Horticulture 2013 Newsletter
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Video of the Week:  Crabgrass Prevention in Lawns

FLOWERS

Planting Easter Lilies Outside

Gardeners often hate to throw out Easter Lilies after they finish blooming and may wonder if they can grow outside. Though not reliably hardy in Kansas, many gardeners have success if they follow a few simple rules.

1. After the flowers have faded, remove the flower stalk so that energy does not go into making seed.

2. Keep the plant inside until the danger of frost is past. Keep soil moist but never waterlogged. Don’t allow water to sit in the tray. Continue to fertilize.

3. The pot can be moved outside when frost is no longer a concern. Sinking the pot into the soil up to the brim and placing in dappled shade will help reduce watering. Continue to water and fertilize until the top growth dies down.

4. Choose a sunny, well-drained spot for planting. Good drainage is vital for lilies and so the addition of organic matter is usually necessary for most soils. Till or dig the soil 6 inches deep and add 3 inches of peat moss. Mix the soil and peat moss together. This will form a berm that should drain very well.

5. Plant the bulbs 6 inches deep and 12 to 18 inches apart and water in well. Mulch to conserve moisture. New growth may appear later in the summer or the plant may stay dormant until the following spring.

6. Cover the plants in the fall after the foliage has died down with straw, pine needles, wood chips or other types of mulch to help protect the plant over winter. Use 4 inches of straw or 3 inches of any of the other materials.

7. Uncover the plants in the spring to allow new growth to appear and fertilize according to soil test. (Ward Upham)
Let's See Some Blooms

Ahh! Finally—let’s get rid of winter and bring on some spring flowers! April marks the earnest beginning of a parade of flowering plants during the growing season. Fortunately, we have lots to look forward to in the shrub world.

For starters, there is a great selection of viburnum from which to choose. Most viburnum species flower in the spring (several varieties can provide you with continuous bloom through June), have attractive summer leaves, great fall color and pretty fruit in the fall. Many, but not all, are fragrant (generally it is a pleasant experience). My absolute favorite is Koreanspice viburnum (*V. carlesii* ‘Diana’), although I’m testing out Judd Viburnum (*V. x juddii*) since I’ve read that it’s supposed to be even better than Koreanspice. The fragrance wafts for quite a distance. Count yourself very fortunate if you’ve got one planted outside your window this spring.

Some viburnums make decent cut flowers, but if they are fragrant, like KoreanSpice Viburnum, you can preserve the smell simply by drying a flowerhead on a flat surface. I have a dried flower head from 3 years ago that still smells sweet (all year long!).

Other viburnums are known for their showy display (Japanese Snowball Viburnum, *V. plicatum* ‘Popcorn’) but do not have much in the way of fragrance. Most blooms are white, although some are pink-tinged or pink in bud. Leaf shapes range from long and pointed to wide and rounded. Fall color varies by species, but is generally a wonderful red/purple color and winter berries generally start out red, but can darken to dark blue or black. A handful of viburnum species even keep some of their leaves on during the winter making them semi-evergreen (Leatherleaf Viburnum, *V. rhytidophyllum* ‘Cree’).

Last fall we initiated a statewide viburnum species trial (19 species, 3 replications at 7 sites). We chose plants that we think have the potential to grow well, but are underused due to a lack of plant growth information. We will be sure to share results as we gather them, but in the meantime you can visit a site to see how they are doing in Haysville, Olathe, Parsons, Manhattan, Colby, Garden City and Salina. Some non-replicated sites (they only received one set of plants so we can’t record data) include Hays, Wichita and Lawrence. More sites will be added this spring. For more information on viburnums, check out “Viburnums” by Michael Dirr (Timber Press) and our website for the trial [bit.ly/KSREViburnumTrial](http://bit.ly/KSREViburnumTrial). We will be updating the site with pictures and summaries as the study progresses. (Cheryl Boyer)
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. (Ward Upham)

Fertilizing the Home Orchard

Fruit trees benefit from fertilization around the bloom period, but the amount needed varies with the age of the tree. Normally, trees primarily need nitrogen, so the recommendations are for a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Use the following rates:

- Trees 1 to 2 years old, apply one-fourth cup of fertilizer per tree;
- Trees 3 to 4 years old, apply one-half cup per tree;
- Trees 5 to 10 years old, apply 1 to 2 cups per tree;
- Trees more than 10 years old, apply 2 to 3 cups.

