

The week ahead

TUESDAY HEALTHY LIVING

BLOOD TEST: Pump up your knowledge about what's coursing through your veins

WEDNESDAY TASTE

TRICKS AND TREATS: Goodies to make for a children's party, what to hand out on Halloween and ideas for leftover candy

FRIDAY HOME

HOME'S DESIGN ISSUE: Three couples' remodeled dream kitchens, and stylish sofas you don't have to wait for

Today on dallasnews.com

Holiday help from Heloise

☑ **Survey:** What bugs you during the holidays? This year, Heloise is here to help. The advice queen will share her best holiday tips with readers just in time for Thanksgiving. No matter if your turkey trauma is long past; she can offer condolences or



congratulations as needed. And maybe other readers can learn from your folly. Send your questions, problems and holiday disaster stories by Monday.

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HOME

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How do I lower pH of flower beds?

I have two flower beds that are about 60 square feet each. The pH in each bed is about 9.1, and I have been advised to use lime or sulfur to lower the pH. What do you suggest?

J.S., Weatherford

Small amounts of sulfur, about 1/4 pound per flower bed, will help. Lime would be the worst choice; it would raise the pH.

You also should apply greensand at a rate of 4 pounds per 100 square feet. And add a layer of compost that is 2 to 3 inches deep.

I have an aloe vera plant that is growing in a pot. The leaves are so heavy that they keep breaking. How can I prevent the leaves from breaking off? Or should I cut them and root the pruned pieces?

R.G., Plano

Remove the plant from the pot. Then remove the small plants, or "pups," that have sprouted around the "mother" plant and transplant each of them to a separate container. The big plant probably needs to be moved to a larger container after you remove the pups. Use loose, well-draining potting soil.

I recently removed soil to a depth of about 14 inches around an established pecan tree to expose its root flare. The tree has a trunk diameter of 12 inches. The diameter of the hole I dug around the trunk is 24 to 30 inches. It appears that soil was piled around the trunk and over the area beneath the tree canopy about 10 years ago during a patio

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
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installation by a previous owner. I want to remove the excess soil to level the area and to improve drainage across the yard and away from the house. Can I till the area and remove 6 inches of soil within a 6-foot diameter without harming the tree's root system?

V.M., Dallas

Without seeing the site or photos, I would say that it should be OK to remove 6 inches of soil.

As you have surmised, the roots of "buried" trees climb to the soil surface to find oxygen. Be careful with the excavation and stop digging when significant roots appear.

My husband and I are buying a house with a natural, spring-fed swimming hole on the property. Beavers have dammed the creek that feeds the swimming hole, and the swimming area has a big algae bloom. We know we have to remove the dam to get the water moving, but what should we do about the algae?

M.E., Dallas

Spread whole ground cornmeal on the water at a rate of 140 pounds per 1,000 square feet of surface area. If you use the pelletized form of cornmeal

that sinks to the bottom, it will work better.

After a fast and hard rain, small masses of bluish-gray insects come out from under landscape timbers and from around trees and the slab foundation of our house. At first, these "masses" resembled spilled paint. But when we looked closer, we saw a collection of tiny insects. The bugs can leap about 1/2 inch. The first time we saw the bugs, we burned them with gasoline. The second time, we used an insecticide to kill them. What are they? And are they harmful?

P.H., Hawkins

I don't know what the insect is, but unless it is eating something, you probably don't need to worry. Most insects are beneficial. If you have digital photos of the bugs, please send them to me so I can see what you are dealing with.

A few more suggestions: Get rid of the landscape timbers; they are saturated with toxic substances that can leach into the soil. Never pour gasoline on soil, plants, insects or anywhere else; it is toxic and extremely dangerous. Setting it on fire makes it even more hazardous. And please don't use toxic pesticides.

RESOURCES

ONLINE: www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts

RADIO: KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. www.ksky.com.

MAIL: P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

CHORES

Brighten cool-weather gardens with fall annuals

By RICK ROSEN
Staff Writer
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Annual flowers are a good way to bring color to the often drab landscape of fall and winter. For those flowers to have a visual impact, you might consider a mass planting. Scattering a few flowers throughout the bed undermines the look.

Landscape designers often create cohesion by using only a few simple colors, but planting a lot of them. Designers attract attention with repeated color; homeowners can easily do the same.

If you plant, for example, a mass of yellow flowers in one spot, repeat yellow in one or two other spots throughout the garden bed to give your plantings maximum effect and unity.

