

# YARD & GARDEN REPORT

October 15, 2014

Vol. 2, No. 18

## The Great Pumpkin for North Dakota

Do you remember Linus from Peanuts in the pumpkin patch? Instead of trick-or-treating with his friends on Halloween, Linus spent the night waiting for the Great Pumpkin. Although the magical spirit never came, Linus' adventure is a reminder to all of us about the charm of pumpkins.

There is something special about pumpkins. It is fun to grow your own Halloween pumpkins, especially if you have children to enjoy them with.

This has been another difficult year for growing pumpkins, especially in the north. Sowing was delayed due to the cold, wet spring weather. Temperatures remained cooler than normal through the summer. Pumpkins were slow to turn orange.

Get to know the Great Pumpkin for North Dakota: 'Neon'. This pumpkin variety doesn't turn orange; rather it starts orange and gets bigger throughout the summer. It is ready to harvest weeks ahead of other varieties.

Over the years, our researchers across the state have been amazed to see bright orange pumpkins growing and glowing in their gardens in August while pumpkins of other varieties were still green.

Another nice feature is its compact habit. The vines of 'Neon' only spread about eight feet across. They won't overrun the garden and can be grown in small spaces.

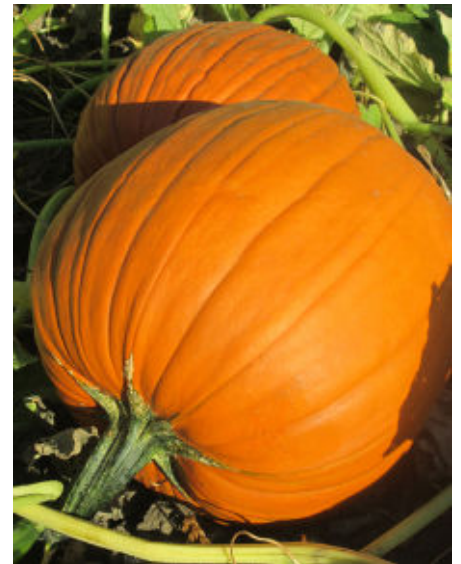


*Figs. 1, 2. 'Neon' (above) and 'Dakota Howden' (right) pumpkins are well suited for our state's short growing season.*

'Neon' pumpkins are a nice size for jack-o'-lanterns. They grow about 10 inches across and weigh about 8 pounds (Fig. 1). Granted, these pumpkins are not huge, but your kids will be delighted.

If you are looking for a bigger pumpkin and have room for the vines to spread, you may want to give 'Dakota Howden' a try. 'Howden' is one of the most popular pumpkin varieties in the USA and the Podoll family in North Dakota has selected a strain that matures 15–20 days earlier. The pumpkins are about 15 pounds with attractive ribs, rich orange color, and sturdy handles (Fig. 2). We are testing 'Dakota Howden' this year and it looks promising.

Go to Google to find seed companies offering these varieties.



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## Exotic tulips

What type of person are you? Are you a glass half EMPTY type of person—or is your glass half FULL?

In other words, when looking at your yard today, do you focus on the DEAD PLANTS or are you already LOOKING FORWARD to next spring?

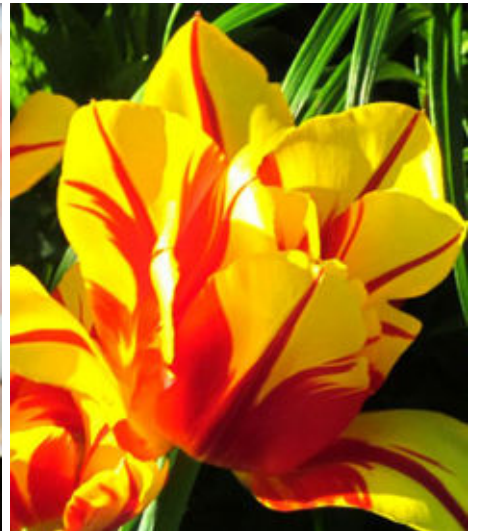
If you are a “glass-half-full” type of gardener, we still have a few weeks to plant tulips. This fall, I encourage you to explore the exotic types. You may discover some of the most fascinating flowers you have ever seen!