You may also use nitrate of soda (16-0-0) but double the rate recommended above. If a soil test calls for phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 but triple the rate.

On apple trees, last year’s growth should be 8 to 10 inches, cherries should have 10 to 12 inches, and peaches should equal 12 to 15 inches of terminal growth. If less than this, apply the higher rate of fertilizer, and if more, apply the lesser amount.

Spread all fertilizer evenly on the ground away from the trunk of the tree and to the outer spread of the branches. Water in the fertilizer. (Ward Upham)
Proper Timing for Crabgrass Preventers

Crabgrass preventers are another name for preemergence herbicides that prevent crabgrass seeds from developing into mature plants. Many people have a somewhat foggy idea of how they work. They do not keep the seed from germinating but kill the young germinating plant. Crabgrass preventers are just that – preventers. With few exceptions they have no effect on existing crabgrass plants, so they must be applied before germination. Additionally, preventers do not last forever once applied to the soil. Microorganisms and natural processes begin to gradually break them down soon after they are applied. If some products are applied too early, they may have lost much of their strength by the time they are needed. Most crabgrass preventers are fairly ineffective after about 60 days, but there is considerable variation among products. (Dimension and Barricade last longer. See below.)

For most of Kansas, crabgrass typically begins to germinate around May 1 or a little later. April 15 is a good target date for applying preventer because it gives active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts. The April 15 target works well for most of the state, but for southeast Kansas April 1 is more appropriate, and for northwest Kansas May 1 is best. Additionally, weather varies from one spring to the next, and with it the timing of crabgrass germination. For example, this year has been cooler than normal. For this reason it is often better to base timing on the bloom of ornamental plants. The Eastern Redbud tree is a good choice for this purpose. When the trees in your area approach full bloom, apply crabgrass preventer. A follow-up application will be needed about 8 weeks later unless you are using Dimension or Barricade.

Dimension and Barricade are the only two products that give season-long control of crabgrass from a single application. In fact, they can be applied much earlier than April 15 and still have sufficient residual strength to last the season. Barricade can even be applied in the fall for crabgrass control the next season. Dimension can be applied as early as March 1. Because of the added flexibility in timing, these products are favorites of lawn care companies who have many customers to service in the spring.

Though Dimension cannot be applied as early as Barricade, it is the herbicide of choice if it must be applied later than recommended. It is the exception to the rule that preemergence herbicides do not kill existing weeds. Dimension can kill crabgrass as long as it is young (two- to three-leaf stage). Dimension is also the best choice if treating a lawn that was planted late last fall. Normally a preemergence herbicide is not recommended unless the lawn has been mowed two to four times. But Dimension is kind to young tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass seedlings and can be applied as early as two weeks after the first sign of germination. Lawns established in the fall can be safely treated with Dimension the following spring even if they have not been mowed.
Note that products containing Dimension and Barricade may use the common name rather than the trade name. The common chemical name for Dimension is dithiopyr and for Barricade is prodiamine. Remember, when using any pesticide, read the label and follow instructions carefully. (Ward Upham)

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. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

What a Difference a Year Makes

By mid-March of last year, we had winter honeysuckle, red maple, apricot, crabapple, flowering pear, forsythia and saucer magnolia in full bloom. By the first of April, we added flowering quince, star magnolia, eastern redbud, creeping phlox, bridalwreath spirea, common lilac, Koreanspice viburnum, apple, fruiting pear, flowering dogwood, Vanhoutte spirea and Tatarian honeysuckle. This year, the only plant mentioned above that was in full bloom on April 1 was winter honeysuckle.

Now remember, last year we were about 2 to 3 weeks ahead of normal and so we might not be as far behind as it first appears. However, we are behind. Take forsythia, for example. An average
date for full bloom has been about the third week in March. The earliest we have seen full bloom on forsythia since 2005 has been March 10, 2006 and the latest was April 5, 2008. Therefore, it appears we are about 2 weeks behind normal and about a month behind last year. This does not mean that we will stay at 2 weeks behind. Below normal temperatures will cause plants to lag even further, while above normal temperatures may allow us to at least partially catch up. Regardless, it appears “normal” in Kansas is just an average of the extremes. (Ward Upham)

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