

YARD & GARDEN REPORT

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The Grand Finale!

When you watch a fireworks show on the 4th of July, do you notice how they always save the best fireworks for last? It's called the Grand Finale!

In flower beds, the Grand Finale is provided by chrysanthemums. While the flowers of summer begin to fade, all of a sudden we see a big burst of colors exploding from our mums!

Nothing can match the brilliance of mums in the fall. That's why garden centers, hardware stores, and even grocery stores are full of mums for sale now.

Most of these mums will be enjoyed for a few weeks and then thrown away. That's okay, but keep in mind that mums are *perennial* flowers. With a little care and luck, we can enjoy encore performances of fireworks in the garden next fall too!

Choose a sunny, well-drained site that is sheltered from harsh winter winds. Prepare a fertile soil bed and care for mums like other perennial flowers.

Plant early blooming, hardy cultivars. These are most likely found at garden centers and not at the local grocery store or florist shop.

When the soil freezes in November, place a 6-inch mound of mulch (hay, straw, evergreen boughs or shredded leaves) over the plants. Do not cut the plant stems; they can trap snow and insulate the crowns. With a little luck (and perhaps a blanket of snow), your mums will survive.



Figs. 1–3. Nothing can match the brilliance of mums in fall. Hardy Minnesota cultivars include 'Burnt Copper', 'Mammoth Coral Daisy' and 'Yellow Quill'.

Next spring, pinch 1/2 inch off shoots when they get 6 to 8 inches long. This will keep the plants compact and bushy. Stop pinching shoots in mid to late June.

One last note: If you truly love mums, keep in mind that best results are achieved when perennials are planted in *spring*, not in *fall*. In this way, the plants have the entire growing season to get established before our brutal winter arrives. Next spring,

look for hardy mums at the finest garden centers and online stores.

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Apple Harvest Season

It's apple picking time! The sun is shining, the air is crisp and cool, and our apple trees are loaded with fruit. It's a great time of the year!

After a disappointing crop in 2015, many growers are reporting a bumper crop of apples this year.

Almost all cultivars are ready to be picked now. If you are not sure, an apple is ready for picking when its background skin color turns from green to yellow (*Fig. 4*). The fruit comes off easily when harvested.

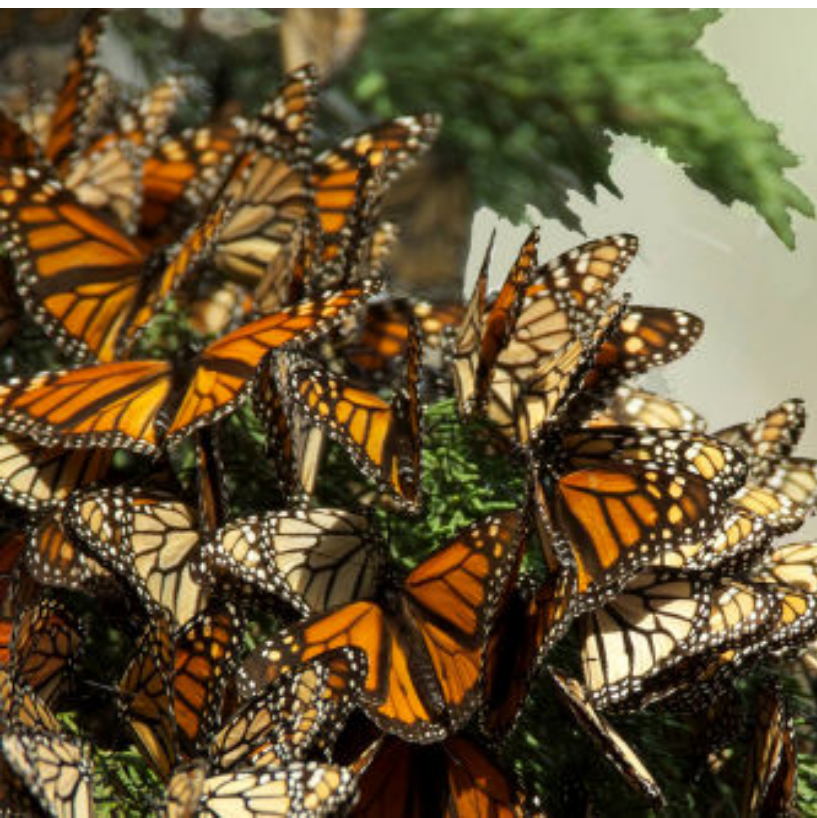
Use an upward and twisting motion when harvesting fruit. Do not yank down on branches. This can tear off the knobby, branch spurs (*shown near the fruit stem in Fig. 4*), where next year's fruits will come.