Fall annuals don't have to be planted in the

ground. Pots, window boxes and hanging baskets can be placed wherever you need a burst of color.

At this time of year, transplants are a better bet than seeds. Plants from seed might not have enough time to mature before freezing weather arrives.

As with other plants, fall annuals need a prepared bed to thrive. If you haven't added organic amendments to your soil, you should.

Pick a site that matches the sunlight needs of the plant. Most fall annuals do best in sun. So make sure the site gets enough sun before planting.

However, if you have a shady spot, forget-me-nots, nasturtiums, nemophilas and nicotianas generally do well in shade, according to longtime gardeners.



Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)



Nicotiana (*Nicotiana*)



Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)



Viola (*Viola* spp.)

COOL-SEASON ANNUALS

- Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)
- Baby's breath (*Gypsophila muralis*)
- Candytuft (*Iberis umbellata*)
- Begonia (*Begonia semperflorens*)
- Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
- Candle tree (*Cassia alata*)
- Celosia (*Celosia cristata*)
- Cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum* spp.)
- Dahlberg daisy (*Dyssodia* sp.)
- Delphinium (*Delphinium*)
- Dianthus (*Dianthus*)
- Dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*)
- English daisy (*Bellis perennis* spp.)
- Forget-me-not (*Myosotis*)
- Geranium (*Pelargonium x hortorum*)
- Iceland poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*)
- Impatiens (*Impatiens*)
- Larkspur (*Consolida ambigua*)
- Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum*)
- Nemophila (*Nemophila insignis*)
- Nicotiana (*Nicotiana*)
- Ornamental cabbage and kale
- Pansy (*Viola x wittrockiana*)
- Petunia (*Petunia x hybrida*)
- Phlox (*Phlox drummondii*)
- Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum*)
- Statice (*Limonium sinuatum*)
- Stock (*Matthiola*)
- Sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*)
- Viola (*Viola* spp.)



Homes Tour Today

The Cliffs at Clariden Ranch in Southlake, TX



Sunrise Ranch



Rancho Laredo

Take Hwy 114 to Southlake.

Exit White Chapel Blvd. and turn right (north) ~ Go 2 miles north to Clariden Ranch Road Turn left into the Clariden Ranch entrance & follow the directional signs to the designated parking area.

ACTIVITIES DURING TOUR:

Friday, October 19

10:00a - 11:00a Enjoy great cooking tips from Chef Daniel Nemecek from Kirby's Steakhouse.

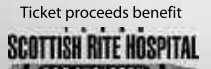
Saturday, October 20

10:30a - 11:30a Learn to make Brio Tuscan Grill's signature dish, Pasta Brio, with Chef Adrian Garcia.
2:00p - 3:00p Have fun cooking with Ferrari's Italian Villa owner Francesco Secchi.

Sunday, October 21

Noon - 4:00p Make your home a "dream home" for a new dog or cat! The S.P.C.A. will be holding pet adoptions at the Sunrise Ranch home.
1:00p - 3:00p Boogie woogie with Radio Disney.
6:30p - 8:30p Get an insider's view of the building process and ask Michael Garabedian questions in this special after hours "Ask the Builder" program.

October 18th through November 4th • Thursdays - Saturdays 10am to 6pm • Sundays Noon to 6pm
Buy your tickets at your neighborhood Tom Thumb now through November 4th.
Tickets are \$8 in advance /\$10 at the door. For more information visit www.wfaa.com/sensationalhomes



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Live Better Here.

NORTH HAVEN Gardens

Plant fruit trees and vines now!

Berry vines and fruit trees add beauty and flavor to the garden!

Vines: Grapes that are perfect for North Texas, Blueberry & Blackberry
Fruit Trees: Peach, Persimmon, Fig, Pear, Apple and Plum

Free Garden Programs

Saturday, Oct. 20
11:00 am - Daylilies in the Garden
1:30pm - Growing Great Grapes
2:30pm - Make Wine at Home
\$10 registration fee
3:30pm - Wine Tasting
Complimentary...following the class

Sunday, Oct. 21
3 pm-5 pm - Rebloomer Iris Show

Saturday & Sunday
First Men's Garden Club of Dallas
2007 Fall Plant & Vegetable Show

7700 Northaven Rd. (Just West of 75)
Open Daily ☎ 214-363-5316 ☎ www.nhg.com

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