Horticulture 2017 Newsletter

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Video of the Week: Caring for Knock-Out Roses

VEGETABLES

Asparagus Time

Asparagus is one of those vegetables where freshness is incredibly important. If you have never eaten asparagus fresh out of the garden, try it. It may convince you to grow some of your own. For those who have an asparagus patch, the new spears should be appearing soon. The first asparagus that comes through the ground always seems to take a long time to reach harvest size. That is because asparagus growth is temperature dependent. The higher the day and nighttime temperatures, the faster it grows. Also, the longer the spear, the quicker the growth. As the season progresses and spears get longer, the growth rate increases.

Harvest asparagus by snapping or cutting. Snapping is quick and easy. Simply bend the stalk near the base until it breaks. Snapped ends dry quickly so refrigerate or use soon after harvest. If you cut asparagus, use a sharp knife to detach the spears slightly below ground level. This base is woodier than snapped asparagus, so it doesn't lose water as quickly. Cut off woody ends before cooking. (Ward Upham)

Frost Proof Vegetable Plants

Certain vegetables can withstand cold spring temperatures as long as they have been toughened up by gradually exposing them to sunlight and outdoor temperatures. This “hardening off” process usually takes about a week.

Reducing watering and temperature is the key to toughening up transplants. If possible, move transplants outside for a portion of each day. Start by placing them in a shady, protected location and gradually move them into a more exposed, sunny location as the week progresses. Hardened off cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and onions can withstand temperatures near 20 F without being killed. Lettuce plants are not quite as tough but will be okay if exposed to temperatures in the mid 20s.

Don’t hesitate to put these plants out now if extreme cold is not forecast. (Ward Upham)

Growing Large Onions

Onion types: Onions bulb in response to daylength and are classified as short-day, intermediate-day and long-day plants. Onions classified as short-day are triggered to bulb earlier than intermediate-day plants and intermediate-day plants are triggered to bloom earlier than long-day varieties. Intermediate-day onions are best adapted to Kansas conditions if you are looking for large onions. We can also grow short-day varieties but bulbs will be smaller than if they were grown further south because the plants are still small when they are triggered to bulb.

Varieties: If you wish to grow large onions, choose an intermediate type such as Candy, Red Candy Apple or Super Star.

Sets or plants: Though onions can be grown from seed if started inside, we are too late to raise seed-grown plants this year. Therefore, we must grow them from sets or plants. Sets are most often unnamed and will produce smaller onions. Therefore, don’t use sets but rather plants of one of the three varieties mentioned above or of another intermediate-day type.

Fertilizing: Onions have shallow root systems and need good, even moisture and adequate fertilizer to develop large bulbs. Fertilize according to soil test and work the fertilizer into the soil before planting. If a soil test hasn’t been done, use a complete, balanced fertilizer such as a 10-10-10 at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. Actually, any fertilizer with the three numbers being similar will work; just follow the directions on the bag to determine how much to use.

Onions respond well to sidedressing (fertilizing a second time) about 3 weeks after the plants have started to grow. Use a fertilizer composed primarily of nitrogen such as nitrate of soda (16-0-0). This fertilizer may be applied at the rate of 2 pounds (about 4 cups) per 100 feet of row. High nitrogen lawn fertilizers such as a 27-3-3, 30-3-4, 29-5-4 or something similar are also good choices, but the rate should be 1 pound (2 cups) per 100 feet of row. Do not use lawn fertilizers that contain weed killers or weed preventers.

Planting: Space plants 4 inches apart to provide adequate room for bulb expansion. Set plants 1 to 1.5 inches deep. Rows can be spaced 12 to 16 inches apart or whatever is convenient.

Care: Keep the planted weeded to reduce competition. Water once per week if no rain. Onions should be ready for harvest around the first half of July. (Ward Upham)

FRUIT

Strawberry Planting

New strawberry plantings should be set early in the growing season so that mother plants become established while the weather is still cool. The mother plants develop a strong root system during this cool period when soil temperatures are between 65 and 80 degrees F. The most appropriate planting time is mid- to late March in southern Kansas and late March to mid-April in the northern areas of the state. Space plants 18 to 24 inches apart.

