Horticulture 2025 Newsletter
No. 06 April 15, 2025

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VIDEO OF THE WEEK:

Vertical Gardening

(April 2023 K-State Garden Hour)

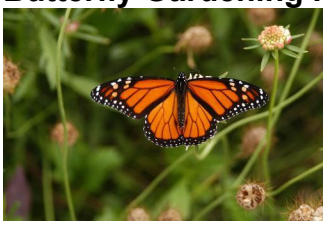
Learn which fruits, vegetables, and flowers will grow best in a vertical garden and how to get started.

April GARDEN CALENDAR

Find out what to plant in the garden this spring.

FLOWERS

Butterfly Gardening Resources



Butterflies are crucial for pollination and are a delight to host in the garden. Organizations have been established to support gardeners who recognize the value of butterflies. Using these guidelines and plant recommendations you can create a suitable habitat to help protect our ecosystem.

The North American Butterfly Association has resources for gardeners wanting to certify their landscape as a butterfly habitat. Here are the basic requirements essential for butterfly garden certification:

- At least three different caterpillar food plants
- At least three different native butterfly nectar sources
- No use of insecticides/pesticides (organic and synthetic)

You can see these requirements and apply online here: Butterfly Garden Certification Program

The Monarch Watch organization has a process to register your garden as a Monarch Waystation. There are over 46,000 waystations in the world providing habitats to support the population of monarch butterflies. Some basic necessary features of a waystation include:

- At least six hours of sunlight each day
- Milkweed plants- at least ten (preferably with two or more species (Visit Monarch Watch to see a list of native milkweed species by region.)
- Nectar plants – annuals, biennials, perennials

Regardless of the type of butterflies you are catering to, proper management of the habitat is necessary. This includes using mulch, thinning plants, fertilizing, amending the soil, watering and removing invasive plant species. Proper care minimizes the occurrence of diseases and pests which is particularly important since insecticides cannot be used.

VEGETABLES

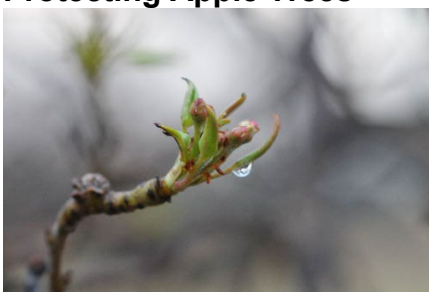
Fertilizing Cole Crops

Environmental stress such as temperature fluctuations can cause cole crops including cauliflower and broccoli to bolt. “Bolting” refers to premature flowering and it negatively affects the taste. Ensure cool season vegetables are receiving consistent moisture, especially with the heat and wind we’ve experienced lately. One-inch of water per week is typically enough for these crops. You can test the moisture of the soil by inserting your finger to a depth of one inch.

Continue fertilizing every two to three weeks until harvest. Fertilizer can be applied on the soil surface next to the rows of plants. This technique is called “side dressing”. Use a high nitrogen source of fertilizer such as blood meal. Lawn fertilizers could be used but cut the rate in half. Do NOT use lawn fertilizers that include weed killers or preventers.

FRUIT

Protecting Apple Trees



Fungicide sprays in April and May are necessary to prevent diseases common to most susceptible varieties of apple trees. When leaves appear, it's time for the first application.

Myclobutanil (Immunox, Fungi-Max and F-Stop Lawn and Garden Fungicide) is effective for controlling apple scab and cedar apple rust which are problematic in April and May. Applications should be made on a 7-10-day schedule.

For summer disease control look at Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard. This insecticide/fungicide can be applied after the petals drop and is effective against sooty blotch and fly speck.

