

# YARD & GARDEN REPORT

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## Landscaping for winter interest

At the risk of stating the obvious, our winters in North Dakota are *long*—about six months of the year. When designing our home landscape, it makes sense to consider how we can make it look attractive during the extended cold season.

Start with trees. Our shade trees are leafless during most of the year. All we see during winter is BARK. It may seem crazy, but the beauty of a tree's bark may be just as important as a tree's flowers, fall foliage or any other feature.

The papery bark of birch adds a wonderful touch to our winter landscapes (*Fig. 1*). Plant your birch in a moist spot with a north- or east-facing exposure and it will thrive.

The bark of amur chokecherry, cherry, and Japanese tree lilac will glisten in the sunlight. Hackberry is a tough tree with pebbled bark; and 'Cobblestone' bur oak has corky texture. A selection of trees with beautiful bark is shown on page 2.

We can't grow the classic Christmas holly in North Dakota, but we can grow common winterberry (*Fig. 2*). Look for varieties with persistent fruit; these include 'Winter Red' and 'Red Sprite'.

Crabapples are often selected for their flowers but this display lasts only a couple weeks. Select a variety with persistent fruit and you can enjoy bright colors through much of the winter. Selections include 'Red Jewel', 'Prairifire', 'Donald Wyman' and 'Harvest Gold' (*Fig. 3*).



*Figs. 1–4. Brighten your winter landscape with (clockwise from top left) paper birch, common winterberry, gold crabapple and cranberrybush viburnum.*

The fruits of cranberrybush viburnum taste terrible! Even the birds won't eat them. That's great for us—we can enjoy looking at the scarlet red fruits all winter (*Fig. 4*).

Among other winter wonders, the burgundy branches of red-osier dogwood stand out after their leaves drop. The hips of rugosa rose are showy in winter, too.

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## Great bark!

Our trees are leafless for most of the year. This makes bark an important feature when selecting a tree. Trees with beautiful bark may be especially showy during the long, long winter. How many of these trees can you recognize? The answers are on page 5.

- |       |                   |       |                    |
|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|
| _____ | Beech, American   | _____ | Hackberry          |
| _____ | Birch, Paper      | _____ | Hickory, Shagbark  |
| _____ | Birch, River      | _____ | Hornbeam, American |
| _____ | Chokecherry, Amur | _____ | Pine, Scotch       |
| _____ | Corktree, Amur    | _____ | Sycamore, American |





## Cardinals coming to the Dakotas

People across the USA are *flocking* to North Dakota and so are cardinals (excuse the pun).

Have you ever seen a cardinal? It's absolutely brilliant. The sight of a cardinal will stop you dead in your tracks and take your breath away!

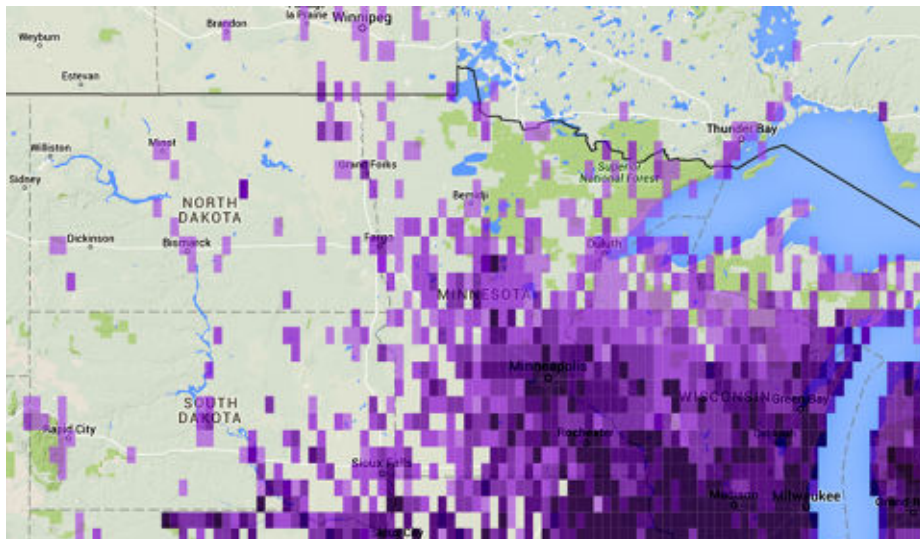
Male cardinals are famous for their bright red feathers and crested heads. The beauty of female cardinals is more subtle yet just as special, as their feathers have a rose-colored tinge (*Fig. 15*).

