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Everyone's Decorating for the Fall

In the fall both nature and homeowners love to decorate the home and landscape. As the leaves change color, nature shows its glory and once again proves that it is the master when it comes to beauty. This beauty causes both young and old to just stop and enjoy our world.

This past week was Farm/City week in Darlington County. Therefore, to bring a taste of nature and farm life to the city, I have been standing out in the middle of a corn maze teaching some 1000 children about nature and farming. Man was it hot and the gnats were bad! Usually we have a killing frost in October to help reduce the gnat population, but not this year. These summer-like conditions are probably why fall color has not made a dazzling presence so far this year. Environmental conditions such as high light levels, near-freezing temperatures, drought and low nutrient levels, increase fall color.

The beautiful leaves and cooler temperatures make fall my favorite time of year. No one truly knows why leaves change color; however, researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have presented a new theory. They believe "the pigments shade sensitive photosynthetic tissue in the fall, while trees reabsorb nutrients from their leaves." Trees need to store as many of those nutrients as they can before the leaves drop.

Whatever the cause, we in our finite wisdom can assist nature in a small degree to make our little piece of earth (our home and yard) a little more beautiful. First of all, we need to keep fall color in mind when we plant shrubs and trees. Remember fall is the best time to plant so before you plant, ride around town and determine which shrubs and trees will have the fall color to best suit your yard. However, there are certain shrubs and trees that are consistent in providing great fall color. Some of these trees include Bradford pear, Sweet gum, Sourwood, Ginkgo, Redbud, and many Hickories and Maples. Some of these shrubs include Forsythia, Beautyberry, Blueberry, and many Cotoneasters, Barberries, and Viburnums.

Next, we can keep these trees and shrubs healthy during the summertime by proper fertilization, liming, and fertilization. A healthy plant will consistently have better fall color. However, over fertilization and irrigation in the fall will reduce fall color.

Finally, you can add your own little touches of decor. However, you need hands on experience with a professional to compete with nature's beauty. This is why the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and Clemson Extension Service are presenting a class on decorating at the newly renovated Red Barn Classroom at the Pee Dee State Farmers Market. Christmas Cheer-Decorating for the Holidays by Amy Taylor of Taylor Garden Shop on Wednesday, November 10, 2004, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Registration fee is \$10.00 per person per class. To register, call (843) 665-5154. Make checks payable to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and mail to 2513 W. Lucas St., Florence, SC 29501. Please indicate on your check which class(es) you are requesting.

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