

In the garden

Advice offered on living Christmas trees

Soil erosion usually doesn't cause much loss of top soil, but in can be a problem, says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

"One solution is to mulch the soil around shrubs and in the garden," McNeilan says. "A layer of mulch tends to hold the soil in place and softens the impact on the soil of falling rain, which causes compaction as well as erosion."

Some good materials are sawdust, large sheets of black plastic, leaves, barkdust and compost. Organic mulch not only protects soil from erosion but also is a valuable addition of organic matter.

Cut holly for decoration around the home during the holidays will stay in "deck the halls" shape longer if properly treated after cutting, says McNeilan.

Cut holly on a day when temperatures are above freezing and the sky is cloudy to avoid foliage drying conditions. Select holly with unblemished leaves and bright berries.

Spray it with cold water to remove spray residue and dust. Then to delay natural defoliation, treat holly with a hormone solution according to label instructions.

For holly leaves with extra gloss, add 2 or 3 tablespoons of a high grade summer spray oil per gallon of hormone mix.

If you plan to mail boxes of cut holly to friends, be sure to drain away excess moisture from dipped holly boughs before packing them in

strong cardboard boxes lined with moisture proof paper.

Store and ship holly by itself. Don't be tempted to send along a few pears and apples in the box. Any ripening fruit will result in almost instant defoliation of the holly.

If the holly is for home use, treat it the same as you would a bouquet of roses. Immerse stems in water. Keep the arrangement in a cool spot away from the drafts.

Home construction work can be deadly to trees, particularly if grading changes in the landscape are part of the building plan.

There are two types of grade changes, and trees have to be protected from both. One is raising the grade and the other is lowering it.

Tree roots need air, water and minerals to survive. When the grade is changed by removing soil from the top of the roots or by adding soil over the roots, the tree has difficulty obtaining its normal amount of air, water or minerals.

Raising the grade. Fill added around the base of a tree blankets the roots and prevents normal air and moisture circulation in the original soil.

Minor fills — six inches or less — will not harm most species of trees if the fill is made with good topsoil high in organic matter and loamy in texture.

Major grade changes require a greater effort to save the tree. This is usually done by installing a layer of gravel and a system of drain tiles over the roots.

The tiles are laid on the original grade. They form a wagon wheel shape with the spokes of the wheel opening into a dry well that is built around the tree trunk. The dry well acts as a hub of the tile system and holds fill away from the tree trunk.

Also it may be necessary to place a series of bell tiles vertically over the roots and connected to the wagon-wheel system to allow for additional air and water circulation.

The air system will have to be designed individually for each tree and fit the contour of the land so it drains water away from the tree trunk.

Lowering the grade. Protecting a tree from a lowered grade is usually less complicated than protecting it from a raised grade. But lowering the grade can be equally harmful to the tree unless proper attention is given to helping the tree survive by cutting roots, pruning branches, stimulating root growth and watering.

Generally, protection is achieved by terracing the grade. If space is available, the tree may be unharmed if you let it remain on a gently sloping mound.

Another way to protect a tree is to build a retaining wall between it and the lower grade. This is effective if the grade difference is less than two feet.

Retaining walls can be laid dry or with mortar. If you lay a wall with mortar, you will have to put a footing under it for stability. And don't forget to leave drain holes in the wall.

The end of the gardening season leaves many home gardeners with a collection of various garden chemical leftovers. Some of these can be saved while others should be discarded.

Insecticides and weed killers can be stored through the winter unless the label says storage is unsafe or ineffective, says McNeilan.

Many garden chemicals break down with age and won't do the job they were intended to after long periods of storage. Malathion and diazinon deteriorate rapidly when exposed to air, and the metaldehyde in slug bait changes when exposed to air, water or sunlight.

Temperature extremes also don't help. Several garden chemicals become useless if exposed to freezing temperatures.

Chemical products that are past their shelf life should be disposed of, McNeilan advises. Discard any chemical over 5 years old, whether opened or not. Follow label directions closely when getting rid of chemicals.

Decorating the home with a living Christmas tree can make the December holiday a memorable one, says McNeilan.

Living trees are now available at many nursery stores and other retail outlets. The trees usually come in a tub of soil or in balled and burlapped condition.

If the tree is in a tub, simply keep it watered until it is time to move it outdoors. If the tree is balled and burlapped, set it in a large tub or other con-

tainer and keep it moist until the tree is to be moved outside.

McNeilan advises living Christmas tree owners to avoid keeping the tree indoors too long. A living Christmas tree is in a dormant state, and if it is kept indoors where temperatures are much higher than outdoors, the tree will break dormancy and begin active growth.

This will be a problem when the tree is finally moved outside again, McNeilan says. The sudden temperature change may cause the tree to die.

When moving the tree back outdoors, move it into a garage or onto an unheated porch first for a few days. This will help the tree acclimate itself to outdoor temperatures gradually after the long stay inside.