Cardinals are southern birds, but gradually their range has extended northward. This movement has been aided by families providing food in feeder boxes during winter.

In our region, the birds are most commonly seen along the Red River up to Winnipeg and along the Missouri River (*Fig. 16*). Cardinals have been documented in Bowman, Carrington, Hazen, Jamestown, Medora, Minot and Valley City among other towns in North Dakota. Obviously most people don't publish a report when they see a bird, but the presence of cardinals in northern cities such as Regina, Edmonton and Calgary suggest that anyone in North Dakota can come into contact with this bird.

Cardinals are not shy about taking food from feeders. Males can be especially aggressive. It is interesting that as the breeding season approaches in March, the domineering mood of the male changes toward its mate. You may see the male cardinal shuck seeds out of sunflower shells for its mate, and then feed her as she lowers her head back to receive the seed (*Fig. 15*).

Strategies for attracting cardinals are similar for attracting many other songbirds. Start with a traditional



*Figs. 15, 16. Cardinals have gradually moved northward and have been documented (purple squares; darker squares indicate a stronger presence) across North Dakota, especially in cities and along the Red and Missouri Rivers.*

bird feeder and mount it on a sturdy pole. Make sure the seed mix has plenty of black, oil-type sunflower seeds. These seeds are loaded with calories that keep birds warm during winter.

The feeding station should be at least 5 feet off the ground to protect birds from cats. There needs to be shrubbery or tree branches within 5 feet to allow birds with protective cover. Set your feeder near a window so you can enjoy your birds.

Many birds die by striking windows. Studies show that keeping the feeder within 3 feet of a window will

reduce deaths because the impact of the strike will be low.

Cardinals do not migrate. Although they wander in winter, seldom do they fly more than a few miles from their nest. Since cardinals do not migrate, the planting of an inviting landscape can attract a cardinal family to your yard for years.

Cardinals prefer to nest in shrubbery and low trees that face open ground. They are attracted to plants that are useful for food and nesting. Such plants include hawthorn, viburnum, raspberry, elderberry, cherry, dogwood, and sumac.



## FORCING TULIPS

Space bulbs closely but not touching each other. The flat edge of the bulb will create an arching leaf; place it along the inner rim of the pot (shown). Cover with soil so bulb tips are at the surface. Water deeply.



Place in an unheated garage (32–50°F) or basement refrigerator for approximately 12–14 weeks. When bulbs begin sprouting, set them in a cool (50–65°F) spot with bright, indirect sunlight for 1–2 weeks.



When sprouts grow 2 inches, set near a sunny window. Plants will bloom in 2 weeks. Once blooms appear, move out of direct sun and keep cool at night to prolong blooms. Discard bulbs after blooms fade.



## WINTERIZE THE MOWER

Scrape off dried grass or dirt from the underside of the mower (shown).

Siphon out as much gas as possible and then run the engine until it runs dry. If the gasoline can't be



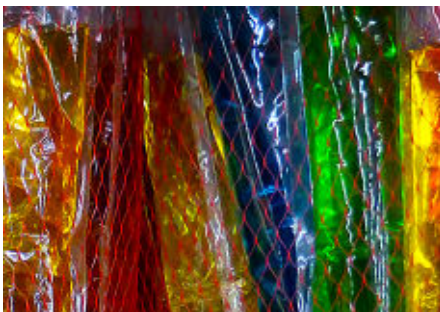
easily removed from the tank, add a fuel stabilizer and run the engine for a few minutes to circulate the fluid.

