

A Personal Message

November means Thanksgiving in our house. We're up to our ears in it this year. Melissa's family will descend upon us from New York and North Carolina. And, my family will be right here, in the middle of it all.

We love the opportunity to see her family. Since they live so far away, we don't get see the nieces and nephews very often. They now range in age from 5 through 11. I have a feeling we'll be very busy while they're in town.

Once again, I'm in charge of the cooking. We're still hashing out the menu, but I have a surprise up my sleeve. I'm going to try a turducken this year.

For those of you who don't yet know, a turducken is a Cajun inspired dish. It consists of a boneless chicken, stuffed into a deboned duck, stuffed into a boneless turkey. It's huge!

Now, I've never actually prepared one of these over the top Thanksgiving treats. This year will be a first for me. However, the family is game to try this somewhat gamey concoction and I'm excited about preparing it.

There will be plenty of other treats on the table from the proverbial soup to nuts. We'll have a total of seventeen at the table, so I'm planning a very large extravaganza. November also signals the beginning of Christmas at the Sadler homestead. And that means our annual Christmas light display will blaze through the night sky for the first time on Thanksgiving night.

Last year, we powered over 12,000 lights. Yes, I realize it may be a bit too much, but I truly enjoy decorating for Christmas.

I have a few tricks up my sleeve this year. There's a life size Santa that we acquired for \$5.00 at a yard sale last summer. He's a little elderly, but we plan to revamp his padding. He may be on the roof or decorating a tree. We haven't decided yet.

Speaking of life size Santas...I may corner the market on him this year. Melissa was shopping the after Christmas sales last year. She found a Santa suit that was marked down from \$100.00 to \$25.00 and bought it for me. She planned to give it to me this year as a Christmas gift.

However, I found it sometime in mid-July. She tells me I was snooping where I wasn't supposed to be. Now, she's capitulated and I get to wear it this season. Should be an interesting look.

Please plan to drive by and take a look at our decorations sometime during the season. We'll have more tidbits about our display in next month's issue.

November Garden Tips

- * It's a good idea to protect your roses against the cold during the winter months. Place a layer of mulch around the roots. Layer it so that the first part of the stem nearest to the ground is covered.
- * Don't forget those outdoor tools that served you so well during the past few months. It's time to sharpen rusty blades, tighten loose screws and discard anything that broke or wasn't working properly. You'll forget their idiosyncrasies by next spring, so set aside some time now.
- * You can still plant your spring flowering bulbs until the ground freezes. Tulips, daffodils and iris bulbs need to be installed soon. You can also plant peonies until the first frost.
- * If you have a vegetable garden, please be sure to get those old weeds and leaves out of it. This type of debris tends to harbor diseases for next year's crop. Clean it up and rototill it for next year. You'll be glad you did.
- * If you're like us and have rosemary and evergreens in containers, remember to water them during the winter. Icy winds can really dry outdoor potted plants.

Hardwood Cuttings

You keep hearing about it, but what in the world is a hardwood cutting? Just like the name implies, this type of cutting is made from wood that is stiff, not pliable.

These cuttings are typically taken during the months of December, January and February. This type of cutting is made from a plant while it is dormant or after it has completed growing for the season and the wood has had time to become hardened. This usually doesn't happen until after a good hard freeze when the temperature drops below 32 degrees.

Good examples for hardwood cutting propagation are wisteria, crape myrtles, hydrangeas and even roses. Forsythia are another excellent example of deciduous plants that grow well when started from a hardwood cutting. This method even works for many species of evergreens, including junipers and yew.

Here's how to start: Take a cutting from the tip, about 4-8 inches in length. There should be about four to six buds per cutting to give them as much of a chance for propagation as possible.

These fragile cuttings may be placed in a propagation-friendly container or even directly outdoors in well drained soil. Plant them deep, leaving only the top 3-4 inches exposed. Be sure to keep the soil moist and protect them from winter winds, if possible. A tarp shelter on the windy side of the cuttings will help keep them alive during the coldest months.

Keep an eye out for new growth in the spring. These young plants will need coddling during the first year. Transplant them to the garden or another container as they establish roots and begin to form branches. Keep them watered and fertilized during the growing season.

Hardwood cuttings require patience and lots of TLC. However, if you don't mind a little extra work, this is an excellent way to obtain new plant material. The plant material that you work with is usually some of the more expensive trees and perennials.

Try these guidelines for a fun, inexpensive way to increase the variety of plants in your gardens, shrubbery borders and tree areas. You'll enjoy share cuttings with friends and neighbors too.

Leaf Removal

We received our first request for leaf removal in mid-September this year. That seemed early to me.

However, when we arrived to complete the job, I was somewhat surprised to see the amount of leaves on the ground. The property owner wasn't exaggerating. There were an astonishing amount of leaves and pine needles covering her grass.

She was smart to realize just what those leaves were doing to her grass. Fallen leaves block sunlight to grass, which in turn reduces photosynthesis production. Grass needs the nutrients which occur during photosynthesis, even during the cold winter months. You and I only see a dormant lawn during the winter. The grass is brown and scraggly. Not a pretty sight as we longingly wish for the beautiful green lawns of summer.

However, your lawn is busy underground all during the winter. Each blade of grass is busy manufacturing food in its' root system. That way, grass can continue to grow underground, even during the dormant season.

Actually, your grass needs food now more than ever to keep it strong in the cold months. So, it's really important to get those leaves off your grass.

We can help you in several different ways. Our leaf vacuum has a 15 foot hose that can reach across your property to suck up huge piles of leaves. It mulches the leaves as it vacuums them.

This makes the entire process much more efficient. We're able to haul solid and compact loads of leaves off your property. Additionally, we use top of the line backpack blowers to reach into every nook and cranny of your yard to erase all traces of autumn. However, you may be a do-it-yourselfer who actually enjoys raking and removing leaves yourself. We can assist you in a very economical way.

After you create piles of leaves, we're available to bring our leaf vacuum to your property to take them away. We can vacuum them for you and haul the load to the landfill. You'll save money on our labor and truck charges this way. You'll only pay for the time we spend to remove the piles, a nominal equipment fee and a small landfill charge.

We offer rapid response leaf removal services that are thorough and efficient. We understand that with the Holidays approaching, you may have plans and that means your yard needs to look sharp. If you have a family function or a party scheduled, call us to clean up right before the event and we'll juggle our schedule to accommodate you.