

# Horticulture 2017 Newsletter

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## Video of the Week:

[When to Harvest Eggplant](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July 29 **Open House, K-State Research & Extension Center, Olathe**

<http://www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/horticulture-field-day.html>

Come see the hottest and newest plants while enjoying cool classes in air-conditioned comfort and ice cold water while wandering the field trials. Learn about the latest and greatest before it ever hits the garden centers. It's all here at the K-State Research and Extension Horticulture Center's Field Day.



It's your chance to peek behind the scenes, talk with the experts and learn about the latest varieties and methods for achieving growing success. This year we are celebrating 20 years of the research center in its current location.

Admission is \$5 per person, which includes ice cold bottled water, seminars, classes and demonstrations.

K-State Research and Extension horticulture research develops its list of recommended grasses, flowers or vegetable varieties through university research conducted in Olathe to determine what grows best in our landscapes.

### August 3 **Turf & Ornamentals Field Day, Wichita**

The field day program is designed for all segments of the turf industry - lawn care, athletic fields, golf courses, and grounds maintenance. Included on the program are research presentations, problem diagnosis, commercial exhibitors, and equipment displays. There will be time to see current research, talk to the experts and get answers to your questions.



Pesticide recertification is available in 3A & 3B, as well as GCSAA education points.

For more information and to register, go to:

<http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-field-day.html>

## TURFGRASS

### Is My Lawn Still Alive?



Normally, a healthy lawn can stay dormant for a good 5 weeks and still recover. After the five weeks are up, it is important to keep the crown hydrated because if the crown dies, the plant dies.

The recommendations differ for a lawn that was overwatered or received so much rain this spring so that it produced a limited root system. Such a lawn may die unless allowed to slowly enter dormancy. This is done by shutting off the water gradually. For example, instead of watering several times a week, wait a week before irrigating. Then don't water again for two weeks. Thereafter, water every two weeks as described below.

Apply about 1/4 inch of water every two weeks to hydrate the crown. This will be enough to hydrate the crown but not enough to encourage weed germination and growth.

If you are wondering if the turf is still alive, pull up an individual plant and separate the leaves from the crown. The crown is the area between the leaves and the roots. If it is still hard and not papery and dry, the plant is still alive. When rains and cooler weather arrive, the turf should come out of dormancy. However, we will probably have to deal with weeds that germinate before the turfgrass grows enough to canopy over and provide enough shade to keep weed seeds from sprouting. (Ward Upham)

## ORNAMENTALS

### Leaf Scorch on Trees and Shrubs



Leaf scorch is starting to show up on maples and other trees and shrubs. This is not a disease but rather a physiological problem associated with damaged roots, storm damage, limited soil area, or hot, dry winds. This year, the wet spring may have compromised root systems so that they are now struggling to provide the moisture needed by the leaves. Moisture is lost so quickly from the leaves that roots can't absorb and transfer water quickly enough to replace

what is lost. Though scorch is usually associated with droughty periods, it can appear even when the soil is moist.

Scorched leaves turn brown or, in some cases, turn black from the edges and between the major veins. If severe, the leaf may drop. Leaves may be affected over the entire tree or may be affected only on one side. White pines are also prone to this condition due to the delicacy of the needles.

Though scorch can be due solely to the weather, the condition of the roots of plants can make them much more susceptible to this condition. Shallow soils such as those over hardpan or rock lead to a limited root system that may not be able to absorb all the water needed. As mentioned, trees may be more sensitive to scorch this year because of the heavy rains many areas received this spring. In certain cases so much rain was received that oxygen was driven from the soil resulting in root damage. That root damage is now making it more difficult for trees to provide all the water needed for the leaves. Also, root damage due to disease, insects, poor drainage or construction can cause poor water uptake.