There is nothing more dramatic than parrot tulips. Their curly petals are as bright as the feathers of parrots. The blooms are gigantic and are excellent as cut flowers. There are pink parrots, black parrots, flaming parrots and more (Figs. 3, 4).

Tulip connoisseurs love ‘Angelique’ (Fig. 5). Its pink, ruffled petals are simply irresistible. They bear 2 or 3 blooms per stem, filling the bed full of color. ‘Angelique’ tulips bloom late and look like peonies.

The Rembrandt tulips are popular for their colorful stripes. This class of tulips originated in the days of Rembrandt the painter (1600s), when families would sell their life’s earnings for a single bulb with “broken” colors. These were one-of-a-kind tulips created by viruses. Today’s Rembrandts are virus free and created by natural mutations. Popular varieties include ‘Olympic Flame’ (Fig. 6), ‘Cordell Hull’ (white with red streaks) and ‘Princess Irene’ (orange with purple streaks). Kids love them!

These tulips are fascinating but have a few shortcomings. Most struggle in windy spots, so give them a sheltered area. These tulips are short-lived; you might only get a couple years of brilliance from them.



Figs. 3–6. Clockwise from top left: ‘Destiny’ (‘Estella Rijnveld’), ‘Black Parrot’, ‘Angelique’ and ‘Olympic Flame’ tulips.

### How to grow tulips indoors

You can enjoy these bulbs indoors, too. Select the biggest bulbs you can find. Use a pot with a broad bottom such as an azalea pot; these are less likely to tip over when the plants get tall.

Fill with potting soil, setting the tips of the bulbs at the surface. Place the bulbs close together, no more than 2 inches apart.

The largest leaves of a tulip bulb emerge out of the flat side of the bulb. Plant the bulb so its flat side is against the inner rim

of the pot and the leaves will cascade over the rim.

The bulbs need about 14 weeks of cool temps (40s) before they will send out sprouts. The basement refrigerator is an ideal spot, but you can grow them in an unheated garage. Water before cooling and keep the soil slightly moist but not wet.

When they start sprouting, place them near a sunny window at room temps. In a few weeks the blooms will be thrilling!

## A new bean of highest quality

Every now and then a new variety becomes an immediate and smashing success. This year it is 'Crockett' filet bean. We are testing it this year along with 'Maxibel' in gardens across the state. 'Maxibel' has been one of the highest rated green beans ever tested in our statewide trials. It was recommended by 90% of gardeners last year, a record for green beans.

But 'Crockett' is simply better. Of the 20 reports received to date, 75% of gardeners prefer 'Crockett' over 'Maxibel' and 95% of gardeners recommend it. The number of gardeners recommending 'Maxibel' has dropped from 90% to 50% after growing it alongside of 'Crockett'.

The plants of 'Crockett' are vigorous. They produce impressive yields throughout the summer.

The biggest difference is the quality of the pods. Gardeners are in awe of the dark green, straight and smooth pods. Filet beans are prized for their slender, flavorful pods and newcomer 'Crockett' is already turning heads.



*Figs. 7, 8. Gardeners in our state are impressed with new varieties of filet beans and Tuscan kale, among the most flavorful of all vegetables.*

## This new kale is magical

Kale is super nutritious and loves cool weather. It is so cold hardy that it is still growing in most gardens across the state. The only problem with kale is the intensity of its flavor (too intense for some people).

A new variety, 'Black Magic', is impressing gardeners with its mild flavor and deep, rich color. This hybrid grows vigorously, leading to

early harvests and high yields. Currently we have 15 reports from gardeners across the state. All (100%) recommend 'Black Magic' and 75% prefer it over 'Lacinato', the standard variety. Tuscan kale, also called dinosaur kale, is considered the finest tasting of all kale, and 'Black Magic' appears to be the best of the best.

## Know your manure

Many gardeners add manure to their gardens in fall. Please be sure you know where your manure comes from. Some farmers spray their pastures with pyridine herbicides to control broadleaf weeds. These herbicides include Crossbow, Curtail, Forefront, Grazon, Milestone, Redeem and Surmount.

