

Horticulture 2017 Newsletter

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2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Cntr.
Manhattan, KS 66506 (785) 532-6173

Video of the Week: [Maximizing Your Garden Space](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention

The Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners along with the Midwest Regional Hosta Society are pleased to host the 2017 conference in Lenexa, Kansas June 22 – 24, 2017. This is the first time in the history of the organization that a hosta convention has been held in the state of Kansas. The three day event features something for all gardening enthusiasts. Day one is education. A series of classes will be held on a variety of topics from hostas to general gardening. Day two is garden tours in the Topeka, Kansas area. These include beautiful estate landscapes as well as stop at historic Ward Meade Park and a visit to the only American Hosta Display Garden in the region. Day three is garden tour day in Johnson County. Unique gardens ranging from a Japanese garden to a conifer garden. There will also be a tour of the only hosta tissue culture lab in the region. Other highlights include a hosta leaf and design show, banquet speakers and a rare plant auction. Complete information can be found at www.2017kchostaconvention.com or by calling the Johnson County Extension Office, 913-715-7000.

VEGETABLES

Controlling Weeds in Home Garden Asparagus Beds



The best time to control weeds in asparagus is early spring before the asparagus emerges. A light tilling (or hoeing) that is shallow enough to avoid the crowns will eliminate existing weeds. Many gardeners like to mix in organic matter during the same operation.

Herbicides can be used before asparagus emerges. Glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall) will kill weeds that are actively growing, and the preemergence herbicide trifluralin can be used to kill weed seeds as they germinate. Trifluralin is found in several products, but not all of them list asparagus on the label. Those that do have asparagus on the label include Miracle-Gro Weed Preventer Granules and Monterey Vegetable and Ornamental Weeder. Mulch can also be used to keep weeds from invading.

No herbicides can be used during harvest. The end of harvest presents another opportunity. Remove all fern and spears and apply Roundup to control virtually all of the weeds present. Past the harvest season and after regrowth of the asparagus, options are limited. Products that contain sethoxydim can be applied to asparagus to kill grassy weeds. Sethoxydim has no effect on broadleaves including asparagus. Two sethoxydim products available to homeowners and labeled for asparagus are Monterey Grass Getter and Hi-Yield Grass Killer. With broadleaves, the only option is to pull them and look forward to next year. (Ward Upham)

Remove Fern and Fertilize Asparagus



If you haven't removed last year's growth from asparagus plants, now is the time. Asparagus comes up around the first of April in Manhattan but will be earlier in southern Kansas and a bit later further north.

Also, asparagus benefits from a fertilizer application early spring. Fertilize according to a soil test or add 1 to 2 pounds of a 10-20-10 fertilizer per 20 feet of row before growth starts. If a soil test shows that only nitrogen is needed, apply 1 pound of a 16-0-0 product or ½ pound of a 30-4-5, 27-3-3 or similar fertilizer per 20 feet of row. Incorporate lightly with a tiller or rake in fertilizer before spears emerge. Fertilize again at the same rate after the last harvest. (Ward Upham)

FRUITS

Frost Tolerance of Apricots and Peaches



Growers of apricots and peaches often wonder at what temperature fruit buds are killed especially in years where we have an early spring. These two tree fruits bloom very early and are often caught by a late frost. The following will give you some guidelines but remember that the actual damage is going to be influenced by the weather before the temperature drops. An extended warm spell before the cold snap may result in more damage due to a loss in cold hardiness. The stages listed are for the fruit buds.

Apricot

Stage	10% Kill (°F)	90% Kill (°F)
First white	24	14
First Bloom	25	19
Full Bloom	27	22
n the Shuck	27	24
Green Fruit	28	25

Peach

Stage	10% Kill (°F)	90% Kill (°F)
Swollen bud	18	2
Half-inch green	23	5
Pink	25	18
Bloom	27	24
Petal fall	28	25
Fruit set	28	25

To check for low temperature injury to fruit buds or blossoms, use a sharp knife and cut them in half longitudinally (from top to bottom). If the tiny seed in the center is white to cream color no damage has been done. But if the seed in several buds or blossoms is dark brown or black, it has been killed.

It is possible to give some protection to blossoms from freezing by covering the tree with a bed spread, blanket or similar fabric. Old-fashioned Christmas lights distributed around the tree will help to give additional protection. The newer, smaller Christmas lights do not give off enough heat and are not recommended. Of course the practicality of this method of protection depends upon the size and number of trees.

Sprinkling the tree with water throughout the freezing period can also protect the blossoms. Sprinklers should be started before the temperature drops to freezing to be sure ice does not block the garden hose or water line. Continue until the temperature warms. With this protection method, there is the potential of creating an ice storm. If temperatures remain below freezing for several hours, ice will accumulate on the branches and limbs. The weight from the ice may cause branches and limbs to break causing severe, and possibly permanent, damage to the tree structure. Also, if water drainage from the soil is slow and the water displaces oxygen from the roots, damage to trees may result. (Ward Upham)

TURFGRASS

Managing Turf in Shade



Turfgrasses differ in their capacity to grow in shade. Among Kansas turfgrasses, tall fescue is the best adapted to shade though it isn't all that good. Although the fine fescues (i.e., creeping red, chewings, hard and sheep) have better shade tolerance, they lack heat tolerance and typically decline during hot Kansas summers. The warm-season grasses have the poorest shade tolerance, although zoysia does better than Bermuda or buffalo. Where shade is too heavy for fescue, there are other courses of action. The most obvious is to either remove trees, or to prune limbs and thin the tree canopies. Grass will do better under openly spaced trees than under closely spaced trees. Pruned limbs and thinned canopies will allow more sunlight to directly reach the turfgrass. If possible, raise the mowing height in the shade to compensate for the more upright growth of the leaves,

