

Horticulture 2009 Newsletter

No. 23 June 10, 2009

PESTS

Ladybird Beetles



If you see what looks like very small alligator-shaped insects on your plants, don't be concerned. This is the larval form of the ladybird beetle. The larvae are covered with spines, about 3/8 inch long, and black with orange markings. Neither the adults nor larvae will feed on the plants but rather on other insects including aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, scale insects and the eggs of various other insects. Because those "other insects" normally are feeding on the plant, ladybird beetles are considered beneficial. (WU)

Grasshoppers



Not every grasshopper is a "bad grasshopper." While a person may note a lot of grasshopper activity when walking along fields or in native grasslands, most have very restricted host ranges and therefore do not constitute a threat to field and garden crops. Yet, there are several opportunistic species which have a very wide host range and therefore are destructive feeders. Three of the most commonly encountered "garden pests" are the larger two-striped grasshoppers and differential grasshoppers (1.5 inches in length) and the smaller redlegged grasshoppers (approaching only 1-inch in length).

The adult females produce eggpods which they deposit in the soil in the fall. Nymphs emerge in mid- to late May. Given their "current" small size, they generally go unnoticed. However, if a person begins noticing small holes appearing in the leaves of various garden crops, closer observations may reveal the presence of the small nymphs --- currently only 3/16-inch in length.

Grasshopper nymphs seem to suddenly appear out of nowhere. Nymphs will consume increasingly greater amounts of foliage as they grow. Therefore, insecticide treatments may be “the means” with which to address the situation. Various active ingredients (carbaryl, cyfluthrin, esfenvalerate, lambda-cyhalothrin and permethrin) are contained in a wide array of products marketed for use by home gardeners. Make note of post-treatment harvest intervals. Additional insecticide applications may be required if there are continued movements of grasshoppers into garden areas.

The popular protozoan *Nosema locustae* is often promoted as the “organically acceptable approach” for grasshopper control. Marketed (in Kansas) under the tradenames Nolo Bait™ and Semaspore™, if used under proper circumstances, they can be efficacious. However, these products were designed for use treating large acreages of rangeland as a long-term control strategy. Comparable results may not be achieved when used as an approach for grasshopper control in home gardens. (BB)

TURFGRASS

Zoysia Large Patch Still on the March



Large patch of zoysiagrass is caused by a subgroup of *Rhizoctonia solani*, and is closely related to fungus that causes brown patch. It’s active in spring and fall, when the zoysia is going in and out of dormancy. This year I saw the first symptoms in early May during some wet weather. The symptoms faded a bit in dry weather, but some recent moisture kicked it back up again. While this disease is most common in golf courses, I did receive a home lawn sample that had large patch. The lower the mowing height, the more severe is the disease. In a study in the early 1990’s, K-State

researchers found that large patch was more severe in turf mowed at 1.2 or 2.5 cm (0-0.5 inch) compared to 4.5 or 5.1 cm (1.75-2 inch). So, large patch is more likely in golf course fairway-type heights than lawn-type heights. (MK)

Control of Prostrate Spurge

Prostrate spurge is one of the more difficult broadleaf weeds to control. It is a summer annual that must come up from seed every year. If caught when young, it is easier to control. But even young plants have proven difficult to kill. Correct herbicide selection is important. Mature plants are almost impossible to control, even with selected herbicides.



Several years ago K-State Research and Extension conducted a study on the phytotoxic effects of

certain herbicides on buffalograss. During the application, we noted the presence of a large number of small prostrate spurge plants. As the study progressed, plots were rated for percent control of spurge. The results were interesting. We found that Drive provided more than 90 percent control but is available only to commercial users. However, Dimension and Turflon Ester offered more than 80 percent control, and Trimec 78 percent. All three of these herbicides are available to homeowners. Dimension results were surprising because it is a preemergence herbicide with some postemergence activity that is commonly used for crabgrass control. (WU)

Drought Stress or Disease



I had a call, email, and sample from a homeowner who reported that their fescue lawn greened up just fine and was looking great in March. Then, a few weeks ago they started noticing a little browning at the tips, and about 10 days ago the whole lawn started looking really brown, all at once. They said they were irrigating 3 nights/ week, and thought it might be a disease. Clue #1 is there really aren't any diseases that hit tall fescue this time of year. Clue #2 is that the symptoms came on so uniformly and suddenly.

Then the sample came in. The soil was bone dry. So, maybe the irrigation system isn't working like they think. I suggested putting out cups around the lawn to make sure the overnight-watering is actually coming on like it is supposed to. Another tip, from my colleague Ward Upham, was for the homeowner to use a soil probe after watering to see how far down in the soil profile the water is getting.