Later in the season, runners and daughter plants develop. The earlier the mother plants are set, the sooner the first daughter plant will be formed and take root. These first daughter plants will be the largest plants at the end of the growing season and will bear more berries per plant the following spring. When planting is done later, the higher temperatures stress the mother plants resulting in reduced growth, weaker mother plants and delays in daughter plant formation. Fewer and smaller daughter plants produce fewer berries, resulting in a smaller crop.

Remove all flowers during the first year. New plants have limited energy reserves that need to go toward establishing the mother plants and making runners rather than making fruit. If fruit is allowed to develop the first year, the amount of fruit produced the second year is drastically reduced due to smaller, weaker daughter plants.

Keep row width at 12 to 18 inches as strawberries bear most on the edges of the row rather than the center. A rototiller or hoe can be used to keep the row at the recommended width. (Ward Upham)

Apple Tree Sprays

Two common diseases on apple trees are cedar apple rust and apple scab. Though some apple varieties are resistant to these diseases — including Liberty, Jonafree, Redfree, Freedom, Williams Pride and Enterprise — most varieties are susceptible. For a listing of the disease resistance of various cultivars, go to: http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/agguides/hort/g06022.pdf

Fungicide sprays during April and May are critical to preventing disease on susceptible varieties. With the warm spring this year, we may have to start sprays in March. The first spray should go down when leaves appear. A fungicide that is available to homeowners and very effective for control of apple scab and cedar apple rust is myclobutanil (Immunox). There are several formulations of Immunox but only one is labeled for fruit. Check the label. Sprays should be

done on a 7- to 10-day schedule to keep the protective chemical cover on the rapidly developing leaves and fruit. These diseases are usually only a problem during April and May.

An insecticide will need to be added to this mixture after petal drop to prevent damage from codling moths that cause wormy apples. Methoxychlor or malathion have been used in the past but labels are changing and these products may no longer be labeled. A new homeowner product with the trade name Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard is labeled and would be effective for all common insect pests on apples. It also contains two fungicides. The active ingredient for insects is lambda-cyhalothrin. The fungicides are Pyraclostrobin and Boscalid. The fungicides only suppress cedar-apple rust and so are not as effective on cedar-apple rust than Immunox. In order to protect bees, DO NOT use any insecticide during bloom.

An organic control with the trade name Cyd-X is also labeled but will control only codling moth.

Although gardeners may continue to use myclobutanil throughout the season, certain other fungicides are more effective on summer diseases such as sooty blotch and fly speck. Consider using Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard after petal drop as it contains both an insecticide as well as two fungicides. However, you are limited to four applications per year.

A spreader-sticker can be added to the fungicide-insecticide chemical mixture to improve the distribution and retention of the pest control chemicals over the leaves and fruit. A hard, driving rain of about 1 inch or more will likely wash chemicals from the leaves and fruit. In such cases, another application should be made. You can find information on controlling insects and diseases on fruit trees in our publication titled "Fruit Pest Control for Home Gardens" at http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/c592.pdf Below is the spray schedule I would recommend. Sprays are applied ever 10 days.

Leaves Appear: Immunox
Petal Drop: Add Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard to the Immunox and so the mixture is Immunox + Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard

June 1: Drop the Immunox so you are applying only Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard
(Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Compost pH

Many gardeners assume that compost is acidic but such is usually not the case. Compost is more often alkaline than acidic. The possible use of alkaline composts on highbush blueberries was enough of a problem that Oregon State University carried out a study that included determining the pH of various composts. The listing below is of some of the composts Oregon State University studied and the pH of those materials. We have not listed those

composted from materials not common in Kansas such as hops and mint hay.

Material	pH
Mixed Manure	7.9
Horse Manure	6.4
Dairy Solids	8.0
Leaf	7.2
Yard Debris	7.7
Composted Bark	5.4

It is interesting to note the tremendous variability in pH; from 8.0 for dairy solids to 5.4 for composted bark. Therefore, it is important to perform a soil test on soils that have been heavily amended with compost as the compost may have affected the pH. (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 or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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