



# Arkansas Re-leaf newsletter

**Jim Robbins**  
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Ornamental  
Horticulture

## Jim's Corner

Spring is finally here, so those folks in the green industry are hopefully swamped with work and customers. For those that missed the annual Green Industry Spring Tune-up workshop, you can purchase a CD of this helpful program.

After three months of hard work by Jennifer Gibson, the training CD is finally here. The CD is organized into three sections covering common insect, disease and weed problems. To expedite your search, sections are hyperlinked. For example, if all you are interested in is spider mites, click on insects, jump to that section, click on the picture of spider mites and you are there. A new twist to this version is the inclusion of actual photographs of consumer products in the chemical control section. Biological recommendations are highlighted in a different color for easier identification. If you are interested in a copy, call (501-671-2226) or e-mail ([jrobbins@uaex.edu](mailto:jrobbins@uaex.edu)) for details. The CD costs \$15. If you are interested in purchasing the ACNLP Plant Materials CD (\$15), contact the Arkansas Green Industry Association (501-225-0029 or [office@argia.org](mailto:office@argia.org)).



January is always filled with great educational conferences, and this year was no exception. The Arkansas Turfgrass Association (ATA [www.arkansasturf.org](http://www.arkansasturf.org)) had some exceptional speakers from at least five different universities. Two weeks later AGIA filled the same halls in Hot Springs with great speakers of their own. Jan Couch from Uniroyal Chemical gave a superb summary on insecticide issues. An 'energy roundtable' generated some interesting discussion. As a result of that, I asked Jennifer Gibson to research the issue of 'gas surcharges' (What's Up section). The following week the Sebastian and Crawford County Cooperative Extension Service staff held their 24th Annual Landscape Maintenance Seminar in Fort Smith. Steve Dobbs, one of the speakers and the Director of Landscape and Grounds at UofA-Fort Smith, was recognized for his national award (Grand Award for the Best Maintained Landscape in the School or University Category)

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## Arkansas Is Our Campus

Visit our web site at:  
<http://www.uaex.edu>

## Plant Profile

*Chimonanthus praecox* (L.) Link-Wintersweet

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I will be 45 years old at the end of March and have now just seen wintersweet in flower. Obviously, this represents a failure in the horticultural education I received during my formative years. I knew the plant existed, had even tried my hand at growing it from seed, but had never seen it in bloom.

The two wintersweet plants in the garden in Fayetteville were obtained from Woodlanders in 1999 but spent the first two years in containers until they were finally placed in the garden.

Already they have been moved once. Finally this winter a single plant flowered for the first time. In mid-December, I was hard-pressed to find any other shrub in bloom at the same time. A couple of vernal witch hazel blooms



(*Hamamelis vernalis* Sarg.), a small number of *Viburnum x bodnantense* Stern. 'Pink Dawn,' along with the wintersweet, were the only flowers I could muster in an assault against winter. This paltry collection helped keep winter at bay until mid-January, but winter finally triumphed, and only recently has it started to yield.

Wintersweet is probably much more common in areas south and east of Fayetteville, yet few sunny doorways should exist without this plant.



The flowers, which open during warm spells of winter, are translucent, a creamy-yellow color, with maroon blotches at the base of the petals. The most winning characteristic is the fragrance, unexpected, but best sampled on a sunny day in winter. Maximum flowering occurs when plants receive summer sun and heat which helps to ripen the wood. Because Fayetteville is at the northern edge of apparent winter hardiness, our plants receive protection near a building but probably don't receive enough sun to flower as well as they might. The foliage in summer is dark green in color, and the plant maintains a vase-shape form as it grows. Our plant tends to hold foliage late, and little fall color develops.

Like other "off-season" flowering shrubs, wintersweet will rarely make an appearance at the local garden center. Circumvent this difficulty through propagation. Seed germinates readily if sown before the seed coat hardens (late spring or early summer). Plants can be somewhat slow to flower from seed. Cuttings can be rooted in mid-summer but can be difficult to over-winter. Yellow-flowered forms, like 'Luteus,' are propagated by grafting.

## What's Up?

House Bill #1654 if not amended, may impact lawn care companies and golf courses in a 14-county area in northwest Arkansas. The bill, '**Arkansas Soil Nutrient Application and Poultry Litter Utilization Act**,' may require that individuals maintaining more than 2.5 acres be required to hold a 'Certified Nutrient Applicator' license and develop a nutrient management plan for that acreage.