Manure from livestock feeding on pyridine-treated hay or pasture grass should not be used in gardens. The chemical passes through the animal without de-

composing. When gardeners use this manure, they are literally adding a persistent herbicide to their soil. The hearts and hopes of many of the best gardeners in our state have been broken.

Tomatoes, potatoes, peas and beans are extremely sensitive. Affected plants will stretch and curl, similar to damage caused by dandelion killers that drift onto plants. Pyridine can persist in manure for a few years—be very careful!



## Survey of timely topics for gardeners in North Dakota:

### TREES AND SHRUBS



#### F10. Fall needle drop

Don't worry; old needles (located near the trunk) are supposed to turn brown. As long as the young needles (located near the tips of branches) are healthy, the tree is full of life.



#### F11. Protect young trees

Place tree guards or wrap Kraft paper around trunks of young trees. This prevents cracking and protects against wildlife. Linden, maple, mountainash, and fruit trees are very sensitive.



#### F12. Irrigate evergreens

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

### LAWNS



#### F13. Fertilizing

Mid October is the best time of year to fertilize lawns, including low-maintenance lawns. This dormant application will develop roots and leaf buds until the ground freezes in mid November, leading to a thicker turf.



#### F14. Last chance to kill weeds

The best time to kill perennial weeds was in late September. The weeds channel the herbicide down into their roots as they prepare for winter. Warm weather in late September might allow for success now. Don't wait!



#### F15. Crabgrass is dead

Crabgrass and other annual grasses are dead. Unfortunately they may have shed thousands of seeds before dying. Prevent these seeds from emerging next spring with a pre-emergent weed killer next April.



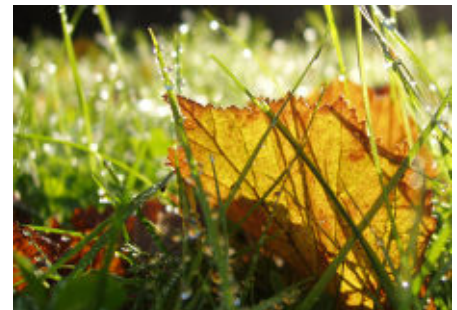
#### F16. Last mowing

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).



#### F17. Dormant seeding

Filling in bare spots? Don't sow now; the seedlings won't survive winter. Wait until November; this seed will sprout in spring. Sow seed, lightly incorporate in soil, and irrigate once.



#### F18. 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.

## Survey of timely topics for gardeners in North Dakota:

### VEGETABLES



#### F19. 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.



#### F20. Harvest and store potatoes

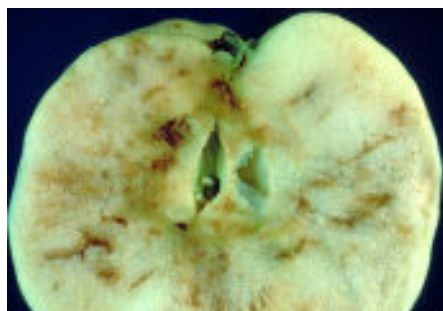
Use a spading fork to dig tubers. Remove loose dirt and avoid bruising. Store in a cool, moist and dark location. Temperatures in high 30s and humidity of 95% are ideal. A root cellar or a cool, damp basement is best.



#### F21. Watermelon virus

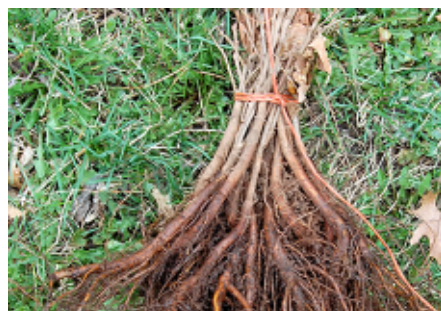
The virus “carves” amazing circles on watermelons! The virus probably was introduced by an aphid that took a ride to ND on a blast of wind from a papaya or cucurbit farm in the southern USA or tropics. No treatment is available.

### FRUITS



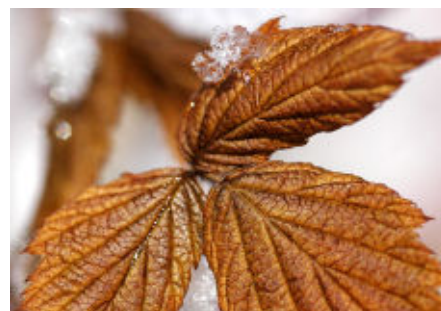
#### F22. Clean under trees

Pick up fallen fruit and leaves to reduce infestations of apple maggot (shown above) and fungal diseases such as scab.



