

Horticulture 2012 Newsletter

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Video of the Week: [Tools for the Garden](#)

FRUIT

Controlling Weeds in Strawberries



Strawberries are one of the most popular fruits, but gardeners often have problems with weed control. Strawberries form a mat of plants, which makes hoeing difficult. Gardeners must pull weeds by hand or use herbicides. Although there are no weed preventers available for homeowners to use on strawberries, Poast (sethoxydim), a grass-killing herbicide, can be used after weedy grasses have emerged. It can be sprayed directly over strawberries without harm but should not be applied within 7 days of harvest. You can find

Poast in Hi-Yield Grass Killer and Monterey Grass Getter. (WU)

TURFGRASS

Seeding Cool-Season Lawns in the Spring



There are several reasons Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue lawns are better seeded in the fall than in the spring.

- Some of the most serious lawn weeds such as crabgrass and foxtail emerge in the spring. Since they are warm-season weeds, they will outcompete and often crowd out young, tender cool-season grasses during the heat of summer.

- The most stressful time of year for cool-season grasses is summer, not winter. Poorly established lawns may die out during the summer because

of heat and drought stress.

- A lawn often gets more use during the summer, leading to increased compaction and traffic stress.

If an area needs to be established in the spring, sodding is much more likely to be successful than seeding. Sodding provides stronger, more mature plants that are better able to withstand stress and prevent weed invasion. (WU)

Keep Mower Blades Sharp



Lawn-mowing season is here. Remember that dull blades give the lawn a whitish cast. A dull blade does not cut cleanly but rather shreds the ends of the leaf blades. The shredded ends dry out, giving the lawn that whitish look. A sharp mower blade is even more important when the turf starts putting up seed heads in a month or so. The seed head stems are much tougher than the grass blades and more likely to shred. Under normal use, mower blades should be sharpened about every 10 hours of use.

(WU)

Slime Molds



Slime molds are primitive organisms that are common on turf and mulch. Slime molds are not fungi and are no longer classified as such. They belong to the Kingdom Protista rather than Kingdom Fungi. On turf, you might often see large numbers of small gray, white or purple fruiting structures, called sporangia on leaf blades during cool and humid weather throughout spring, summer, and fall. Affected areas are often several inches to 1 foot in diameter. During wet weather, the fruiting structures may appear slimy. As the

structures dry out in hot weather, they become ash gray and break up easily when touched.

Homeowners often are concerned that this is a disease organism that will kill the grass, but slime mold feeds on bacteria, other fungi, and dead organic matter. It simply uses the turf as a structure on which to grow. However, slime mold can damage turf by completely covering leaf blades and interfering with photosynthesis. Chemical control of slime molds is not necessary. Use a broom or a heavy spray of water to dislodge the mold.

Slime molds on mulch often attract attention because of their bright colors and disgusting

appearance. Common names are often quite descriptive. For example, the "dog vomit" slime mold is a bright, whitish color that resembles its namesake. It eventually turns brown and then into a hard, white mass. There is also the "scrambled egg" slime mold, "the yellow blob" slime mold and the "regurgitated cat breakfast" slime mold. Slime molds do not hurt anything, but most people do not find them attractive and want to get rid of them. Simply use a shovel to discard the offensive organism and then stir up the mulch for aeration. (WU)

PESTS

Bagworms, It's Still Too Early to Spray



Timing is critical in many things, including controlling bagworms. Though handpicking is effective through much of the year, often it is impractical because of the sheer number of bagworms. But if you only see a few bags, now would be a good time to pick them off and destroy them.

New bagworms will likely hatch and leave the mother's bag in May, but spraying is not usually recommended until later in June. Spraying now

will be ineffective because they are too well protected inside their mother's bag. Closer to hatch, watch for an article on when and what to spray. (WU)

Ash/Lilac Borer



If you have had problems with canes or stems of lilac and privet suddenly wilting, or ash trees that show borer holes in the trunk and larger branches, the ash/lilac borer may be to blame. This insect causes the base of infested lilac stems to swell and the bark to separate from the wood. A fine sawdust-like material is present around holes in the canes. Ash and mountain ash also are affected. The borer attacks the trunk, which may cause bark to swell and crack if there are repeated infestations.

Ash/lilac borers overwinter as larvae in infested trees and shrubs. Moths generally begin to emerge in mid to late April. Emergence peaks in May, dwindles by mid to late June and ends by the first week of July. However, this year the moths will be earlier (see below). The moth has clear wings and resembles a wasp. There is one generation per year.

