Horticulture 2024 Newsletter
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Video of the Week: How to Grow Big, Bushy Mums

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Are you a gardener? Do you know a gardener?
If so, email cdom@ksu.edu to be featured in an upcoming newsletter as part of our Garden Spotlight feature.

2024 Kansas Turf and Ornamentals Field Day
August 1, 2024, at Rocky Ford Turfgrass Research Center in Manhattan, KS.
https://www.k-state.edu/turf/events/2024TurfFieldDayProgram.pdf

GARDEN To-Do

- Mulch vegetable gardens
- Pinch mums when they reach 6” tall to encourage bushier growth. (See video of the week.)
- Scout for bagworms

VEGETABLES

Onions Developing
Nitrogen fertilizer will support healthy plant development above ground which directly relates to onion bulb growth.

Here are some guidelines for fertilizer rates:

- Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at a rate of ½ cup per 10 feet
- 29-5-5 or 27-3-3 can be used at a rate of 1/3 cup per 10 feet

Apply the fertilizer two to three inches away from the plants and water it in. Stop fertilizing when bulbs begin to emerge through the soil. Do not mound soil over the bulbs.

Weed regularly to reduce competition for water, nutrients and space. The amount of water and space the bulbs have available will affect the size of the bulbs. Provide regular water during droughts.

FRUIT

Thinning Fruit


Apple; Full Fruit Cluster

Thinning fruit from trees will result in a good crop in subsequent years. Allowing trees to produce a heavy crop, especially on a young tree, can cause damage to the branches due to the weight, and can reduce the size of the fruit this year.

The guidelines that follow can help you determine which fruit to remove and which to leave intact. These are just averages. Fruit can be left closer on the branches, but this spacing will promote a healthier yield.

- Apples and Pears: 6-8 inches between fruit. Apple trees tend to produce fruit in clusters of five. Remove all but one fruit from each cluster. Leave the largest, healthiest fruit.
- Peaches: 6-8 inches between fruit. Peach trees tend to cluster together. On average the fruit should be spaced about seven inches apart.
- Plums and Prunes: Space fruit four to five inches apart.
- Apricots: Space fruit two to four inches apart.

Fruit can be removed by snipping with clippers or snapping the fruit stem with your fingers. Be careful not to damage the branch.

Tip Blackberries, Black Raspberries and Purple Raspberries
Raspberries and blackberries have similar growing and fruiting habits. The perennial root system grows for several years. The canes are biennial (live for two years).

The first-year canes are called primocanes and do not produce fruit. The second year, the primocanes become floricanes which fruit and then die. Primocanes are produced each year so plants have both types of canes present simultaneously.

Primocanes should be tipped by removing the top two to three inches to promote branching and fruiting.

The species and fruiting habits of the plant determines how the plant should be tipped. Plants that fruit on primocanes are referred to as “everbearing”. Plants that produce fruit only the second year are called “traditional”.

Here are guidelines for tipping blackberries and raspberries:

- Traditional blackberries: tip at 4 feet
- Everbearing blackberries: tip at 25-30 inches; tip laterals at 25-30 inches as well
- Black Raspberries: tip at 3 feet
- Purple Raspberries: tip at 36-40 inches
- Red Raspberries: do not tip

TURF

Aerate Warm-Season Grasses

Roots make up 90 percent of grass plants and need oxygen for survival. Compacted soil restricts the roots’ access to oxygen and inhibits growth. Aeration loosens the soil, allows air to enter and provides better infiltration of water and nutrients. All of this promotes healthier root growth and consequently, healthier grass.

Core aeration is done with a machine that uses hollow tines to remove plugs of soil leaving holes that are two-three inches deep. Multiple passes may need to be done in order to get the holes three inches apart.

Bermudagrass, buffalograss and zoysiagrass tend to require aeration more frequently than bluegrass and fescue. Clay soils and lawns with heavy traffic may require aerating twice a year. Warm-season grasses should be aerated from late May through July. It is recommended to have a professional aerate your lawn because the procedure requires heavy duty equipment to penetrate the soil.