To help alleviate damage due to dry soils or limited root systems, water once per week for recently transplanted trees or every two weeks for large trees if there is no rainfall. Mulching small trees or shrubs will help conserve moisture. (Ward Upham)

## VEGETABLES

### Bitter Cucumbers



A bitter taste in cucumbers is the result of stress that can be caused by a number of factors, including heredity, moisture, temperature, soil characteristics, and disease. Most often this occurs during the hot part of the summer or later in the growing season.

Two compounds, cucurbitacins B and C, give rise to the bitter taste. Though often only the stem end is affected, at times the entire fruit is bitter. Also, most of the bitter taste is found in and just under the skin. Removing the stem end and the skin can often help salvage bitter fruit.

Bitter fruit is not the result of cucumbers cross-pollinating with squash or melons. These plants cannot cross-pollinate with one another.

Often newer varieties are less likely to become bitter than older ones. Proper cultural care is also often helpful. Make sure plants have the following:

- Well-drained soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Plenty of organic matter also helps.
- Mulch. Mulch helps conserve moisture and keeps roots cool during hot, dry weather.
- Adequate water especially during the fruiting season.
- Disease and insect control. (Ward Upham)

## Bumps on Tomato Stems



Tomato stems sometimes develop “warts” or “bumps” on the stems close to ground level. Though this looks abnormal, the condition is natural and not harmful. These bumps can eventually give rise to roots (called adventitious roots) if conditions are favorable. This is actually the mechanism the plant uses to form roots when tall, leggy plants are planted in a trench. Some varieties tend to be more prone to this condition than others and stress such as that produced by waterlogged soils also makes a “warty” stem more likely. Growth regulator type herbicides such as

2,4-D can also induce this state. So if you see a warty stem, don’t be concerned. The bumps will not harm the plant in the least. (Ward Upham)

## PESTS

### Cicada Killer Wasps



These large (1-1/3- to 1-5/8-inch long) wasps fly slowly above the ground. Cicada killers have a black body with yellow marks across the thorax and abdomen. Wings are reddish-orange.

Although these wasps are huge, they usually ignore people. Males may act aggressively if they are threatened, but are unable to sting. Females can sting, but are so passive that they rarely do. Even if they do sting, the pain is less than

that of smaller wasps such as the yellow jacket or paper wasp and is similar to the sting of a sweat bee.

The cicada killer is a solitary wasp rather than a social wasp like the yellow jacket. The female nests in burrows in the ground. These burrows are quarter-size in diameter and can go 6 inches straight down and another 6 inches horizontally. Adults normally live 60 to 75 days from mid-July to mid-September and feed on flower nectar and sap. The adult female seeks cicadas on the trunks and lower limbs of trees. She stings her prey, flips it over, straddles it and carries it to her burrow. If she has a tree to climb, she will climb the tree so she can get airborne and fly with cicada back to the nest. If not, she will drag it. She will lay one egg per cicada if the egg is left unfertilized. Unfertilized eggs develop into males only. Fertilized eggs develop into females and are given at least two cicadas. Cicadas are then stuffed into the female’s burrow. Each burrow normally has three to four cells with one to two cicadas in each. However, it is possible for one burrow to have 10 to 20 cells.

Eggs hatch in two to three days, and larvae begin feeding on paralyzed cicadas. Feeding continues for four to 10 days until only the outer shell of the cicada remains. The larva overwinters inside a silken case. Pupation occurs in the spring. There is one generation per year. Cicada killers are not

dangerous, but they can be a nuisance. If you believe control is necessary, treat the burrows after dark to ensure the female wasps are in their nests. The males normally roost on plants near burrow sites. They can be captured with an insect net or knocked out of the air with a tennis racket during the day. Carbaryl (Sevin) or permethrin may be used for control. (Ward Upham)

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To view Upcoming Events: <http://hnr.k-state.edu/events/index.html>

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to [cdipman@ksu.edu](mailto:cdipman@ksu.edu) or [wupham@ksu.edu](mailto:wupham@ksu.edu) listing your e-mail address in the message.

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