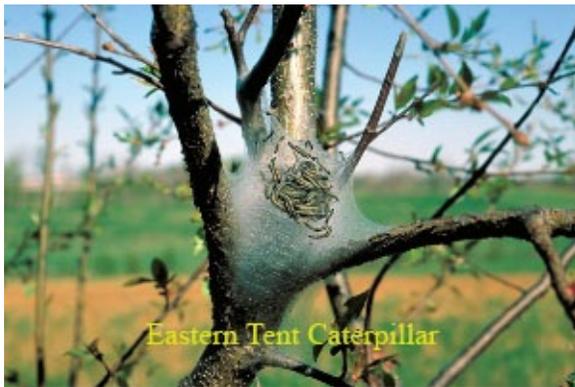
Public and commercially managed properties often use pheromone traps to determine the presence of adults. Spray treatments are started seven to 10 days after capture of the first moths.

Sprays also can be timed using phenology, the practice of timing one event by another.

The first spray for ash/lilac borer should be applied when the Vanhoutte spirea is in full to late bloom, probably by about April 12 this year. Apply a second spray four weeks after the first. Thoroughly treat the trunk and larger limbs of ash or the lower portion of the stems of lilac or privet. Heavily infested ash should be cut and burned during the fall and winter.

Infested stems of lilac or privet should be removed as well. Bifenthrin or permethrin (Hi-Yield Garden, Pet, and Livestock Insect Control and 38 Plus Turf, Termite and Ornamental Insect Control) are labeled for control. Though there are a number of homeowner products that contain one or the other of these two active ingredients, the permethrin products listed above are the only ones I've found that specifically lists the ash/lilac borer on the label with directions for control. (WU)

Eastern Tent Caterpillars



Eastern tent caterpillars have hatched in the Manhattan area and have started to feed on trees and shrubs such as flowering crab and sandhill plum. These insects produce a “silken tent” in the crotch of a branch where they stay when not feeding. Larvae and the tent they make will increase in size until about mid-May at which point they pupate. Though usually not detrimental to a tree's health, control may be desired to prevent the ragged look these insects will produce by their feeding. An easy way to get rid of the colony is to

wait until the insects have returned to their webbing and use a pole with a nail at its end or a toilet brush to twirl up the nest (and the larvae inside) and dispose of it. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Magnolia

We've had a mild winter this year. Fortunately for us, we've been able to enjoy the spring flowers several weeks earlier than planned. Hopefully, we won't get any more damaging frosts and lose flowers and fruit buds. I'm not a meteorologist, but I think things will work out this year.

Which brings me to my question: Did you see the Magnolias this spring?

They were beautiful! The pink and white buds of the saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) are always a treat. Not only are they relatively large (3-6



inches), but they are also fragrant. In years where we have a late frost, it will terminate flower buds on magnolia. You'll just have to wait for next spring to enjoy the flowers. Normally, they'd be flowering right now. But our mild winter has allowed most plants to start flowering about three weeks early this year so you might have missed the 2012 floral display.

Magnolias can be marginal in Kansas, primarily because of the cold, but there are several species worth trying. In general, they prefer full sun to part shade with moderate amounts of water. They are small trees (15-20 feet) or multi-stemmed shrubs, making them ideal for planting near utility lines, though placing them in a semi-protected spot may give a better chance of flowering every year. They prefer acid soil, but can still grow well here, if not as large as in more southern (and acidic soil) locales.



In addition to Saucer magnolia, you are likely to see Star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*). These flowers are a few inches smaller than a saucer and mostly white, with a bit of pink tinge. Star magnolia flowers about the same time as the Saucer magnolia (early spring).

You might also come across Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) as a multi-stemmed shrub. It flowers later in May and June and in addition to a white color, they are lemon-scented. It may continue to flower sporadically all the way to September, but the main show is late spring, early summer. Sweetbay magnolia can tolerate shade and wet sites.

How about a yellow-flowering magnolia? You got it: Cucumbertree (*Magnolia acuminata*). The best cultivar is 'Butterflies' and it should be easy to find in garden centers. In addition to yellow flowers, it boasts pH adaptability and late spring, early summer flowering time.



One last magnolia to share is Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). Yes, these do grow here (zones 6-10) and are much larger (40-50 feet).

They take a few more years to flower than any of the previously mentioned species of magnolia. They have a long flowering season in late spring (May to June) and are a broadleaf evergreen option for the landscape. The best cultivar for cold hardiness is 'Bracken's Brown Beauty.' It is a compact, dense plant that will be smaller than other cultivars.

Keep an eye out for these beauties, especially in the spring! (CRB)

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