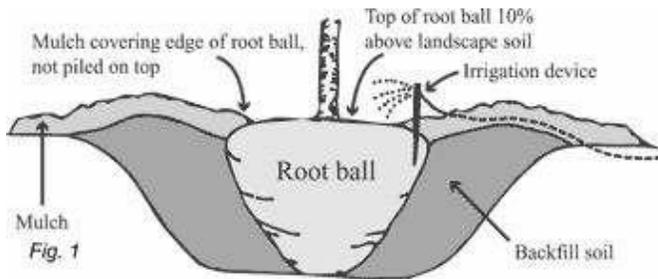
and to provide more leaf area for photosynthesis. The thin, weak turf in the shade may tempt you to fertilize more.

Remember, the problem is lack of light, not lack of fertility. Too much nitrogen in the spring causes the plant to grow faster and may result in weak plants. The nitrogen rate for shaded grass should be cut back to at least half of that for grass in full sun. Late fall fertilization after tree leaves have fallen, on the other hand, is important for shaded cool-season turfgrasses and should be applied at a full rate. Irrigate infrequently but deeply. Light, frequent irrigation may encourage tree feeder-roots to stay near the surface, which increases competition between the trees and the turf. Restrict traffic in the shade.

Many times, the best choice for shaded areas is switch from a turfgrass to a more shade-tolerant plant. For example, English ivy and periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) are much more shade tolerant than any turfgrass adapted to our area. Another option is simply to mulch the area where turf doesn't grow well. The trees will love the cool, moist soil and the absence of competition. (Ward Upham)

ORNAMENTALS

Ten Rules for Planting Trees



Before you begin spring landscaping, here are some tips on planting trees.

1. Select the right tree for the site. To avoid serious problems, choose trees that are adapted to your location. Consider whether the tree produces nuisance fruit or if there are disease-resistant varieties available. For example, there are a number of crabapple varieties that are resistant to apple scab and rust diseases. Also consider the mature size of a tree to be sure you have enough room. See <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/index.html> or ask a local nurseryman for suggestions for trees adapted to your area.

2. Keep the tree well watered and in a shady location until planting. When moving the tree, lift it by the root ball or pot and not by the trunk.

3. Before planting, remove all wires, labels, cords or anything else tied to the plant. If left on, they may eventually girdle the branch to which they are attached. The root flare (point where trunk and roots meet) should be visible. If it isn't, remove enough soil or media so that it is.

4. Dig a proper hole. Make the hole deep enough so that the tree sits slightly above nursery level. Plant the tree on solid ground, not fill dirt. In other words, don't dig the hole too deep and then add soil back to the hole before placing the tree.

The width of the planting hole is very important. It should be three times the width of the root

ball. Loosening the soil outside the hole so it is five times the diameter of the root ball will allow the tree to spread its roots faster.

5. Remove all containers from the root ball. Cut away plastic and peat pots; roll burlap and wire baskets back into the hole, cutting as much of the excess away as possible. If you can remove the wire basket without disturbing the root ball, do it. If roots have been circling around in the container, cut them and spread them out so they do not continue growing so that they circle inside the hole and become girdling roots later in the life of the tree.

6. Backfill the hole with the same soil that was removed. Amendments such as peat moss likely do more harm than good. Make sure the soil that goes back is loosened - no clods or clumps. Add water as you fill to ensure good root to soil contact and prevent air pockets. There is no need to fertilize at planting. Note: Adding organic matter to larger area than just the planting hole can be beneficial, but it must be mixed in thoroughly with the existing soil. However, adding amendments to just the planting hole in heavy soil creates a “pot” effect that can fill with water and drown your new tree.

7. Don't cut back the branches of a tree after planting except those that are rubbing or damaged. The leaf buds release a hormone that encourages root growth. If the tree is cut back, the reduced number of leaf buds results in less hormone released and therefore fewer roots being formed.

8. Water the tree thoroughly and then once a week for the first season if there is insufficient rainfall.

9. Mulch around the tree. Mulch should be 2 to 4 inches deep and cover an area two to three times the diameter of the root ball. Mulching reduces competition from other plants, conserves moisture and keeps soil temperature closer to what the plants' roots prefer.

10. Stake only when necessary. Trees will establish more quickly and grow faster if they are not staked. However, larger trees or those in windy locations may need to be staked the first year. Movement is necessary for the trunk to become strong. Staking should be designed to limit movement of the root ball rather than immobilize the trunk. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Adding Organic Matter in the Spring



Organic matter is a good way to improve garden soil as it improves a heavy soil by bettering tilth, aeration and how quickly the soil absorbs water. However, organic matter added in the spring should be well decomposed and finely shredded/ground. Manures and compost should have a good earthy smell without a hint of ammonia. Add a 2-inch layer of organic matter to the surface of the soil and work the materials into the soil thoroughly. Be sure soils are dry

enough to work before tilling as wet soils will produce clods.

To determine if a soil is too wet to work, grab a handful and squeeze. If water comes out, it is much too wet. Even if no water drips out, it still may not be dry enough to work. Push a finger into the soil you squeezed. If it crumbles, it is dry enough, but if your finger just leaves an indentation, more time is needed. Be sure to take your handfuls of soil from the depth you plan to work the soil because deeper soils may contain more moisture than the surface. (Ward Upham)

Contributors: Ward Upham, Extension Associate

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 or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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