#### F23. Planting fruit trees, shrubs

There is no advantage to planting in fall. The plants may be damaged from deer, voles and severe temps. Wait until spring; the bare-root materials will be healthier and less expensive.



#### F24. Prune raspberries

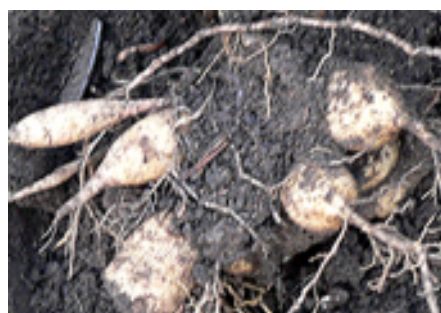
Remove canes that bore fruit this summer; these are brittle and dying. Cut canes at ground level. In March/April, thin remaining canes to stand 3–4 inches apart.

### OUTDOOR FLOWERS



#### F25. Plant tulips and daffodils

You can plant until the ground is frozen; the sooner, the better. Plant large bulbs in a sunny, well-drained site. Add slow-release bulb fertilizer. Irrigate. Mulch in mid November.



#### F26. Dig nonhardy bulbs

Cut glads to base, dahlias to 3 inches and cannas to 6 inches. Dig bulbs; shake off soil. Dry bulbs for a week in garage. Brush off remaining soil. Trim and store in sand or peat moss at 40°F.



#### F27. Clean beds

Remove diseased foliage. Remaining foliage may be kept to trap snow, or removed. Mulch after the soil freezes (mid November). Mulching too early can attract rodents and prevent hardening.

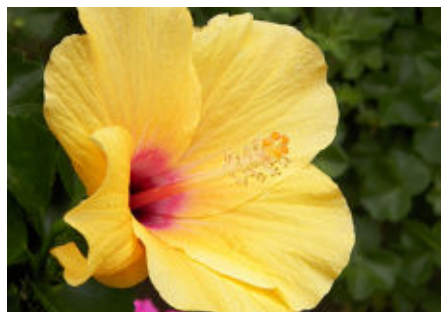
## Survey of timely topics for gardeners in North Dakota (continued):

### INDOOR FLOWERS



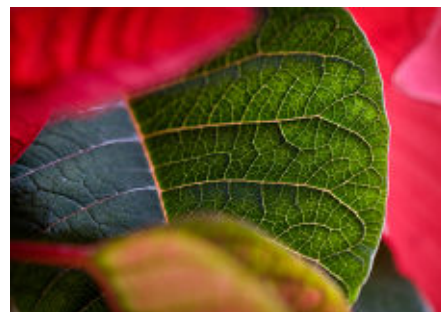
#### F28. Overwinter geraniums

Place into 8-inch pots. Cut back to 1/3 height to keep plants compact. Set near a bright sunny window. Cool temps (60s) are best. Water sparingly.



#### F29. Overwinter hibiscus

Set your hibiscus near your sunniest window. Indoor light levels are only about 10% that of outdoors. You will see fewer flowers and the old leaves will drop. Prune back in March/April.



#### F30. Color your poinsettia

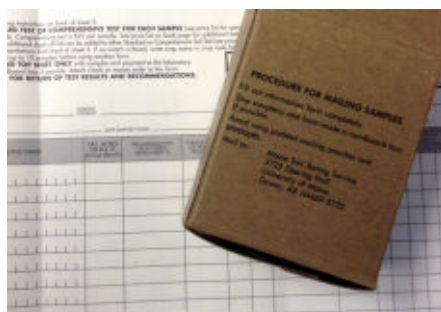
Place last year's poinsettia in absolute darkness for 15 hours every night for two months. Move it to a sunny window during each day. Does this seem like too much work? Yep.

### SOIL IMPROVEMENT



#### F31. Clean debris

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



#### F32. Test your soil

A soil test can lead to healthier plants and higher yields. You will learn nutrient levels, acidity, salinity and organic matter levels. Extension offices have soil testing materials.



