Pest Corner

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Information adapted from articles written by Don Tapio, G.H. County Extension Agent.

Mushrooms

Mushrooms sprouting up in the lawn and garden? The mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of underground fungus organisms which are feeding on decaying organic material. The easiest way to control them is either by raking, picking by hand, or mowing them down. Warm temperatures and fall rains are conducive to their growth. They disappear once colder temperatures arrive.

Weed Management

Fall is a good time to get a jump-start on next spring's weed problems. An option is to remove weeds from beds now. Another option is to make an application of some sort of organic mulching material now. Shred fallen leaves and spread them on landscape beds. Also, a fall application of beauty bark will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the garden during the winter months, and also prevent the germination of shotweed, chickweed and other common weeds that grow profusely during the winter months. Organic mulches should not be piled deeply beneath rhododendrons, azaleas and other ornamental plants that have roots close to the soil surface. All organic mulches have the added benefit of improving the physical condition of the soil.

About application of the pre-emergent herbicide Casoron: It controls annual, biennial, and perennial broadleafed weeds and grasses and generally does not damage woody plants. The label clearly states: Casoron is registered for use around established ornamental plants that have a woody root structure. It can be used in landscape beds where there are no underplantings of herbaceous flowers or bulbs. Casoron is best used before weeds emerge. It needs light rain and cold temperatures to move into the soil. If temperatures are too warm when it is applied, it becomes volatile and does not provide adequate weed control. If it rains too much just after it is applied, it may travel downslope and damage nontarget plants. Generally, best time to apply is from November to February. Casoron persists in the soil for 6 to 9 months or more, depending on rainfall, soil conditions, and application rate. Its use may limit the option of planting annuals and other herbaceous garden plants next spring in areas where applications were made.

Making Apple Cider

Cider makers don't agree on much, but they are united in the belief that mixes produce the best juice. The flavor in cider depends on the amounts of acid, tannin, sugar, and the aromatic qualities of the apples. You can perk up bland juice from one apple variety dramatically by adding juice from tart, aromatic or astringent varieties. Don't worry about precise measurements; experiment until you find the taste that is most appealing to you.

Avoid moldy, rotten or unripe fruit; they'll make bad tasting and sometimes toxic juice. Don't worry about apple scab, or other surface blemishes; they won't spoil the cider. Watercore apples are also good squeezed into the cider mix.

Wash the apples thoroughly before grinding and pressing. Apples which have spent too much time on the ground pick up acetobacter, the bacteria that converts sweet juice to vinegar. Reject any that are slimy feeling, soft or heavily bruised. Do not use windfall apples lying under the tree if there's a possibility of animal manure present on the ground.

WSU Food specialists advise that apple juice should be pasteurized by heating the juice to at least 160 degrees F. to kill any harmful bacteria that may have been left on the apples. Check the temperature with a thermometer. When finished, keep the cider refrigerated. Enjoy!

Pest Corner is the title of a series of gardening articles which appears in the Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties Master Gardener Newsletter.