Apples on trees can tolerate temps approaching 26°F before frost damage occurs. If they freeze on the tree (*Fig. 5*), wait for the fruits to thaw before harvesting. Frozen fruits should be used promptly.

Store fruits in a cool (34–40°F), humid (90% RH), dark place. A refrigerator is best, but a root cellar or unheated garage is acceptable.



Figs. 4–6. Apples are ready when the background color of the skin turns yellowish. Fruits can tolerate temps down to 26°F before damage occurs. Store fruits under cool, humid conditions.



Bon Voyage

The days are getting shorter and colder. We can sense winter is coming and so can the monarchs of North Dakota. They have begun their migratory flight to Mexico, a remarkable trek of over 2,500 miles. They'll fly 25 miles or more each day and gather together each night (as shown) on a branch to stay warm.

Monarch populations have declined over the past 20 years. We were optimistic by a rise in 2015–2016, but early reports suggest this increase was an exception (*Monarch Watch.org, 2016*). We can help to conserve monarch populations by growing ornamental milkweeds and limiting our use of insecticides.

Timely Topics in North Dakota Yards and Gardens

VEGETABLES



Harvest potatoes

Use a spading fork to dig tubers. Remove loose dirt and avoid bruising. Store in a cool, moist and dark location. Temperatures in high 30s and humidity of 95% are ideal. A root cellar or a cool, humid basement is best.



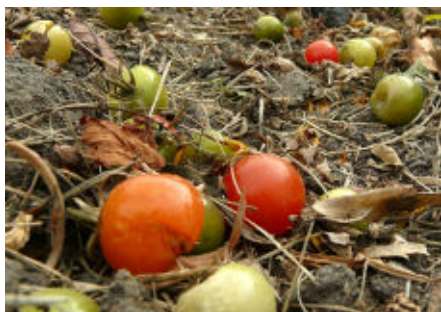
Potato scab

Peel off scabs; tubers are edible. In the future, keep soil evenly moist while tubers grow (4–6 weeks after flowers appear). Use resistant cultivars and certified disease-free seed. Avoid using fresh manure.



Harvest winter squash

Harvest before a killing frost (28°F). Leave at least one inch of stem attached. Wipe but don't wash fruit. Except for acorns, cure in a warm (80°F) spot for 10 days to toughen skin for long-term storage.



Frost-sensitive vegetables

Cover tender veggies (tomato, pepper, cucumber, melon, pumpkin and squash) with blankets during light frosts. Carrot, beet and potato tolerate light frost. Kale, cabbage, broccoli and radish will tolerate a hard (28°F) frost.



Ripen tomatoes indoors

Set blushing, crack-free tomatoes on a newspaper and then place another newspaper sheet over the fruits. This traps ethylene, which fruits emit when ripening. Keep out of direct sun. Room temperatures develop fullest flavors.



Stinkbug damage on tomato

Dark pinpricks develop into tan, corky lesions. Shake vines to find large, brown or green bugs with flat, shielded bodies. Control next year by managing weeds and spraying insecticides.



