Time to check your pack



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I was in my office, catching a short power nap, when the high-octave screech from the other room startled me awake. Bolting out the office door, ready to go three rounds with the Cookie Monster, I clumsily came to the rescue.

What I found was my wife pointing at my hunting pack and screaming, "Something in there moved. I tried to pick it up and hang it back on the hook, and it moved. What poor creature do you have trapped in there?"

"Nonsense," I exclaimed. Nonsense is an excellent word and I exclaim it every chance I get. In the interest of marital bliss, I grabbed the pack and headed back into my office with it, keeping any further

exclamations to myself. Upon closer examination of the backpack, I realized that something was definitely amiss. I normally go through my pack and update the snacks and survival gear at the end of hunting season, in December, to have it ready for spring and summer hiking season. I then redo the pack in September to get it ready once again for the hunting seasons.



See CHECK page A13 Now is the time to check the contents of your pack, in case you have to spend an unplanned night in the woods. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Wrapping up the gardening season

How crazy has this gardening season been? First, we had an early spring freeze that damaged some of the fruit crops and early spring flowers. Then we had a killing frost June 8. Then we go from high temperatures in the upper 80s to freezing temperatures in a matter of a day.

Would it be an understatement to say this has been one crazy year? I think most people are actually anxious to see this hot, windy, smoky gardening season come to an end.

But the great thing about gardening is that we grow through the experiences and challenges and roll up our sleeves and say, "better luck next year." So, let's talk about some of the things that may have occurred in your landscape and how to overcome them next season.

The average first light frost date of 32 degrees is Oct. 7 in the Montrose area. I hope you didn't get nipped by the frost earlier this week. I know many people covered their gardens just in case. Regardless, root crops and cold hardy vegetables should be just fine. Translucent colored tomatoes and peppers signal they were definitely hit by the frost and are history, but those that survived the cold could be picked and kept in a cool location to ripen. Did you know that some apples actually become even sweeter following a light frost, so there may be some good in the craziness?

Last year we had a hard freeze with temperatures



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

around 13 degrees on Oct. 11. This actually froze the leaves right onto the trees. When spring rolled around, the leaves were still clinging to some of the trees. Most trees managed to put on new growth and overcame.

However, I still see a lot of trees, especially maples, that still look discolored and a little deformed on the east side of the tree. These trees are going to go into winter a little stressed, so you might want to keep an eye on them during the winter months and make sure they don't become too dry. A good soaking before the irrigation is blown out for

the season will help. Pinions had a rough summer with Ips beetle attacks. If your tree was one of the unfortunate ones to be attacked and is dead, or mostly dead, remove it this fall or winter. The beetles over winter will be in the infested trees and will emerge next spring. Because they're attracted to fresh cut wood, this is one

job you don't want to put

off until next spring since it will attract beetles to your remaining pinions and even your neighbor's trees.

Just in case you ran into a few setbacks in your garden this season, perhaps this may help. If your potatoes or cucumbers have a hollow center, it's due to nothing more than uneven watering. Mulching and trying to keep the soil from becoming too dry or wet will help prevent the problem next season.

Some varieties of cucumbers are more prone to "hollow heart," so if this is a continual problem, you might want to check the seed packet next spring to choose a variety that is less prone to hollow heart.

Maybe you've experienced bitter tasting cucumbers. This is also a result of dry soil or the cucumber becoming too mature. Once again, mulching and consistent watering will help alleviate this problem in the future.

Carrots that appear to have "multiple legs" are another common problem. This can happen if your soil is compacted. The poor little carrot wants to grow deep and straight, but the soil is just too hard. Amending the soil in the spring or planting cover crops this fall will help improve the soil and allow you to grow happy carrots in the future. You may want to choose shorter carrot varieties until your soil improves.

See SEASON page A13





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OUTDOORS

CHECK

FROM PAGE A12

Apparently, I neglected to remove the snack foods last spring from the pack. While I did find the beef jerky had evolved into a semi-intelligent life form, and was grazing on a half-eaten Snickers bar, I seriously doubt the pack actually "moved." Nonetheless, it was time to clean out the pack and get it ready for the upcoming

Regular readers of my columns know that I annually write about the importance of a survival pack. The pack is necessary as standard equipment for just about all outdoor excursions and activities. It astonishes me that every year, people are stranded in the woods without equipment or skills to stay alive, even though it is preached at them endlessly ad nauseam from all outdoor people.

I try to convince people to carry some things in their packs for that "just in case moment." These items should be geared for the time of year you are heading up into the woods and the particular activity you will be involved with.