While the engine is warm, drain and refill with fresh oil (shown). Remove the spark plug and battery.



Clean or replace the air filter. Sharpen or replace the mower blade.

Store the mower in a cool, dry place. If you cover your mower, use a cloth material. Plastic covers can trap moisture.



## BLUE RASPBERRIES?

This artificial fruit was created in a lab. Makers of ice pops had more red flavors (cherry, strawberry, raspberry and watermelon) than shades of red dye. Kids wanting a cherry ice pop, for example, could not figure out



which red ice pop to select.

Raspberry pops originally used a dark red dye but it was later banned by the FDA as a possible carcinogen. Brilliant Blue dye (FD& C Blue No. 1) was sitting on the lab shelves and the blue raspberry was created—



along with blue tongues. Its flavor mimics the flavor of blackcap raspberry *Rubus leucodermis*, a wild berry. Blue raspberry snacks with *natural* flavors often do not have any *raspberry* juice; less expensive juices such as apple and orange are used.



# Last-minute chores in North Dakota yards and gardens:



## F25. Recycle Halloween pumpkins

Smash the pumpkin and put it in your compost pile. Or break it down into one-inch or smaller pieces and work it into your garden soil.



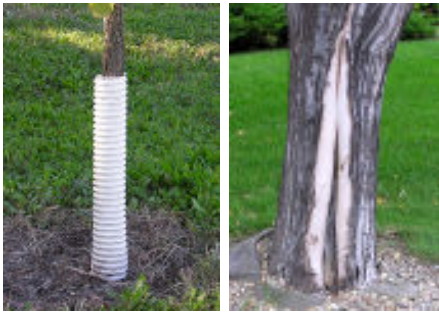
## F26. Clean garden debris

Remove or deeply bury any diseased plants or fruits in the garden. This will reduce the likelihood of infection next year.



## F27. Plant tulips outdoors

Bulbs are on sale. It sounds crazy, but you can plant until the ground is frozen solid. The flower bud is already inside the bulb. Irrigate and mulch.



## F28, 29. Wrap young trees

Place tree guards (left) or wrap Kraft paper around trunks of young trees. This prevents cracking caused by the scalding rays of the winter sun (right) and protects against wildlife. Linden, maple, mountainash, and fruit trees are very sensitive to cracking.



## F30. Irrigate evergreens

Irrigate evergreens now to fill needles with water. These needles are exposed to the winds and glaring solar rays of winter. Young, wind-exposed trees are most sensitive.



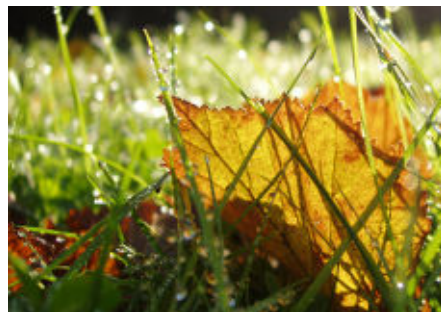
## F31. Mulch tender flowers

Apply 4–6 inches of straw or hay *after* the ground freezes this month. Mulch insulates plants from extreme temps, prevents premature sprouting, and keeps soil stable during freezing/thawing cycles.



## F32. Last mowing

A tall turf is bad over winter. It attracts rodents and is subject to mold. Cut your turf at normal height or slightly lower (1.5–2.0 inches).



## F33. Shredding/raking leaves

Shred leaves with your mower. The lawn will not suffocate from the mulched leaves as long as you can see the grass blades after mowing. Thick layers of leaves must be raked.

