Horticulture 2024 Newsletter
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VIDEO OF THE WEEK:
K-State Garden Hour
Establishing a more Environmentally Sustainable Lawn

Whether you are interested in reducing your water bill or supporting pollinators, there are alternatives to growing and maintaining typical turfgrass lawns. This webinar will discuss reducing the water, herbicides, and fertilizers used on fescue lawns and replacing fescue turfgrass with low-growing alternatives that support our pollinators.

GARDEN TO-DO

- Transplant cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower to their final location.
- Plant salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard and other greens from mid-August to early September for a fall harvest.
- Harvest vegetable crops on a regular basis for season long production

TURF

Kentucky Bluegrass Variety Selection for Cool-Season Lawns

Though Kentucky bluegrass is not as heat and drought tolerant as tall fescue and the warm-season grasses, it is commonly used in northeastern Kansas where there is sufficient annual rainfall. It is also grown under irrigation in northwestern Kansas where the higher elevation allows for cooler summer night temperatures.

Recommended cultivars for high-maintenance lawns and low maintenance lawns differ. High maintenance lawns are those that have irrigation to prevent stress and receive at least three fertilizer applications per year.

Lawns under a low-maintenance program may provide limited watering and fertilization. Instead of the 4 to 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year typical of high-maintenance turf, a low maintenance program would include 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. Obviously, a low input lawn will not be as attractive as a higher-input lawn, but you can expect the cultivars listed above to look fairly good in the spring and fall, while going dormant in the summer. A listing of both high-maintenance and low-maintenance cultivars can be found at the KSRE publication: Highest Rated Kentucky Bluegrass Cultivars for Kansas.

Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars

Though several cool-season grasses are grown in Kansas, tall fescue is considered the best adapted and is recommended for home lawns. The cultivar K-31 is the old standby and has been used for years. However, there are myriad newer cultivars with improved color, density and a finer leaf texture. Most of these newer varieties are very close to one another in quality.

We recommend a regional blend of tall fescue cultivars that are commonly available in local garden centers and hardware stores. National blends such as those in big box stores often don't perform well in Kansas as they frequently contain cultivars that don't tolerate our stressful Kansas conditions. Pay attention to the percent "Crop Seed" and "Weed Seed." Anything over 0.01% of either of these is not recommended.

Though K-31 may still be a good choice for large, open areas where weeds and a lighter green color can be tolerated, the new cultivars will give better performance for those who desire a high-quality turf.

VEGETABLES

Harvesting Winter Squash

Spaghetti squash, butternut, acorn and hubbard are all examples of winter squash. Contrary to their summer squash relatives, such as zucchini, winter squash varieties should not be harvested until they have fully matured. Harvesting too soon will result in

produce that shrivels up and lacks flavor. Mature winter squash can be stored longer as well.

Mature winter squash will have a hard rind that cannot be easily sliced with your fingernail and the color will be deeper. To harvest, cut the squash away from the vine leaving about twoinches of stem attached to the fruit. Handle the squash with care to avoid damaging the rind. Any winter squash that has a damaged rind or is harvested without a stem attached will not store well and should be used soon after harvest.

Winter squash should be stored in a cool, dry area. For the best air flow and to prevent rot, store in a single layer and avoid allowing the fruit to touch.

FRUIT

Pears are typically ready for harvest from now through October. Pears left to ripen on the tree may develop a gritty texture. Harvesting at maturity but before peak ripeness along with a chilling period can bring out the sweet flavors.

When ready for harvest, pears change to a darker green color. Some varieties will have brown spots on the skin. These are the fruits' "breathing pores" known as lenticels. On immature pears the lenticels are white or greenish-white. Mature fruit will develop a waxy coating and separates easily from the branch when twisted. There should also be a pear aroma at maturity.

To harvest, carefully lift the fruit at an angle and twist to remove. Avoid damaging the twig where it attaches as this could negatively impact fruit development next year. Refrigerate newly harvested pears at 31 to 50 degrees F for two days to several weeks depending on the variety. Remove pears from the cold storage and allow to sit at 60 to 65 degrees F for one to three weeks to finish ripening. Fruit may rot instead of ripening if conditions are too warm.

TREES

Tubakia Leaf Spot on Pin Oak

Description: Tubakia can appear as brown leaf spots about the size of a pencil eraser. The spots can enlarge and run together, blighting sections of the leaf. Tubakia can also

be found in association with browning along the leaf margins. Tubakia can cause infections along the leaf veins resulting in death or browning of the veins. The necrosis of the veins is similar to oak anthracnose, but that disease is active in the spring and Tubakia is active late summer.

