

Garden Tips

- Some areas are having an excellent year for caterpillars, butterflies and moths. If you lose foliage from a deciduous tree this time of the year, it will not hurt the tree. The leaves have already produced plenty of food for the tree and they would fall anyway in another month. The main reason to kill these fall caterpillars would be to keep the droppings off the sidewalk or out of the pool. Any pesticide labeled for caterpillars would work. Be sure to use one labeled for fruits or nuts if you plan to spray something edible. By the way, the ones that make webs this time of the year are commonly called fall webworms. Tent caterpillars will show up in the spring and their nests are normally in the forks of the tree. Fall webworms will make nests on the ends of the limb. Bagworms have individual protective bags instead of webs. Speaking of bagworms, it is too late to control them with a pesticide. The good news is that the eggs will be laid inside the bag and hand-picking the bags will work from now until next June.
- Rising energy costs have some of us considering cost-saving measures, even when it comes to our lawns. Do you have more lawn than you need? Many urban landscapes are quite small, but there still are plenty of homes with huge expanses of grass. It is not difficult to convert a lawn to a forested area, although you may have to comply with certain zoning requirements. A forested area requires less energy to maintain.
- The high price of gas is still causing the cost of produce to rise at the grocery store. Support local growers by purchasing at farmers markets or, better yet, plan to put in a fall garden, if you have not already. Plant cool-weather plants such as lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, collards, spinach and other greens now, along with root crops such as carrots, radishes, beets, onions and garlic. Turnips for roots need to be planted now. Turnips for greens can be planted until September 20. Consider growing some edible crops in your landscape. Choices for edible landscaping include blueberries, figs and grapes.

Compost is not only good for your garden but making and using it is good for your community. Any leaves, grass clippings or pruning that go into the pile don't end up being collected by cities. Make a simple compost pile by incorporating a small amount of garden soil and a little fertilizer to a pile of leaves. Next spring you will have a supply of leaf mold to improve the structure of your garden soil. To achieve faster decomposition of the compost pile, turn the pile over every month or so during the growing season. For more detailed information on composting go to <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/pdf/ag-467.pdf>