The covers also provide your gutter with additional protection from plants, insects, and nesting animals such as squirrels, mice, and birds.

The covers are fabricated from metal or vinyl by a number of manufacturers.

The design differs from company to company but all are predicated on the same no-debris technology.

The covers can be installed on existing gutters, but Turner says typical installation involves both covers and matching gutters as part of a system.

While gutter covers block large debris, homeowners might need to periodically flush mud and sand from the gutters. How easily the covers are removed for this cleaning depends on the brand purchased.

Homeowners should expect to pay nearly twice as much for a full package of gutter covers and matching gutters as they would for standard aluminum or vinyl varieties.

Manufacturers say the time and labor saved with less frequent cleaning more than offsets the increase in price. For instance, if one has his gutters cleaned professionally twice a year (which in many areas might not be frequent enough), he will spend between \$750 to \$1,500 in five years time. On the other hand, people who neglect to clean their gutters risk more expensive repairs based on the water damage to their paint, drywall, siding, fascia boards, basement, and roof.

In terms of color choices, gutter guard options are currently somewhat limited. White and beige appear to be the most prevalent colors. On the other hand, there has been a proliferation of designer colors in standard aluminum gutters. The more familiar aluminum gutters are now available in more than 50 colors, and with time and growing popularity, gutter covers will undoubtedly be made available in many of the same colors.

Steve Matteo of Matteo Aluminum in suburban Cleveland says gutter cov-

ers are nice, but routine maintenance and cleaning are important to any gutter. He recommends homeowners spray or brush gutters clean as often as necessary. Leaks occur at the corners in most seamless gutters. Matteo suggests homeowners not use roof tar to patch leaks but instead use a specialty sealer formulated for gutters. As with most sealers, the surface should be clean and dry.

Dont view gutter covers as the ultimate solution to destructive ice dams. Ice dams are formed when heat from the house melts accumulated snow on the roof. The runoff freezes solid in the gutter when it runs into cold air at the end of the shingles. Your best bet is plenty of attic insulation and an adequate attic ventilation system to remove excess heat.

“Gutter covers are an effective solution for homeowners who either dislike or just don’t perform regular cleaning and maintenance on their gutter systems,” concludes Turner.



AP Photo/The Home Service Store


Clogged gutters like this one are a persistent headache for homeowners. Gutter guards stop most blockages from occurring. Debris falls harmlessly to the ground rather than blocking the flow of water.

Buying caulk

BY MORRIS AND JAMES CAREY
The Associated Press

Caulking the exterior of the home usually is performed just before painting. But it’s a good idea to check the exterior of your home at least once a year to make sure that all the joints and connections are well sealed. Once rain and snow begin, it will be too late because caulks and sealants just won’t adhere to damp surfaces. When shopping, you will probably discover that there are caulks made specifically for use with glass, wood, concrete or stone. Name the surface — there is a specialty caulk for it. If you’re unsure about which one to buy, try polyurethane caulk; it sticks to everything, remains soft and pliable and best of all can be painted. Exterior latex caulk with silicone is also universal, but it isn’t as durable or as flexible as polyurethane caulk. Polyurethane costs more, but lasts three to four times as long as latex.

Buyers of standing timber and sawlogs.



Silver Leaf
SAWMILL

542 Tobias, Elmira, MI 49730
1-877-667-4245 or (231) 584-2500 • Fax: (231) 584-2505

Please contact us about a management plan for your wood lot. No matter how large or small.

hm10-14-722574

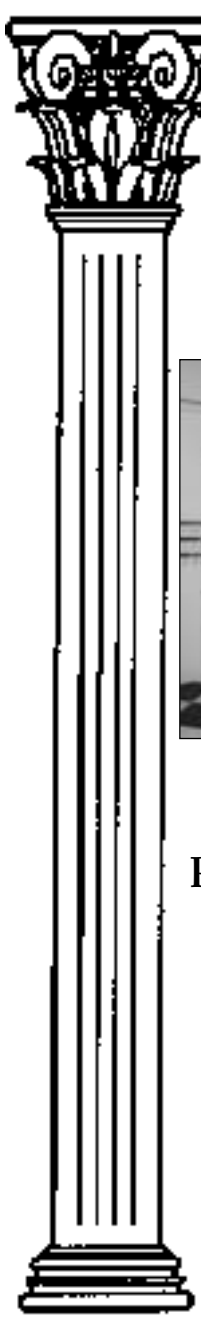
ADVANCED UPHOLSTERY & CANVAS
RECOVERING REPAIRING RESTYLING
938-2233

UPHOLSTERY


Acme, MI • 1 1/2 Miles East of MI-72

10%-20% off
UPHOLSTERY FABRIC
Offer ends Oct. 31, 2003

hm10-14-722591



SARA BUSBY DESIGN
Displays For Sale



CORSI CUSTOM CABINETRY
with old English finish


Featuring Corian Countertops & Sink with *with routed drain board & oil rubbed bronze faucet*

Valued at over \$13,000

\$4,500 For Sale

Painted White Bead Board Hutch

Featuring Maple Countertop & Frosted Glass Doors

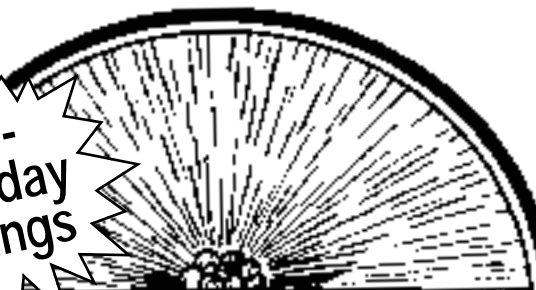


Valued at over \$4,800

\$1,999 For Sale


Hours: Mon-F 10:00 a.m - 4:00 p.m.
(231) 264-9511
965 U.S. 31 • Elk Rapids

hm10-14-722569




Pre-Holiday Savings

Draperies On Wheels



Featuring



Linda

Custom Draperies by Lafayette
Up To 25% OFF

Pleated Fashions by Lafayette
Up To 50% OFF

Millennium™ Vertical Blinds
Up To 60%

Mini Blinds
Remarkably Affordable


Shop at home with our Mobile Showroom!

Residential/Commercial

(231) 935-0200
1-800-626-6518

Locally owned & operated since 1989

Serving All of Northwest Michigan - Manistee to the Bridge



hm10-14-722579