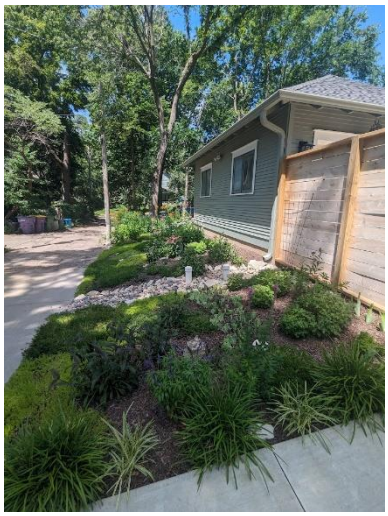
Life Cycle: Spores from Tubakia leaf spot overwinter on the twigs and leaves of diseased trees. In the spring the wind and rain cause spores to travel spreading the disease to new hosts.

Damage: In Kansas, Tubakia leaf spot is common in pin oaks. The disease tends to be active during July and August when the temperature and humidity are high. When conditions are favorable, Tubakia can cause extensive leaf spotting, leaf blight and shedding. The disease can look dramatic but is considered to be a cosmetic problem.

Control: The best control is prevention. Ensure trees are not under environmental stress by maintaining proper soil moisture. Clean up debris in the fall to remove spores that may try to overwinter. Chemical treatment is not recommended.

MISCELLANEOUS

Water Restrictions for Parts of the State



Areas of the state are experiencing drought conditions which has led to water restrictions for homeowners. Rules for water use vary by county when restrictions are imposed but often include a limit on the number of days and which days homeowners can water their landscape.

Whether you're in an area with water restrictions or not, efficient watering in the landscape is *always* relevant. Making these practices habit will benefit your plants and the environment.

- Check soil moisture before adding water rather than watering on a set schedule. Use a soil probe to test for moisture in the root zone and add water accordingly.
- Group plants with similar water requirements together to prevent overwatering species that are more drought tolerant.
- Control weeds to reduce competition for soil moisture.
- Trees benefit from deep watering. If drip irrigation is not an option a 5-gallon bucket with a small hole drilled in the side near the bottom can be used. Fill the bucket and let the water drip out slowly next to the tree. Each time the bucket drains you have applied 5 gallons of water. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted two to three years ago will require more water.

- Avoid planting a ring of flowers at the base of trees. This creates an imbalance by pairing plants that require regular, shallow watering with plants that need less frequent deeper watering. The result is shallow tree root growth and the potential for basal decay.

COMMUNITY GARDEN CORNER

Gardening FOR the Community

We often think of community gardens being a place where individuals grow fruits and vegetables for their family. While this is often the arrangement, community gardening can also be a group gardening together for the benefit of the community. The Sedgwick County Master Gardeners care for a very public landscape within their community. Combating challenges of theft, destruction and poison ivy, the gardeners have turned the grounds of the county courthouse into a space that benefits the community and pollinators.

Read more: Gardening FOR the Community

QUESTION of the WEEK

Why aren't my hydrangeas blooming?

I have a few questions about my two hydrangea plants. We've been in our home for five years and these hydrangeas where here when we moved in. One of them buds each year, but only with a few blooms. The other one hasn't had buds since the first or second year of us being here. It looks healthy but there's no blooms on it. Is there anything we can do so that it blooms correctly each year?

Here are some common reasons why hydrangeas fail to bloom:

Bigleaf hydrangeas prefer light shade/filtered sun. Too much shade can hinder blooming. Too much sun can cause stress for the plant.

Pruning at the wrong time can remove buds for the next year and prevent blooming. This varies by species/cultivar so you need to know what type of hydrangea you are growing. Some cultivars develop buds on past season's growth while others develop on new growth.

Well-drained soil is essential. Compacted soil can prevent the plants from receiving moisture even if you are providing enough water. Over and underwatering will impact flower development and plant health overall.

Too much nitrogen fertilizer will support leaf development but not flowers. Fertilizers with more phosphorus will support flower growth.

*** Winter temperature is commonly a problem with hydrangea blooms. If there is a cold snap and no snow insulating the plants along with inconsistent weather (unseasonably warm, followed by a freeze) the buds that developed in the fall can be damaged and this will impact the spring bloom. A late spring frost can also cause problems. If you think this is likely the problem, you can try wrapping the plants as we head into winter to provide some protection.

Your local extension agent can help diagnose further based on the historical weather data from your region.

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For questions or further information, contact your local extension agency.
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