For organic treatments, Cyd-X is labeled for apple trees to control against codling moth. Apple bagging is a method of protecting fruit by covering it with a brown paper bag and restricting access for pests and diseases. This can be done in combination with early season fungicide applications to provide season-long protection. Here is a reference video to learn how to bag apples. University of Kentucky Extension – Apple Bagging

***Always follow the label recommendations and do not use insecticides during bloom period.

The best prevention for diseases and pests is proper cultural care. Thinning fruit to give at least 4-6 inches between each apple allows better spray coverage and exposes codling moth larvae. Fruit that are infected should be destroyed. During droughts, provide supplemental water to fruit trees throughout the root zone. Stake young trees and secure with a wide strap that will not cut into the tree trunk. Maintain a 3-foot diameter weed-free barrier around trees to reduce pest problems and protect against damage from mowing. This will also reduce competition for nutrients and water. If mulch is added, keep it a few inches away from the trunk.

You can read more by accessing our KSRE publication: Spray Guide for Growing Apples at Home

Peaches, Nectarines and Apricots

Late frost can prevent fruit from setting on these trees especially if they are in full bloom. Trees that will not develop fruit as a result of late frost do not need to be on a spray schedule. Trees that will bear fruit can be treated with a product that contains captan or myclobutanil (Immunox, Fungi-Max, Fertilome F-Stop Lawn and Garden Spray) from now until about two weeks before harvest with applications every ten days.

Visit the KSRE website Common Plant Problems to see treatment options for specific problems pertinent to fruit.

Fertilizing Strawberries and Brambles

June-bearing strawberries should not be fertilized until renovation (after harvest) and again in late August or early September.

Everbearing and day-neutral strawberries bear fruit in spring and again in the fall. They benefit from an application of nitrogen-rich fertilizer this time of year. Unless a soil test suggests otherwise, add a layer of compost or organic fertilizer such as blood meal next to the plant rows. A high nitrogen fertilizer such as 27-3-4 at a rate of 1 ½ tsp per hill can be used but if using a lawn fertilizer, ensure it does not contain weed killers or preventers. Irrigate immediately after adding the fertilizer.

Brambles can be fertilized now as well using the same method as above. For synthetic fertilizers apply ½ cup for every 10 row feet.

TURF

Wild Violets in the Lawn

Wild violets are popping up in lawns this time of year. The petite purple blooms serve as a food source to bees and other pollinators. However, broadleaf weeds found in the lawn compete with turfgrass for nutrients and water. Each homeowner should evaluate their lawn goals when deciding how to maintain it and whether or not treatment is necessary.

For some homeowners, a uniform lawn is important. If you identify with this desire then you will need to follow proper maintenance guidelines to keep your lawn dense so it can compete with weeds and pests. You may also need to consider using a postemergence herbicide for wild violets. Triclopyr is effective in cool-season turfgrass and can be found in Turflon Ester, Triclopyr Ester and Weed-B-Gon Chickweed, Clover & Oxalis. These products can be used for tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. Triclopyr products will cause severe injury to bermudagrass. Weed-B-Gon Chickweed, Clover & Oxalis is labeled for buffalograss and zoysia. Follow all label instructions and never spray on windy days or when the temperature is over 90 degrees.

Homeowners who enjoy variations of color and leaf shape in the lawn may choose to tolerate some broadleaf weeds. They can be managed with proper lawn maintenance and hand-pulling/digging to prevent overtaking the landscape while allowing early season pollinators to benefit from the food source they provide.

PESTS

Clover Mites

Clover mites are about the size of a pinhead and can make their way into homes through the tiniest openings. The reddish color and long front legs make clover mites easy to identify.

Clover mites feed on over 200 plant varieties including clover, grasses, ivy and honeysuckle. They do not bite humans but can leave stains on curtains, walls and carpets if crushed. Removing clover mites from the home can easily be done with a vacuum, though they will continue to live inside the vacuum so dispose of them as needed.

Mites do not readily cross loose, clean, cultivated soil so maintaining a plant-free perimeter around the home can prevent them from entering. Limit the growth of host plants near the home and instead plant species that are not attractive to mites such as marigolds, petunias, geraniums and yews. Insecticidal soaps can kill clover mites on contact, but if the problem persists it may be necessary to contact a pest management professional.

Read more and see photos from KSRE Entomology. Clover Mite

Asparagus Beetles

Description: Adult beetles are ¼-inch long with cream markings over the metallic blue-black and red body.