#### F33. Add organic matter

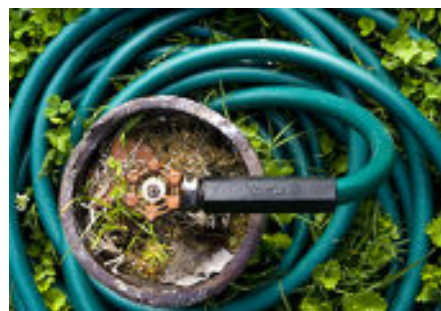
Incorporate an inch of peat moss, compost or rotted manure to improve soil structure, drainage and fertility. Avoid manure from pastures treated with persistent herbicide.

### TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT



#### F34. Garden tools

Brush off soil and sharpen blades. Put oil on moving parts and rub a light amount of oil into the wood.



#### F35. Garden hose

Hoses may crack if left outdoors over winter. Drain hoses and bring indoors. Warm hoses to room temperature before coiling for storage.



#### F36. Lawn mower

Remove spark plug. Brush off dirt and grass. Run engine to empty fuel or keep a full tank and add fuel stabilizer. Cover and store in a dry place away from furnace or any potential flame.

# Weather Almanac for September 21–October 12, 2014

Site	TEMPERATURE				RAINFALL				GROWING DEGREE DAYS <sup>1,2</sup>			
	9/21–10/12				9/21–10/12		2014		9/21–10/12		2014	
	Avg	Norm	Max	Min	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm	Total	Norm
Bottineau	51	49	93	20	0.81	0.93	17.34	15.64	157	126	1987	2133
Bowman	53	50	92	25	1.50	1.09	17.47	13.78	161	145	1959	2230
Carrington	52	51	87	21	0.34	1.26	12.78	17.79	160	147	2024	2307
Crosby	52	47	95	22	0.96	0.86	13.99	13.45	147	117	1949	1981
Dickinson	54	49	91	25	0.94	1.04	16.75	15.00	170	154	2034	2218
Fargo	55	52	86	23	0.29	1.70	15.46	19.55	185	143	2453	2455
Grafton	52	52	86	23	1.25	1.24	19.26	17.66	153	127	2160	2449
Grand Forks	53	50	87	22	0.63	1.47	18.19	18.11	173	129	2290	2197
Hazen	53	52	92	21	0.70	1.06	18.10	15.07	162	180	2072	2447
Hillsboro	53	51	86	21	0.47	1.69	17.06	18.89	173	131	2260	2315
Jamestown	52	51	86	27	0.47	1.41	15.24	17.51	153	131	2125	2274
Langdon	51	47	86	20	0.30	1.27	11.84	17.36	142	97	1855	1824
Mandan	54	51	90	23	0.38	1.08	14.06	16.06	175	145	2151	2298
Minot	53	49	90	23	0.61	1.07	18.06	16.05	154	115	2031	2081
Mott	53	50	91	23	1.12	1.06	17.22	14.78	165	161	2033	2317
Rugby	52	49	92	23	0.47	1.13	14.04	17.46	161	131	2064	2131
Wahpeton	54	54	86	20	0.30	2.02	16.80	19.88	185	155	2364	2569
Watford City	54	50	95	25	1.15	0.74	10.83	12.99	171	149	2183	2224
Williston	54	53	98	24	0.94	0.81	10.75	12.81	167	175	2215	2515
Wishek	53	50	87	21	0.56	1.42	13.75	18.77	162	128	2031	2094

## DAYLENGTH (October 12, McClusky)<sup>3</sup>

Sunrise: 7:55 AM | Daylength: 11h 6m  
 Sunset: 7:01 PM | Change since Sep. 20: -74m

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

6–10 Day: Temp: Above Normal; Precipitation: Below Normal  
 8–14 Day: Temp: Above Normal; Precipitation: Below Normal

<sup>1</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>2,3,4</sup> Sources: North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network, [www.sunrisesunset.com](http://www.sunrisesunset.com), and National Weather Service, respectively.

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Written by Tom Kalb, who expresses gratitude to NDSU educator Lindsay Maddock for her contribution to the report.

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