The pine, fir and blue spruce trees that are available as living

Christmas trees in Oregon will eventually grow to be 30 to 35 feet tall. Avoid planting them too close to homes because their roots may cause damage to cement foundations.

A living Christmas tree can be used in the landscape as a windbreak tree, or as a barrier tree to divide the yard or add to the privacy of the home.

Garden and lawn fertilizers left over from the summer growing season can be stored for use next year, but using them now might be a better option, says McNeilan.

Unused fertilizer often hardens over the winter because it attracts moisture. Rather than break it up in the spring, many gardeners simply discard it.

This problem can be avoided by using all leftover fertilizer in the landscape, rather than storing it, says McNeilan. If saving it, store it in its original container. Fold it tightly to keep it moisture free.

Gingerbread kids season requirement

For those smitten by the affliction, the season wouldn't be the same without gingerbread kids. These doughboys are made of pungent, yeast-risen gingerbread.

GINGERBREAD KIDS

6 to 6 1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon cloves

3 packs dry yeast
1 cup water
1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup dark molasses
1/4 margarine
2 eggs (room temperature)
Melted margarine
Confectioner's sugar frosting

In a large bowl thoroughly mix 2 cups flour, brown sugar, salt, ginger, cinnamon, cloves and undissolved yeast.

Combine water, milk, molasses and 1 1/2 cup margarine in a saucepan. Heat over low heat until liquids are very warm (120 to 130 degrees F.). Margarine does not need to melt. Gradually add to dry ingredients and beat two minutes at medium speed of electric mixer, scraping bowl occasionally. Add eggs and 1 1/4 cup flour. Beat at high speed two minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Stir in enough additional flour to make a stiff dough. Turn out onto lightly floured board; knead until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Divide dough into four equal pieces. Shape each piece into an 8 x 3-inch rectangle. Place on two large greased baking sheets. Starting at bottom of each rectangle make a 3-inch cut up the center. Shape as for legs. Measure two inches down on each side from top of oblong and press dough towards the center to shape head. Make 1/2-inch cuts on both sides at the neck. Measure four inches up the sides from bottom of legs; slit in one inch and then up one inch on both sides. Pull arms out to

three inches. Press dough against baking sheet and shape arms. Tuck dough in around head and body to finish shaping. Brush generously with melted margarine. Cover tightly with plastic wrap. Freeze until firm. Transfer to plastic bags. Keep frozen up to four weeks.

Remove from freezer; place on ungreased baking sheets. Cover; let stand at room temperature until fully thawed, about two hours. Let rise in a warm place, free from draft, until more than doubled in bulk, about one hour 15 minutes.

Bake at 375 degrees F. for 20 to 25 minutes, or until done. Remove from baking sheets and cool on wire racks. Frost with confectioner's sugar frosting, then decorate as desired. Makes four 8-inch kids.

To bake without freezing: after shaping, let rise in a warm place, free from drafts, until doubled in bulk, about one hour and 15 minutes. Bake as directed above.

Scouts benefit from bingo

The Mt. Hood Lions Club is earmarking its proceeds from bingo on Friday, Dec. 28 to go to the local Boy Scout troop. Bingo starts at 7:30 p.m. at the Lions Club building in Wemme.

On Friday, Dec. 14 the minimum blackout will be \$250, according to Neal Sullivan.

Fine Arts Guild plans art exhibit and sale

The Portland Fine Arts Guild will hold an art exhibit and sale through Dec. 24 at the 42nd Street Station, 2000 NE 42nd Ave., Portland.

Workshops open to the public are held Mondays, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at St. Peter and Paul's Episcopal Church, located at SE 82nd and Pine. Sessions are conducted by

Portland Fine Arts Guild artists. There is a \$2 charge with free parking. Bring a sack lunch.

The Guild is always looking for new members. Both professional and amateur artists are welcome to attend monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month at 7:15 p.m. at the church.

First-term honor roll announced at Welches

The first-term honor roll was recently announced at Welches School.

Students are listed by grade point averages.

4.0: Erin Burke, 7th grade, and Julie Dieterich, 8th grade.

3.85: Danielle Estes, 7th, Lora Hawkins, 8th, Allison Lake, 8th, and Renee Richardson, 8th.

3.71: Virginia Dyal, 6th.

3.66: Jennifer Deneen, 6th, Chris Fennell, 7th, and Amy Lake, 6th.

3.57: Dawna Spencer, 8th.

3.50: Fernando Hodgson, 7th, and Tia Shisler, 8th.

Honorable mention

3.33: Diana Engleking, 8th.

3.28: Deana Collins, 8th, and

Guava French, 8th.

3.2: Stephanie Deneen, 8th.

3.16: David Closner, 8th, Sarah Fox, 6th, and Ritchie Phillips, 8th.

3.0: Chandler Burke, 8th, Carey Hubert, 7th, Ian Noel, 8th, and Angela Kramer, 7th.

Scouts set paper drive

The Boy Scouts in Hoodland are holding a paper drive on Saturday, Dec. 15. People who have newspapers they would like picked up may call Alan Jensen at 622-4844.

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