Most of these items will fit in the side pockets or a separate small bag to be carried in your pack. This leaves plenty of room in the pack for the other things, like extra clothes, fishing tackle, binoculars, hunting gear, lunch, snacks, drinks, beef jerky and half-eaten Snickers bars.

The emergency stuff is in there, just in case you have a Murphy moment, from my old buddy of Murphy's Law fame. I can promise you that if you spend enough time in the great outdoors, you are eventually going to run into the erudite Murphy.

who will constantly add new items to their pack. Every time I see something that will be useful, someday, it gets added to the pack. This gets out of hand when the pack gets too heavy to lift. This is the big reason I must go through the pack twice a year.

I am one of those people

Begin with making a small survival kit. Keep it small and lightweight so you can carry it with you all the time. Keep it with you everywhere you go, as it will not help you if it is sitting in the truck. Probably 90% of the rescues the sheriff's posse conducts are for folks who have no survival kit with them. Being unprepared turns a minor inconvenience into a life-threatening emergency.

Here is a list to get you started:

- Compass and GPS: It is most important to take a waypoint for your starting place on the GPS. This way, you always have a Lat/Lon number to head home to.
- Signal mirror and whistle: These are great for helping searchers locate you in the event of an emergency.
- Knife and Leatherman tool: I prefer a separate knife, not just the one in the multi-tool.
- Flashlight and extra batteries: Lots of extra batteries, preferably the lithium type over the al-

kaline. They work better in the cold and don't leak.

- Waterproof matches, lighter, fire starter-fire can be used for signaling and warmth.
- Drinking water-some packs come with a hydration bladder built in.
- Food-power bars, trail mix, jerky etc. High energy snacks with protein. And Snickers bars.
- Cell phone: Keep the power off to save battery. The battery power will run out quickly searching for service. Carry a portable battery pack to recharge the phone.
- Small first-aid kit: Carry only essential items, such as a tourniquet, Israeli bandage, couple bandaids, etc., keeping weight in mind. Be sure that you have any essential prescription drugs you may require.
- Rain Poncho: Can also be used as a shelter or tarp.
- Solar blanket bivy. You can crawl in one of these to keep warm.
- Toilet paper: A must if you eat that bad jerky.
- Duct tape: For first aid

and repairs, wrap some around an old credit card for easy carry.

- Pencil and paper: Pens never work outdoors when you want them to.
- Extra ammunition for your firearm: Many times a lost person was able to signal for help firing the universal three well-spaced shots.
- Extra warm clothing: In the mountains, the temperature can drop 30 or more degrees in a matter of minutes. Having some dry clothes along will help in case you get wet.

According to the

Mountain Rescue Association, search and rescue personnel conduct more than 3,000 operations each year in the Rocky Mountains of the United States. More than 2,000 people lose their lives annually in those same mountains. Many would be alive today had they been better prepared. Most people, who are lost or stranded, are rescued within 24 to 36 hours. It is not necessary to pack enough equipment to sur-

vive the 100-year war.

The woods are not the place to give Murphy's Law a test. Mother Nature has no sense of humor. She will change the weather in an instant, hide your visual reference points and partner with Murphy to throw an injury at you. While you are fighting for your life, the two of them are laughing themselves silly and eating the last of the cookies in your pack.

Actually, I think it was Murphy who ate the half a Snickers bar. I know it was not me, because I would have eaten the whole thing.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@icloud.com.



A frost from Oct. 11, 2019 actually froze leaves right onto the trees. The result of the frost was apparent on many trees and shrubs throughout the summer. These trees may need a little extra TLC this winter. (Linda McIntosh/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

SEASON

SEASC FROM PAGE A12

This is definitely apple season, but worms in apples are probably the biggest problem that gardeners have when growing fruit. Spraying the apples for coddling moths a couple times throughout the growing season should solve this problem in the future. Traps can be somewhat effective but coddling moth control needs to begin shortly after the flowers fall from the tree next spring.

If the skin on your apples looks like they have a road

map of tan patterns or if your pears have dark crusty areas, it could be the result of powdery mildew. Spraying the tree with dormant oil next spring and raking up the leaves this fall will help next year's crop.

It's time to reduce the amount of water your Austrian pines, peach and globe willows are receiving. Reducing the water signals the tree to start shutting down for winter.

This is a great time to divide and transplant crowded spring and early summer blooming perennials. However, iris and lilies should be transplanted after they're done blooming in the spring.

If you managed to get through this year of gardening with a green lawn and healthy plants, give yourself a great big pat on the back. You overcame a bunch of obstacles and deserve a big "way to go!" If you weren't quite so fortunate, don't give up. Challenges keep it interesting.

Linda Corwine McIntosh is an ISA certified arborist, licensed commercial pesticide applicator and Colorado advanced master gardener.



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