Video of the Week:
Beautiful Flowers Start with Plants Adapted for Kansas

FRUIT

Fruit Tree Sprays and Rain

A spreader-sticker should be used in fruit tree sprays to improve the distribution and retention of fungicides and insecticides on fruit and leaves. However, even with a spreader-sticker, a rain can reduce the length of time the materials are effective. Less than one inch of rain since the last spray will not significantly affect residues. One to two inches of rain will reduce the residue by one half. Reduce the number of days until the next spray by one half. More than two inches of rain since the last spray will remove most of the spray residue. Re-spray as soon as possible. Details on when and what to spray are available in the K-State Research and Extension publication, "Fruit Pest Control for Home Gardens" at http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/c592.pdf. (Ward Upham)

VEGETABLES

Red Plastic Mulch and Tomatoes

Plastic mulches have long been known to provide advantages for the vegetable grower including earlier fruiting, increased yields and weed control. More recently advantages have been noted for colored mulches over the more traditional black plastic mulch. With tomatoes, the color of choice has been red. Though normally there is an increase in production of marketable fruit with red mulch over black mulch, the amount of the increase varies with the type of year we have. There may be no increase during years of near-perfect weather or
up to a 20% increase with less favorable growing conditions. A good average expected increase is about 12%.

So, how do you apply plastic mulch? Commercial growers have a mulch-laying machine that applies the trickle irrigation line and the mulch in one operation. Home gardeners must do this by hand. The first step after soil preparation is to place a trickle line near the center of where the mulch will lay as the plastic will prevent rainwater or overhead irrigation from reaching the plants. Then construct trenches for the outer 6 inches of the plastic mulch. This allows the center of the bed to be undisturbed with the edges of the mulch draping down into the trench. Fill the trenches to cover the edges of the mulch. This will prevent wind from catching and blowing the mulch. If the soil has been tilled, a hoe is all that is needed to prepare the trenches. (Ward Upham)

**Rhubarb Harvest and Seedstalks**

Rhubarb, like asparagus, is a perennial vegetable. It is harvested for the leaf stem, which is also called a petiole. Some years rhubarb will produce large, hollow-stemmed seedstalks that arise from the center of the plant. These should be broken or cut out as they appear so that energy will go into plant vigor rather than seed production. It will take several weeks for all the seedstalks to appear so be vigilant in removing them. Newer varieties of rhubarb are selected for vigor, bright red-colored stalks and less of a tendency to produce seedstalks than the older types. (Ward Upham)

**ORNAMENTALS**

**Sweet, Sweet Lilacs**

I adore lilacs. They were my favorite flowers as a child and, to this day, when I smell their sweet fragrance, I liken it to childhood in general. It takes me back for sure. Does it take you back to the past?

There will always be a place in my garden for a lilac, just because of the sweet memories I associate with it. The trouble is that, aside from their bloom time in May, the lilac shrub itself is kind of…well…boring. They have no fall color and are often susceptible to pests (borers, etc.), but they are tough plants that can handle very cold temperatures as well as abandonment (read: drought!). That’s why they are good in a mixed planting so they can fade into the background as the seasons change and new, exciting features appear on other plants.
In my mind, two saddening traits of lilacs are that they only bloom once a year for about 10-14 days (though it is pure heaven during that time), and they can get quite large. Fortunately, both of those seem to be solvable problems. Let’s tackle the first: reblooming, is it possible? The answer appears to be “Yes!” In the last 5-10 years there have been a few new cultivars with this trait patented and released to the trade. Syringa hybrida ‘Penda’ (Bloomerang® Lilac) was one of the first and most widely marketed reblooming lilacs in recent years. I couldn’t wait to get my hands on one, but when I finally saw it in person, I was less than impressed. The flower panicles seem to be looser and more open than other lilacs and the bloom was not as impressive in May, though it did continue to flower sporadically throughout the summer. In essence, it spread out the blooming feature over a longer time, but it had less of a show at any one time. The good news, however, is that the reblooming trait has been isolated and new reblooming lilac cultivars will only get better over time as breeders select for the trait. I will certainly be looking forward to these new plants and I hope you are as well.