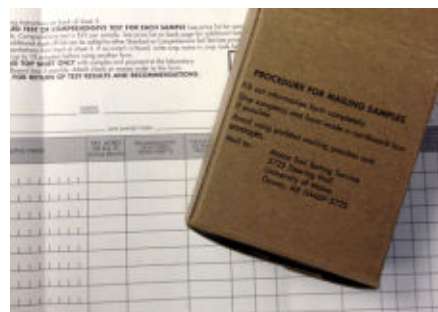
Forked, twisted carrots

Usually found in rocky or compacted ground, or when fresh manure is used. A loose, fertile seed bed is critical. Thin seedlings to avoid overcrowding.



Carrot rust fly

Larvae tunnel in roots; their excrement appears rusty. Wounds may lead to bacterial rot; roots are soft and smelly. Deeply plow debris to destroy pupae. If problems repeat, use floating row covers to prevent egg laying on plants.



Test your soil

A soil test can lead to higher yields in the garden and healthier plants in the landscape. You will learn nutrient levels, acidity, salinity and organic matter levels. Google "NDSU Soil Testing Lab" for instructions and forms.

Timely Topics in North Dakota Yards and Gardens

TREES AND SHRUBS



Fall needle drop

Old needles (located near the trunk) are supposed to turn brown and drop. As long as young needles (located near the tips of branches) are healthy, the tree is full of life.



Needlecast on Colorado spruce

Last year's and older needles turn purplish-brown. Begins on shaded or lower branches of mature trees. Black spores appear in stomata (shown). Canopies are thin. Apply fungicides in late spring. Don't confuse with the natural drop of old needles in fall.



Falling branch tips

Mature shade trees may drop short branch tips in fall. Tips have smooth, rounded edges. This self-pruning, called *cladptosis*, may be a reaction to stress or the shedding of less vigorous branches. No treatment is needed.

FLOWERS



Rose hips

Stop deadheading roses. The maturation of seed pods (rose hips) will help plants harden for winter. The pods add color to the yard in winter.



Overwinter geraniums

Dig before frost; repot using potting soil. Cut back to one-third height to keep plants bushy. Set near a bright sunny window. Cool temps (60s) are best. Water sparingly over winter.



Frost-sensitive annuals

Not enough blankets to protect all your flowers? The most sensitive annuals include zinnia (shown), impatiens, begonia, celosia and coleus. Hardier flowers include aster, cosmos, dianthus, petunia and snapdragon.

LAWNS



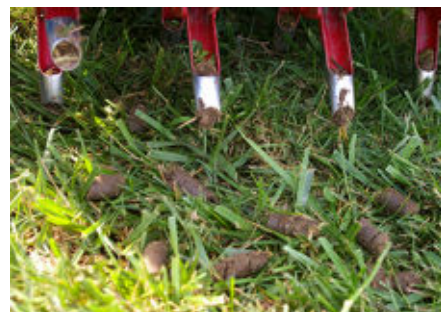
Seeding

Sowing now is risky, especially in northern areas. Mid-September is the general deadline. An alternative is to wait and sow in November; this seed will sprout in spring.



Thistle, perennial weeds

The best time to kill thistle, dandelions and other perennial weeds is in mid to late September. The weeds will channel the herbicide down into their roots as they prepare for winter.



Core aeration

Hollow tine aerators are recommended. Remove cores as deep as possible. Let cores dry for a couple days; mow to break them up. Best results are obtained when the soil is slightly moist.