Little Barley in Lawns

Little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) is often confused with foxtails because of the seedheads that form on the bunch grass from spring through summer. However, little barley is a winter annual and foxtails are a summer annual. The seedheads don’t develop on foxtails until mid to late summer.

Little barley is commonly found in disturbed areas such as roadsides, overgrazed pastures and thin lawns. Maintaining a dense, healthy lawn is the best defense. Overseed sparse lawns in late August to early September or use a preemergent. Mow the lawn on a higher setting to prevent sunlight from reaching the soil.

Dimension (dithiopyr) can be used for little barley. Apply it in mid-September and water in to activate. Southern Kansans may need to apply this preemergent a couple weeks earlier.

FLOWERS

Iris Care

As iris blooms decline, cut the flower stalk using sharp, clean pruners. Leaves should be left intact to continue generating energy to support healthy rhizomes. In mid-July to early August, overgrown/crowded irises can be dug up and divided. If they are divided now, they may not bloom as well, or at all, next year. Between now and July, as leaves die back and if they develop brown spots, they can be cut back and thrown away.

Remove Spring-Flowering Bulb Leaves

By now, most of the leaves from spring-flowering bulbs have turned yellow/brown and started to die back. At this stage they can be removed by cutting them down to the ground level. Leaving them intact until they die back naturally allows the roots to take in more energy which directly impacts next year's growth. Flowering can be reduced if leaves are removed too early. If bulbs need to be transplanted, this can be done at the same time as leaf removal.

MISCELLANEOUS

Side-dressing Chart

Side-dressing is a method of applying fertilizer to plants that are already growing. This is a useful strategy for applying nitrogen which is often leached due to heavy spring rain storms. To side-dress a crop, sprinkle the fertilizer along the sides of the rows and water it into the soil. The plant variety helps determine how much fertilizer to apply and the proper timing.

Gregg Eyestone, our Riley County Horticulture Extension Agent, created a helpful chart to support gardeners with fertilizing plants already in the ground.

KSRE publication: Side-Dressing Nitrogen Fertilizer

SCHOOL GARDENING

Lasagna Garden

Summer is a great time to learn new gardening techniques and plan for the upcoming school year. Lasagna gardening may sound delicious, but it's actually a composting method. It is compatible with school gardens because of the access to veggie scraps from the cafeteria and dried leaves around the school grounds. Find out more about lasagna gardening now so you're ready to get started in the fall.

KSRE publication: Lasagna Garden.

QUESTION of the WEEK

Bagworms

Should I be spraying for bagworms now?

Young bagworms have begun hatching in Kansas. Recently hatched larvae are 1/25 of an inch long and spin silken bags around them. The larvae drag these bags along with them as they feed on the host plant. The larvae continue adding to the bag using leaf pieces while they're feeding. When the larvae reach maturity, usually August, the bags can be one to two inches long. At this time the larvae attach the bag to the underside of the branch and seal themselves inside to pupate. Adult males are clear-winged moths and emerge from the bag in September. Adult females are wingless and do not leave the bag. After mating, females lay eggs inside the bag and then die. Eggs overwinter in the bag and hatch the following spring beginning the cycle again.

Knowing the life cycle of the bagworm can help you understand how to time treatments. This time of year, manually removing bags can be effective for small populations. Bags need to be placed in a bucket of soapy water. Larvae can chew through trash bags and will find a new host if not disposed of properly.

Insecticides containing the active ingredients *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki* or spinosad are effective if used when larvae are small. These are stomach poisons so the larvae must consume the residue on plant foliage. Thorough coverage of plant foliage is necessary for control.

If an insecticide is applied now, you will miss many of the larvae that are still hatching. Typically, we recommend waiting to apply insecticide until mid-June when the majority of the larvae are actively feeding. If you choose to apply treatment now, you will need to repeat applications on a weekly basis until mid to late June to ensure all the larvae have hatched. As larvae reach maturity, they eat less which reduces their exposure to insecticides. By August, when they seal inside the bags, insecticide is completely ineffective.

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