

## Horticulture 2008 Newsletter No. 17 April 30, 2008

### TURFGRASS

#### Fertilize Irrigated Cool-Season Lawns in May



May is an excellent time to fertilize cool-season lawns such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass if they will be irrigated throughout the summer. Non-irrigated lawns often go through a period of summer dormancy because of drought and do not need this fertilization.

May is a good time to fertilize because the springtime flush of growth characteristic of these grasses has tapered off, so the fertilizer you apply will be less likely to cause excessive shoot growth than if you had fertilized in April. Slow-release nitrogen sources are ideal. These nitrogen sources promote controlled growth, which is desirable as

the stressful summer weather approaches. Relatively few fertilizers available to the homeowner supply ALL of the nitrogen in the slowly available form. But one such product that is widely available is Milorganite. Other such products available in the retail market include cottonseed meal, alfalfa-based fertilizers, and any other products derived from plants or animals.

(Bloodmeal is an exception, and contrary to popular belief, the nitrogen it supplies is quickly available.) These products are all examples of natural organic fertilizers. They typically contain less than 10 percent nitrogen by weight, so compared to most synthetic fertilizers, more product must be applied to get the same amount of nitrogen. Translation: they are more expensive!

Apply enough to give the lawn one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. For example, if the fertilizer is 6 percent nitrogen by weight, you will need to apply almost 17 pounds of fertilizer product per 1,000 square feet.

If cost is prohibitive, you can use the less expensive quick-release (i.e., soluble) sources, but split the application into two doses as follows: apply enough to give the lawn 0.5 lb nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in May and again in early June. (WU)

## ORNAMENTALS

### Sunscald on Thin-Barked Trees



Many young, smooth, thin-barked trees such as honey locusts, fruit trees, ashes, oaks, maples, lindens and willows are susceptible to sunscald and bark cracks. Sunscald normally develops on the south or southwest side of the tree during late winter. Sunny, warm winter days may heat the bark to relatively high temperatures. Research done in Georgia has shown that the southwest side of the trunk of a peach tree can be 40 degrees warmer than shaded bark. This warming action can cause a loss of cold hardiness of the bark tissue resulting in cells becoming active. These cells then become susceptible to lethal freezing when the temperature drops at night. The damaged bark tissue becomes sunken and discolored in late spring to early summer (people are starting to see this now). Damaged bark will eventually crack and slough off. Trees will often recover but will need some TLC (especially watering during dry weather).

Applying tree wrap from the ground to the start of the first branches can protect recently planted trees. This should be done in October to November. (WU)

## PESTS

### Carpenter Bees



Although carpenter bees look much like bumblebees, they are easy to identify if you know what to look for. Bumblebees have hairy abdomens that are usually yellow and black. Carpenter bees' abdomens are shiny blue-black. Carpenter bees are solitary (do not form colonies) and are nonaggressive unless provoked. Only the female possesses a stinger. The male may act aggressive but is harmless. Carpenter bees get their name from the ability of the female to bore into wood. Holes are about a half-inch in diameter and may be 6

inches deep. The female then builds six to eight cells off the main tunnel and lays an egg in each. Developing larvae feed off of "bee bread" (pollen and nectar) regurgitated by the female bee. Larvae become adults by late August and September, but do not emerge until the following spring. Individual holes may not cause much damage, but cumulative effects of numbers of bees can weaken structures. Painting wood surfaces can make them less attractive to bees. Stains seem to have little effect. Insecticides, such as Sevin, can be used to treat openings. It is best to treat near sundown when the bees have returned to their tunnel. (WU)

## Imported Cabbageworm Butterflies



Imported cabbageworm butterflies overwinter as chrysalids formed last fall. The overall coloration of a newly formed chrysalis is lime green. When aged, the chrysalis' integument becomes transparent, revealing the soon-to-emerge butterfly.

The recent warmer temperatures have spurred the 2008 imported cabbageworm activities.

Butterflies mate and deposit eggs on newly transplanted cole crops (primarily cabbage and broccoli transplants) in home gardens. By observing where butterflies rest, a person can usually locate freshly deposited yellow, elongated eggs (most commonly on lower leaf surfaces).

The resultant larvae are aptly described as “green fuzzies”. More mature worms are responsible for creating holes in foliage — which in some instances may be the first sign of their presence.

Although feeding damage on wrapper leaves is cosmetic, worms will move to cabbage heads to continue feeding. Accumulations of fecal pellets are objectionable, and damaged heads reduce usability/marketability.