**Tree Bark Matching Answers**

1. Birch, River (*Betula nigra*).
2. Sycamore, American (*Platanus occidentalis*).
3. Hornbeam, American (*Carpinus caroliniana*).
4. Birch, Paper (*Betula papyrifera*).
5. Hickory, Shagbark (*Carya ovata*).
6. Beech, American (*Fagus grandifolia*).
7. Pine, Scotch (*Pinus sylvestris*).
8. Chokecherry, Amur (*Prunus maackii*).
9. Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*).
10. Corktree, Amur (*Phellodendron amurense*).

# Weather Almanac for October 1–31, 2015

Site	HARD FROST <sup>1,2</sup> (28°F)		TEMPERATURE <sup>2</sup> October 1–31				RAINFALL <sup>2</sup> Oct. 1–31 2015				GROWING DEGREE DAYS <sup>2,5</sup> Oct. 1–31 2015			
	2015	Norm	Avg	Norm	Max	Min	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm
	Bottineau	09/29	10/01	45	42	82	23	0.97	1.25	13.08	16.39	127	74	2221
Bowman	10/15	10/01	48	44	85	15	1.71	1.38	14.85	14.56	178	103	2355	2270
Carrington	10/09	10/03	47	44	87	22	0.98	1.77	14.97	18.87	140	98	2351	2340
Crosby	10/25	10/01	47	41	82	24	0.92	1.11	13.78	14.10	140	65	2251	1998
Dickinson	10/16	09/25	49	43	87	25	1.68	1.27	12.07	15.73	174	117	2491	2267
Fargo	10/16	10/07	50	46	95	24	1.25	2.15	18.80	20.75	164	96	2679	2489
Grafton	10/07	10/12	47	43	85	23	1.29	1.98	27.34	19.77	129	81	2376	2177
Grand Forks	09/29	10/02	49	43	91	24	1.20	1.97	13.82	19.25	162	76	2532	2219
Hazen	10/14	N/A <sup>6</sup>	47	46	87	19	1.52	1.38	13.21	15.88	176	142	2425	2508
Hillsboro	10/07	10/09	49	45	93	20	1.37	2.17	14.68	20.08	171	81	2496	2340
Jamestown	10/16	10/03	49	44	96	25	0.68	1.69	17.18	18.44	167	80	2554	2298
Langdon	10/15	09/29	45	40	84	25	1.72	1.49	18.46	18.18	96	43	2132	1830
Mandan	10/16	10/03	49	44	88	27	1.74	1.37	15.37	16.85	177	102	2567	2336
Minot	10/17	10/05	48	43	84	26	0.92	1.41	15.09	16.86	150	65	2384	2099
Mott	10/15	N/A	49	44	88	23	1.74	1.28	14.85	15.46	183	125	2457	2371
Rugby	10/15	N/A	46	42	81	26	1.57	1.18	13.81	18.09	123	80	2302	2155
Wahpeton	10/15	N/A	50	47	97	19	1.24	2.39	14.47	21.13	174	106	2626	2608
Watford City	10/16	09/28	48	43	85	28	1.20	1.03	12.48	13.62	159	101	2500	2260
Williston	Not yet	10/04	49	46	83	30	1.70	0.97	12.23	13.36	153	134	2527	2571
Wishek	10/16	10/03	49	44	90	24	0.64	1.60	15.47	19.61	151	82	2419	2122

## DAYLENGTH (Nov. 1, McClusky, center of ND)<sup>3</sup>

Sunrise: 7:24AM

Daylength: 10h 2m

Sunset: 5:26PM

Change since Oct. 1: -1h 42m

## LONG-TERM OUTLOOKS<sup>4</sup>

Nov. 6–10: Temp: Above Normal; Precip.: Normal

Nov. 8–14: Temp: Above Normal; Precip.: Below Normal

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Sources: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, www.sunrisesunset.com, and National Weather Service, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> GDDs for garden vegetables are not available. GDD data in this table are for corn, which responds to temperature as most vegetables grown in gardens. Data begin May 1 with base minimum and maximum temperatures of 50 and 86°F., respectively.

<sup>6</sup> N/A = not available.

## Credits

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