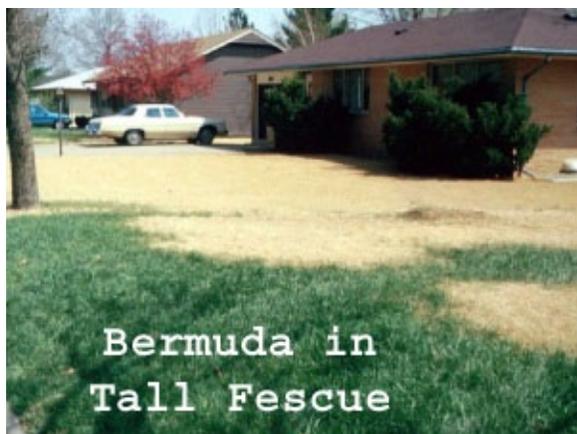


Video of the Week: [Common Tomato Problems, Part 2](#)

TURFGRASS

Bermudagrass Control



Bermudagrass can make a nice lawn if you don't mind its invasiveness and short growing season. But many people dislike both these characteristics. Warm-season grasses, such as bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and buffalograss, green up later than cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. They also go dormant earlier in the fall, which can make a lawn unattractive. Bermuda that invades a cool-season lawn will be brown during much of the spring and fall while the rest of the lawn is green. And it is much more drought and heat resistant than cool-season grasses, so it will take over a cool-season lawn during the

summer months if it is in full sun. So how do you control bermudagrass that has invaded a cool-season lawn? Research conducted in 1996 showed that glyphosate (Round-up, Kleen-up, Killzall, Kleeraway) is the best herbicide for the job. Glyphosate is a nonselective herbicide and will kill everything—including tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass. You will need to reseed treated areas. In our study, we applied a 2% solution of glyphosate on July 15 and again on August 15 on a bermudagrass plot that was more than 15 years old. More than one year later, we saw no regrowth. Glyphosate works best if bermuda is growing well. The better the bermudagrass is growing, the more chemical is taken up and pushed into the roots. Water and fertilize if needed to get it going.

Spray about the middle of this month (or when the bermuda is growing well) and again about a month later if there is any green left in the bermudagrass. Use glyphosate (2% solution). Wait two more weeks and reseed. It may also be helpful to scalp (mow as low as possible and remove clippings) the lawn two weeks after the first application so that dead grass does not prevent the glyphosate from reaching the recovering bermuda. (Ward Upham)

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. (Ward Upham)

Hornworms on Tomatoes



Hornworms are the largest larval insect commonly seen in the garden. Though usually seen on tomato, they can also attack eggplant, pepper, and potato. The larval stage of this insect is a 3 ½- to 4-inch long pale green caterpillar with five pair of prolegs and a horn on the last segment. The two most common hornworms are the tobacco hornworm (seven diagonal white stripes and, most commonly, a red horn) and the tomato hornworm (v-shaped markings with a horn that is often blue or black). The adult of the

tobacco hornworm is the Carolina sphinx moth. The five-spotted hawk moth is the adult of the tomato hornworm. Both moths are stout-bodied, grayish-colored insects with a wing spread of 4 to 5 inches.

The larva is the damaging stage and feeds on the leaves and stems of the tomato plant, leaving behind dark green or black droppings. Though initially quite small with a body about the same size as its horn, these insects pass through four or five larval stages to reach full size in about a month. The coloration of this larva causes it to blend in with its surroundings and is often difficult to see despite its large size. It eventually will burrow into the soil to pupate. There are two generations a year. This insect is parasitized by a number of insects. One of the most common is a small braconid wasp. Larva that hatch from wasp eggs laid on the hornworm feed on the inside of the hornworm until the wasp is ready to pupate. The cocoons appear as white projections protruding from the hornworm's body. If such projections are seen, leave the infected hornworms in the garden. The wasps will kill the hornworms when they emerge from the cocoons and will seek out other hornworms to parasitize.

Handpicking is an effective control in small gardens. Bt (Dipel, Thuricide), spinosad (Conserve; Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer & Tent Caterpillar Spray; Colorado Potato Beetle Beater Conc; Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Monterey Garden Insect Spray), cyfluthrin (Bayer Vegetable & Garden Insect Spray) and other insecticides may also be used to control hornworms. (Ward Upham)

Weird Squash, Cucumbers or Melons



Occasionally we receive a call from someone who has a squash (or cucumber or melon) that just doesn't look like what was supposedly planted.

They often wish to know if that fruit had cross-pollinated with another vegetable close by. In such cases, the gardener is assuming that cross-pollination will affect the fruit. Such is not the case. The characteristics of the fruit is determined by the mother plant and is not affected by cross-pollination. However, there will be a problem if

seed is saved for the next year from a flower that was cross-pollinated. All bets are off on what you will get if that happens.

So how do we end up with this weird fruit? Though it could be that the gardener had forgotten exactly what he planted, more likely is that the seed he planted had been cross-pollinated before packaging. Another possibility is that it came from seed that came from fruit that had rotted in the garden the previous year. Regardless, don't worry about planting different cultivars of squash or cucumbers or melons close to one another. Though cross-pollination may occur, the fruit will not be affected. (Ward Upham)

Raccoons and Sweet Corn



It seems the official sweet corn inspector should be the raccoon as they seem to harvest the sweet corn the day before it is to be picked. The only effective control measure I have had success with is the electric fence. Here are some suggestions based on my experience. Other designs may very well work but this is what has worked in my garden.