Weather Almanac for September 12–26, 2016

Site	TEMPERATURE				RAINFALL				GROWING DEGREE DAYS ^{1,2}			
	Sep 12–26				Sep 12–26		2016		Sep 12–26		2016	
	Avg	Norm	Max	Min	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm
Bottineau	54	55	81	27	1.35	0.69	15.43	15.00	131	126	2029	2046
Bowman	58	55	85	40	1.35	0.66	12.62	13.00	143	140	2297	2129
Carrington	57	56	80	36	0.63	0.89	15.60	16.88	134	137	2170	2204
Crosby	54	53	84	28	1.84	0.59	15.12	12.84	117	119	2057	1901
Dickinson	57	55	82	35	2.13	0.76	12.67	14.29	129	144	2312	2110
Fargo	61	58	79	39	1.21	1.19	16.54	18.32	167	136	2564	2355
Grafton	59	55	80	35	1.16	1.13	26.69	17.53	147	131	2245	2060
Grand Forks	60	55	80	36	0.51	0.96	22.26	17.05	155	129	2338	2109
Hazen	57	57	83	35	1.02	0.72	15.98	14.33	144	160	2272	2319
Hillsboro	59	57	79	32	1.26	1.04	18.00	17.64	154	130	2357	2225
Jamestown	57	56	79	36	0.74	1.04	22.83	16.51	136	130	2202	2184
Langdon	55	53	78	33	3.97	0.90	24.16	16.48	111	107	1923	1760
Mandan	58	57	82	36	0.79	0.74	17.20	15.30	146	135	2317	2196
Minot	56	55	81	34	2.41	0.70	15.10	15.29	125	117	2155	2003
Mott	56	56	83	34	1.12	0.66	13.43	14.03	131	150	2197	2204
Rugby	56	54	80	36	2.38	0.89	15.70	16.71	134	128	2172	2041
Wahpeton	61	59	80	32	1.74	1.37	18.46	18.41	176	146	2493	2461
Watford City	56	55	83	33	3.88	0.48	13.15	12.48	122	139	2302	2120
Williston	56	58	82	30	2.82	0.56	12.68	12.26	121	158	2289	2391
Wishek	57	56	80	38	1.09	0.98	20.90	17.77	132	127	2137	2006

DAYLENGTH (Sep 27, McClusky, center of ND)³

Sunrise: 7:35AM | Daylength: 11h 55m
 Sunset: 7:30PM | Change since Sep 12: –51m

LONG-TERM OUTLOOKS⁴

Oct 2–6: Temp.: Normal; Precip.: Above Normal
 Oct 4–10: Temp.: Below Normal; Precip.: Above Normal

¹ 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.

^{2,3,4} Sources: North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, www.sunrisesunset.com, and National Weather Service, respectively.

Credits

Monarch Watch.org. 2016. Monarch population status. Accessed online.

Photos were made available under Creative Commons licenses specified by the photographers. Prefixes of photos are “www.flickr.com/photos/” unless noted otherwise: 1–3. Univ. of Minnesota, David L. Hansen; 4. Michael E., .../24842334@N07/10362474553/; 5. Fredrik Alpstedt, .../alpstedt/11025803586/; 6. wongaboo, .../27146806@N00/15228654692/; **MONARCHS:** Hagerty Ryan, USFWS, www.public-domain-image.com/free-images/2016/06/14/monarch-butterflies-migration-insects.jpg; **VEGETABLES:** Ishikawa Ken, .../chidorian/2630925542; Jane Heth, NDSU; Nick Warner, .../nick777/1435149146/; Emily, .../ebarney/5295532639/; Andrea R, .../andrea_r/41992649/; Anitha Chirumamilla, NDSU; Samuel Huckins, .../samuelhuckins/5825270283/; Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado St. Univ.,

Bugwood.org; Kate, .../blueberryfiles/11818771983/; **TREES AND SHRUBS:** Tom Kalb, NDSU; Paul Bachi, Univ. of Kentucky Research and Education Center, Bugwood.org; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org; Bill Hodous, NDSU; **FLOWERS:** Frank Green, .../46921770@N00/5203842425/; Susan Ujka’s Collection, .../lit-linx/3438321158/; Martin LaBar, .../martinlabar/2075788698/; **LAWNS:** Timo Newton Syms, .../timo_w2s/8986743787/; Thistle-Garden, .../63026284@N05/8687240201/; Paul Tukey, http://www.safelawns.org/blog/2010/10/now-is-the-time-to-aerate-if-you-must/.

Written by Tom Kalb, who expresses gratitude to his colleagues who contributed to this report: Anitha Chirumamilla, Jane Heth, Bill Hodous, Kelsey Sheldon, Kathy Wiederholt and Joe Zeleznik.

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