Others that rebloom? ‘Josee’ is an older (i.e., 2003) cultivar that reblooms, though it is susceptible to a few diseases and pests. It is a parent of Bloomerang®. The cultivar ‘Bailsugar’ (Sugar Plum Fairy® lilac) is also reported to rebloom.

How about size? All of the cultivars mentioned are reported to stay less than 5 feet tall. In addition, Syringa meyeri ‘Palibin’ has a heavy bloom and is quite compact. It matures at 4 to 5 feet tall and 5 to 7 feet wide, but it starts blooming at 1 foot tall. So, if you want a small lilac that will give you a show this year, look for ‘Palibin.’

If you’re not concerned with reblooming or plant size, there are a plethora of lilacs to choose from—it can make your head spin! In fact, Dr. Mike Dirr in his book Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, resorts to presenting a handful of lists from lilac enthusiasts to characterize the favored cultivars. According to various authorities there may be between 400 and 2,000 cultivars of the common lilac (Syringa vulgaris), with the primary difference being flower color. I compared these lists with plant availability lists from nurseries in the area and came up with just a handful for you to consider. Though, if you are a lilac enthusiast, please feel free to try as many as you like.

**Common Lilac (Syringa vulgaris)**

1. ‘Alba’—white.
2. ‘Arch McKeon’—Bright reddish-purple.
3. ‘Charles Joly’—Double petals, magenta.
4. ‘Krasavitsa Moskvy’—Double white petals, pink in bud making it look bicolor.
5. ‘Prairie Petite’—light pink, fades to lavender. Dwarf (3 x 3 feet).
6. ‘President Roosevelt’—Purple, highly fragrant.
7. ‘Sensation’—Purple, edged in white.

You might also be interested in the Chinese lilac (Syringa x chinensis). It’s less common in nurseries, but is more delicate and has more flowers than the common lilac. It can get large—8 to 15 feet tall and wide, eventually making it look a little leggy so it needs some pruning (prune after it blooms).

So what do you think? Ready to make some memories with a lilac this year? (Cheryl Boyer)
PESTS

Asparagus Beetles

Below normal temperatures have kept the asparagus well behind normal but we are finally starting to see some appear. Be on the lookout for asparagus beetles. Both the adult and larvae of asparagus beetles feed on asparagus spears by chewing the tips and spear surfaces, leading to scarring and staining of the spear tips. Asparagus beetles overwinter as adults in trash near the garden. The adults are a blue/black beetle with a red prothorax with yellow spots. The larvae are a soft, greenish grub. Small, elongated, black eggs — sticking out long ways from the side of asparagus spears — are laid on developing spears.

Early control of beetles is important to reduce feeding damage later. Sevin will provide control (a one-day wait before harvest is required). Some products with permethrin are also labeled but require a 3-day waiting period between spraying and harvest. (Ward Upham)

Termites or Ants

Both termites and ants are able to swarm and may have wings during part of their lives. Since these insects are close to the same size, people often misidentify flying ants as termites. Since flying ants do not attack wooden structures like termites, it is helpful to be able to tell the difference.

Fortunately, there are several differences that can easily distinguish the two. For example, ants have a thin waist; the waist of a termite is thick. Also, ants' antennae are elbowed, while termites' are straight. Thirdly, termites have two pairs of wings that are of equal length. Ants also have two pairs of wings, but theirs are of unequal length. Homeowners who find signs of termite activity should shop for a reputable pest control firm. (Ward Upham)

Contributors: Cheryl Boyer, Nursery Crops Specialist; Ward Upham, Extension Associate

To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe
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.

For questions or further information contact: wupham@ksu.edu

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service