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On March 17, a group of individuals will meet in Fayetteville for the first meeting of the **Arkansas Exotic Pest Plant Council** (AEPPC). The group will likely provide a focus for issues and concerns regarding exotic pest plants in Arkansas.

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The issue of **fuel surcharges** was recently brought up during a panel discussion at the Arkansas Green Industry Association (AGIA) meeting in Hot Springs. After researching the topic, we have concluded that the 'Motor Carrier Fuel Cost Equity Act of 2002,' or Senate Bill 1914, and the companion House Bill, H. R. 2161 (previously H. R. 4441), have not yet been enacted. Both of these have been referred to committees on transportation. Basically, if both bills pass, a mandatory fuel

surcharge would be charged to those not already paying one when the price of diesel rises above a benchmark price (e.g., \$1.15 per gallon). Currently, large motor carrier companies often charge shippers a fuel surcharge when the cost of diesel rises sharply; however, this optional charge is agreed upon by both parties before the surcharge is added. Smaller motor carriers may or may not have the market power to demand a fuel surcharge from shippers and usually pay the fuel increase out of pocket. Keep in mind the case in Pennsylvania (<http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/press/release.cfm?p=FD6F173B-A46D-BFBE-EAE0F836DC52AE02>) where a lawn care company agreed on a contract with customers and then later added a fuel surcharge. (Jennifer Gibson)

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Lots of business activity in the northwest corner of the state. Merle and Lissa Morrison, owners of Family Garden Nursery in Pettigrew have formed a partnership with Chris Young and Gene Bordelon to open **White River Wholesale Nursery** on Hwy 16E in Fayetteville. The main focus for the four owners is to have affordable, quality plants and supplies available for landscapers and contractors.

**Westwood Gardens** is opening a fourth store at 3112 W. New Hope Road in Rogers. The

new facility, which will open April 1, will have 16,000 square feet of greenhouses, a 3,000 square feet retail space and a fully stocked tree and shrub yard.

Doug Williford, owner of Chenal and Maumelle Gardens, and George Collins of Arkansas Garden Centers formed a partnership in a new business venture, **Arkansas Plant Brokers**. Located on 5.5 acres in West Little Rock, at the corner of Cantrell Road and Ferndale Cutoff, Arkansas Plant Brokers will specialize in offering a full line of high quality plants and bulk materials to the nursery and landscape trade.

David Culberson (Culberson Greenhouses) in Mayflower is now selling bulk bark mulch (hardwood, pine, cedar, cypress). Contact David at 501-470-0329 or 501-733-4990.

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Greenhouse growers – The January 2004 issue of *GM Pro* had a great article on "Plant Growth Regulator Calculator." The article details the software program from NC State University and tells you how to obtain it ([www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/floriculture/software/PGRCALC.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/floriculture/software/PGRCALC.htm)). The February issue highlights a "Fertilizer Mixing Calculator" (<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/floriculture/software/FERTCALC.htm>).



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## Upcoming Events

**April 10** – Horticulture Workshop sponsored by the University of Arkansas Horticulture Club, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Horticulture Farms at University Farms, Fayetteville. Featured topics are Tomatoes, Growing the Small Rock Garden Plants, and Small Fruits and Grapes. For more information, please contact Marilyn McCord at 479-575-3793.

**July 13-15** – Arkansas Urban Forestry Council Annual Conference, “Urban Forestry in Arkansas...Practically Speaking,” Conway. Contact Christy Watts @ 800-958-5865.

**July 8-9** – The Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association Trade Show and Conference, Hamilton County Convention Center, Chattanooga, TN. Contact TNLA, 931-473-3951, or <http://www.tnla.com>.

**August 12-14** – SNA 2004 - Southern Nursery Association Researcher’s Conference and Trade Show,. Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA. Contact SNA; 770-953-3311 or <http://www.sna.org>.

**August 26-28** – The Farwest Show. Portland, Oregon, Oregon Convention Center. Contact Aimee Schendel, Oregon Association of Nurserymen, 29751 SW Town Center Loop West, Wilsonville, OR 97070; 800-342-6401; 503-682-5089 x 2006; Fax, 503-682-5099; e-mail, [info@farwestshow.com](mailto:info@farwestshow.com); url, <http://www.farwestshow.com>.

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