Life Cycle: Adult beetles emerge from the soil in early spring and travel to new shoots where they feed and mate. Females secure up to 30 eggs, on end, to the tips of asparagus spears. Eggs are dark-brown and positioned in rows. Larvae hatch in about one week and are 1/3-inch long. The larvae resemble slugs and are green-gray with black heads and legs. After feeding for a couple of weeks, larvae burrow into the soil and pupate. Within two weeks, adult beetles emerge and begin feeding. Beetles overwinter in plant debris. There are two generations of asparagus beetles each year.

Damage: Asparagus beetles feed on spears of asparagus as well as ferns. The black stain left behind the feeding larvae does not make asparagus inedible, but unsightly. Leaves and tender buds near the growing tip are often damaged through feeding.

Control: Always begin with prevention in mind. Clean up plant debris at the end of the growing season to remove the overwintering habitat. During the active season, monitor plants regularly, primarily in the afternoon. Remove beetles/larvae/eggs by hand and place in a bucket of soapy water.

Horticultural oil and insecticidal soaps can be used for those who prefer organic methods of control.

Carbaryl (Sevin) and permethrin are two synthetic control options, but note the wait time for harvest after application.

Termites vs Ants

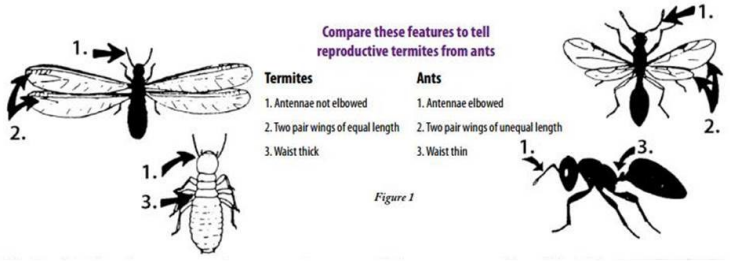
The appearance of termites and ants is often confused. Both insects may have wings, are able to swarm and are of a similar size. Here are some distinguishing characteristics to help identify each. If you suspect the presence of termites, get professional guidance.

Ants:

- Thin waist
- Elbowed antennae
- Two pairs of wings of unequal length

Termites:

- Thick waist
- Curved antennae
- Two pairs of equal-length wings

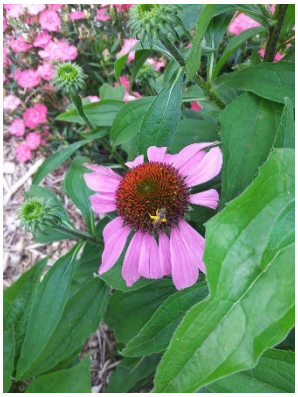


Read more by visiting KSRE Entomology: Termites vs. Ants

MISCELLANEOUS

Plant Recommendations

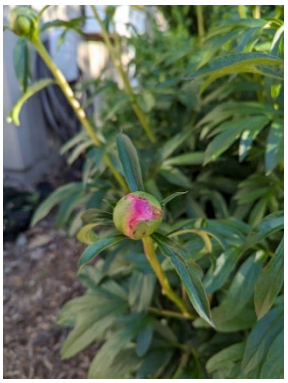
The best way to grow a healthy landscape is to start with the right plant in the right place. But, how do you know what plant is right for each place? Whether you're looking for natives, fruit trees or turfgrass, the K-State Horticulture Resource Center has lists of recommendations to support you. Visit our website: Hort Resource Center Recommended Plants to explore the right plants for your landscape.



QUESTION of the WEEK

"There are ants on my peony buds. Is this good/bad?"

Peonies produce nectar on the outside of buds which attracts ants looking food. It is a myth that ants are necessary to get the buds to open.



Ants are not problematic for the blooms and insecticide is NOT warranted. As blooms reach their peak, ants typically move to their next food source.

Gardeners who harvest peonies for indoors, should cut before the bloom is fully opened. Buds will continue to open once placed in a vase of water. If ants are present when harvesting, hold the stem, upside-down, close to the bloom and gently shake to dislodge ants. The blooms can also be lightly washed to remove ants.

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For questions or further information, contact your local extension agency.
This newsletter is also available on the World Wide Web at:
http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html

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