Imported cabbageworm butterflies produce multiple generations each year. Thus both spring and fall cole-crop plantings are subject to damage. A continual spray program is required to keep larval populations at acceptable levels. The degree of larval suppression depends on acceptable damage level requirements of growers. A variety of insecticide products are available for controlling cabbageworms. Products may contain synthetic active ingredients, or organic alternatives such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, spinosad, neem, or horticultural oils and soaps. It is the end user's responsibility to check individual product labels to ensure legal application against the intended pest and crop. (BB)

## Growing Degree Days for March 1 - April 22

It's been a warmer week, but despite higher daytime and nighttime temperatures, accumulated 2008 growing degree days (GDDs) continue to lag behind those of 2007. Here are March 1 – April 22 values: Baxter Springs – 237 (427.5); Clyde – 79.5 (267.5); El Dorado – 129 (329); Elkhart – 131 (211.5); Ellsworth – 105.5 (307); Emporia – 123.5 (333); Garden City – 97.5 (219); Hays – 73 (217.5); Hiawatha – 80 (280.5); Independence – 204.5 (414.5); Kansas City – 108.5 (308); Lawrence – 95.5 (302.5); Manhattan – 96 (299); Newton – 100.5 (297); Olathe – 114.5 (297); Pittsburg – 237 (424.5); St. Francis – 59 (125.5); Salina – 91.5 (307); South Hutchinson – 99 (313); Topeka – 115.5 (334.5); Wichita – 152 (328.5). (BB)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Field Bindweed Control



Field bindweed is difficult to control, especially for homeowners, but there are options.

### Home Vegetable Gardens

Weed control requires taking the treated portion of the garden out of production for a time.

Solarization - Solarization uses the energy from the sun to produce heat that pasteurizes the soil. Follow these steps to solarize a garden area:

1. Select the hottest time of year to solarize, usually mid-June to mid-August in Kansas.
2. Work the soil deeply, and smooth the surface so the clear plastic will make uniform contact with the soil.
3. Water well. Moisture encourages seed to germinate and existing bindweed to grow so the plants can be killed by the heat. The water also helps conduct the heat deeper into the soil.
4. Spread clear polyethylene film over the area. Seal the edges and seams with soil to prevent air from circulating under the plastic. One mil film is most effective at creating heat, but is likely to be torn apart by Kansas winds. Film that is 4 mil thick is more likely to last.
5. Leave the plastic in place for 4 to 6 weeks. The longer time is more effective.
6. Remove the plastic after 6 weeks. If you leave it in place longer, it may become brittle from exposure to ultraviolet radiation and be difficult to remove. You can plant the next day.

Glyphosate is sold under a wide variety of names, the most common being Roundup. Take the garden out of production when treating.

1. Roundup is a nonselective herbicide that will kill whatever it hits. But it is inactivated when it contacts the soil.
2. Roundup is most effective when applied to bindweed that is at or beyond full bloom. You can treat earlier but don't skip the late summer to fall application.
3. Do not apply to bindweed that is under moisture stress or not growing well.

### Turf

Selective herbicides are available.

Homeowner's should use a combination herbicide that contains dicamba and quinclorac such as Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max + Crabgrass Control or Bayer All-in-One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer.

Commercial applicators can use Drive (quinclorac) or Q4 (contains quinclorac). Works about as well as glyphosate but is selective.

### **Shrub Beds**

Use spray of glyphosate between plants. Use a shield if spraying near plants to keep spray from contacting green plant material. Remember, glyphosate will hurt your shrubs if it contacts green tissue.

It is possible to control field bindweed by pulling, but you must be extremely persistent. I remember reading a study from the 1940s that found that bindweed produces enough energy to start strengthening the roots when it reached the six-leaf stage. So, if pulling, never allow plants to produce more than six leaves. (WU)

### **Poison Ivy Identification and Control**



Learning to identify poison ivy is vital if you wish to avoid the rash that accompanies exposure.

Unfortunately, poison ivy can make identification difficult because it occurs in three forms: an erect woody shrub, a groundcover that creeps along the ground, and a woody vine that will climb trees.

When poison ivy climbs, it forms numerous aerial roots that gives the vine the appearance of a fuzzy rope. The leaves of poison ivy also vary. Though the compound leaf always has three leaflets, the leaf margins may be toothed, incised, lobed or

smooth. The size of the leaves can also vary, although usually the middle leaflet is larger than the other two. Also, the middle leaflet is the only one with a long stalk; the other two are closely attached to the petiole (leaf stem). The number of leaves gives rise to the saying: "Leaves of three, let it be!" Poison ivy is often confused with Virginia creeper. Virginia creeper, however, has five leaflets rather than three.

There are three methods commonly used to eradicate poison ivy. These include pulling or grubbing out the plants by hand, cutting off the vine, and then treating the regrowth, and spraying the plants directly. The method used depends somewhat on the plant's growth form. If the plant is growing as a groundcover, direct spray or grubbing the plant out is often used. If grubbing, wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt. The soil must be moist for grubbing to work well. Wash the clothes (and yourself) immediately after you finish. It might also be a good idea to rinse the washing machine. If the plant is in the shrub form, direct spray is the most common control method. If the plant is a woody vine that has climbed a tree, the preferred method is to

cut the plant off at the base and treat the sprouts after they emerge. Some triclopyr herbicides also have instructions on treating a freshly cut stump directly.

Herbicides that can be used include glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall Weed and Grass Killer, Nutgrass, Poison Ivy and Vine Killer) or triclopyr (Brush-B-Gon Poison Ivy Killer, Brush Killer Stump Killer). Poison ivy is tough. Repeat applications may be necessary. (WU)

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