– Two or more wires must be used. Place the first about 5 inches above the ground and the second 4 inches above the first (or 9 inches above ground).

Raccoons must not be able to crawl under, go between or go over the wires without being shocked.

– Fence posts used for electric fences work well for this application (go figure), as do the insulators used to support the electric wire.

– It is much easier to use the woven electric wire with strands of wire embedded than to use a solid metal wire. The woven wire is easier to bend around corners and to roll up when done for the year.

– Though both the plug-in and battery operated fences work, the battery operated types allow more versatility in where corn is grown. One set of batteries is usually sufficient for the season. In my case, I pull the battery out of an old tractor that is not used often. It will also last the season if fully charged at the beginning. My fencer is probably on for a total of a month.

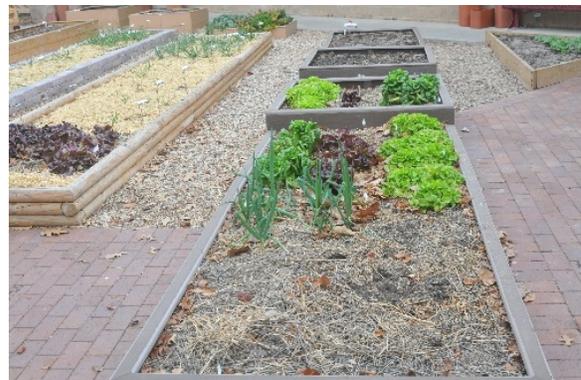
– Start the charger before the corn is close to being ripe. Once raccoons get a taste of the corn, they are more difficult to discourage.

– Control weeds near the wire. Weeds can intercept the voltage if they touch a wire and allow raccoons entry beyond the weed.

– Check the wire occasionally to make sure you have current. This can be done easily (but unpleasantly) by touching the wire. There are also tools that will measure the voltage available for sale. They are worth the money. (Ward Upham)

Fall Gardening: Cole Crops

Probably the last thing most gardeners are thinking of now is planting vegetables. However, for those hardy few, now is the time to start the cole crops such as cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. These members of the cabbage family can be either seeded directly in the garden or started in pots for transplanting about mid-August.



Plant slightly deeper than you would in the spring so the seed stays cooler and the soil around the seed stays moist longer. Plant more thickly and thin later. The plants may need to be protected from rabbits through the use of fencing.

Use light amounts of fertilizer before planting. For example, apply 1/4 cup of a low-analysis fertilizer (6-7-7) per 10 feet of row. Sidedress two weeks after transplanting or four weeks after sowing seed by applying 2 tablespoons of a 16-0-0 or 1 tablespoon of a 27-3-3, 30-3-4 fertilizer, or something similar per plant.

Watering must occur more frequently because seed should not be allowed to dry out. Overhead watering often causes soil to crust, making it more difficult for young, tender plants to emerge. Prevent this by applying a light sprinkling of peat moss, vermiculite or compost directly over the row after seeding. Even better, use a soaker hose right next to the row to allow water to slowly seep into the ground.

Plants should be ready for harvest in late September to early October, with broccoli side shoots developing well into November, weather permitting. (Ward Upham)

FRUIT

When to Pick Blackberries



The exact time to harvest blackberries varies by cultivar, with thorny blackberries normally ripening earlier than thornless types. But there are some general guidelines to keep in mind when harvesting blackberries. Do not pick blackberries too early or berry size and flavor will be sacrificed.

Two major characteristics determining maturity for harvest are fruit color and ease of separation.

Blackberries usually develop a dull, black color with plump, juicy fruitlets as they ripen. The

berries soften and produce the characteristic flavor. Full color often develops before the berries separate easily. Pick the berries by gently lifting the berry with the thumb and fingers. The receptacle, or center part of the fruit, remains in the fruit when blackberries are harvested, unlike raspberries, which leave the receptacle on the bush. Take care not to crush the berries or expose them to the hot sun. When possible, avoid picking berries when they are wet. They'll probably need picking every second or third day. Cool the berries immediately after harvest to extend shelf life. Keep them refrigerated under high relative humidity and use within three to five days. (Ward Upham)

PESTS

White-lined Sphinx Caterpillar



The caterpillar of this species is a hornworm reminiscent of the tomato and tobacco hornworms. Like other hornworms, this larva has a horn on the tail-end. However, this is a thinner hornworm and prefers plants such as evening primrose, portulaca, pigweed and purslane. Beneficial plants such as apple, elm, grapes and some garden vegetables are also fed on at times.

The caterpillar is highly variable in coloration but are often green with black stripes and yellow and orange markings. High populations can result in larvae that are very dark to almost black. Though the horn on the back end of the larva may look

dangerous, it is not. It will neither sting or penetrate the skin. Sphinx moths received their name from the habit of some of the caterpillar raising its head and striking a sphinx-like pose when at rest.

Control of this insect is rarely called for as it most commonly feeds on weeds. However, if control is warranted due to feeding on desirable plants, follow the recommendations given in the accompanying article on tomato hornworms. (Ward Upham)

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