On top of the potential irrigation issue, the turf is getting thatchy, nearly ½ inch. Turf with thick thatch is particularly prone to drought stress. It's getting too late now to aerify cool-season turf. (MK)

FLOWERS

Pinching Mums

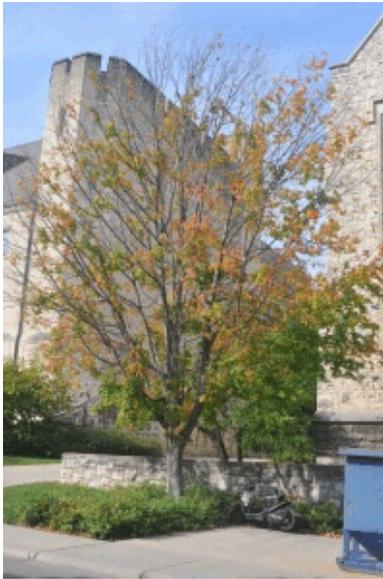
Though cushion mums normally do not require pinching back, other garden types will benefit. Pinching is done by removing the top inch of growth by pinching it between your thumbnail and forefinger. Pinching encourages lateral buds to break and grow resulting in a shorter, sturdier and fuller plant. The first pinching is usually done when the mums reach six inches in height. A second pinching should be done when the new growth from the previous pinch reaches six to



eight inches. Usually that is all we have time for because the last pinch should take place before July 15. Pinching later than that can delay flowering resulting in a shorter time of flowering before frost kills the blooms. (WU)

MISCELLANEOUS

Accumulated Stress May Result in Death of Plants



We have received reports of trees in numerous areas of the state dying suddenly. In some cases the trees leafed out and then died. In other cases the trees never leafed out at all. In still other cases, the still surviving tree leafed out but then lost leaves through a general thinning. The cause in most of these cases seems to be stress-related. Some areas in Kansas were very wet last year which damaged root systems due to saturated soils not providing the oxygen the roots needed. This was followed by a dry, open winter with fluctuating temperatures further stressing root systems. The growing season thus far this year has ranged from extremely wet to extremely dry depending on your location. We also had a sharp cold snap in early April that may have led to some leaf drop now. Buds may have been damaged resulting in leaves that were able to function during the cool, spring weather but not when the weather turned hot. In such cases, dropped leaves are often still green or may have turned to a yellowish green. Let's

look at some of these situations and what should be done to compensate, if anything.

Plants that withered seemingly overnight may have actually died earlier but had enough food reserves to put out leaves and even to grow for a period of time. When the food reserves were depleted, the plants died suddenly, often it seems overnight. Be careful not to confuse this with feeding damage from May beetles. May beetles will strip a tree of leaves rather than leave them wilted and dead on the plant. Healthy trees will easily recover from May beetle damage by throwing out a new set of leaves. Before any tree is cut down, check the twigs. Dead trees will have brittle, dry stems that snap. Live stems may break, but they won't be dry. If the tree is still alive, give it time to put out a new set of leaves.

Trees that lose individual branches should have those branches cut out. Note that there are other possible causes of branch loss such as verticillium wilt. You may want to take a sample to your county extension office to have them send it through our plant disease lab on campus if you suspect disease rather than stress. To find out more about verticillium wilt, go to <http://www.hfir.ksu.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=1737>.

Trees that are losing leaves through a general thinning should be fine. If the thinning is severe enough, the tree will throw out a new set of leaves from dormant buds. Since this is still early in the growing season, the tree has plenty of time to make the energy it needs before leaf drop in the fall.

If you suspect you have plants under stress, try to water them once a week if we do not receive rainfall. Trees should be watered to a depth of 12 to 18 inches if possible. Though this will not reach all the roots of a tree, it will reach the majority of them. Trees normally have at least 80 percent of their roots in the top foot of soil. Shrubs should be watered to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. Check the depth of watering by pushing a wooden dowel or metal rod into the soil. It will stop when it hits dry soil. (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. Use plenty of soap as the oil that causes poison ivy is not removed with water alone. 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)

Contributors:

Ward Upham, Extension Associate; Bob Bauernfeind, Entomologist; Megan Kennelly, Plant Pathologist

To view Upcoming Events: <http://tinyurl.com/fswqe>

[Horticulture 2009 E-mail Subscription](#)

For questions or further information contact: [Hort WebMeister](#).

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service