K-State horticulture expert shares important chores for winter, spring

Knotweed Control

“Knotweed is an annual that germinates in late February or early March,” Upham said. “So a pre-emergence herbicide can be used in the late fall.”

The beginning of November is the ideal time to apply herbicide. For pre-emergence knotweed, Upham recommends brand names Scotts Halts, Weed Impede, Barricade, Dimension or XL. For post-emergence, Trimec, Weed-Out, Weed-B-Gon or Weed Free Zone can be applied in spring.

If seeding in the spring, another option is tilling, which will adequately control knotweed without the addition of a herbicide.

Rabbit Protection

Rabbit invasions of the garden are likely to increase in the winter when there is not as many plants available for them to nibble on. Their favorite targets are newly planted trees and shrubs.

Upham advises several methods of protection:
- At least 2-foot-tall cylinders of 1-inch-mesh of chicken wire or similar material.
- Plastic tree wraps.
- Liquid rabbit repellent, re-applied after every rain.

If using the chicken wire wrap, remember to remove it in the spring before the wire starts to constrict the trunk.

**Compost Pile**

Fallen leaves and other materials are abundant for the compost pile. It is vital to keep the compost pile moist in order for the materials to efficiently decompose.

“(T)he compost needs to be kept moist so that the bacteria and fungi can break down raw materials,” Upham said.

During times without a recent rain, a sprinkler can be used to soak through the pile. After wetting, the pile can be allowed to drain. Aim for the entire pile to be moist but not waterlogged. Edges can dry out quicker than the rest of the pile and can be lightly sprinkled to be moistened again.

For more information on composting, the K-State Department of Horticulture provides an instructional video or series of publications.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story

Composting: Making Black Gold (video), http://tinyurl.com/jn6yppo_


K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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