



Horticulture Newsletter

May 19, 2026

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Horticulture and
Natural Resources

Video of the Week:



When fertilizing plants, it is important to select the right fertilizers. One of the biggest differences in most fertilizers is how quickly or slowly the nitrogen sources in the fertilizers are released to plants. [This week's video provides information on both slow and quick release fertilizers](https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/fertilizing-lawns-slow-and-quick-release-fertilizers), and when is the ideal time to use each product: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/fertilizing-lawns-slow-and-quick-release-fertilizers>

Garden Calendar:

- Harvest fresh asparagus until the spear size decreases. Stop harvesting when the majority of spears emerge the size of an ink pen in diameter.
- Plant kitchen herbs for summer use in dishes or food preservation.
- Thin heavy fruit set on apple and peach trees to increase fruit size. This also helps increase next year's crop.
- Plant annual flowers for summer color.
- Sod or sprig zoysia, bermuda, or buffalograss lawns to fill in bare areas.
- Mulch around young trees and shrubs to conserve moisture and control weed growth.
- Rotate indoor houseplants to develop a well-rounded plant.
- Four to six inch cuttings are a great way to start new houseplants. Root cuttings in a moist potting mix under low light conditions.

Vegetables:

Protecting New Vegetable Transplants From The Wind:

As vegetable seedlings emerge and new transplants are planted into the garden, plants may need additional protection from strong winds. In Kansas, annual wind speeds average between 11 to 14 miles per hour around the state, with stronger, gusting winds regularly occurring. Even plants hardened off before transplanting can



be broken, twisted, or snapped off by strong winds.

During the growing season, winds prevail mostly from the South. Consider placing wind breaks on the South side of plants for the most wind protection. Local wind conditions may vary however, as winds are funneled between or swirl around buildings and other objects in the landscape. Adjust the placement of wind protection as necessary.

Fences and hedgerows can serve as effective long-term windbreaks, protecting crops from prevailing winds. Temporary windbreaks can also be created using wooden shingles, or large plastic bottles, such as a milk jug or 2-liter soda bottle with both the bottom and top cut off. Push the jug or bottle into the soil far enough so it will not blow away. Use wooden dowels or metal rods to secure objects in windy conditions.

In addition to protecting plants from physical damage, windbreaks can have many other positive benefits on fruit and vegetable plants, including through improved water management, increased yield and quality, and earlier crop maturity. In fact, University of Nebraska research found that melon yields were 70% greater in sheltered fields than fields with no wind protection. They also found bell pepper plants with wind protection produced nearly five times as many flowers per plant in just 30 days after transplanting.

Visit the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s [publication, Windbreaks for Fruit and Vegetable Crops](https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/ec1779/2006/pdf/view/ec1779-2006.pdf), to learn more about the benefits of wind protection in the garden:

<https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/ec1779/2006/pdf/view/ec1779-2006.pdf>

Fruit:

Remove Blossoms On Newly Planted Strawberries:

June-bearing strawberry plants that were planted this spring should have their flower blossoms pinched off. New plants have a limited amount of energy. If blossoms remain on the plants, energy that should go to runner development is used to mature fruit instead.

Runners are long, leafless horizontal stems (also called stolons) produced by the strawberry plants that grow above the ground. Runners are an important way strawberries self-propagate and increase the amount of fruit-bearing area the following year. For strawberry plant establishment, and a good crop next year, early season runner development is critical. Early runners will produce far more strawberries than runners that form later in the season.

If newly established June-bearing strawberry plants are allowed to produce fruit, they will eventually produce runners, but those runners will not be strong enough to produce a good crop of fruit the following year.



Everbearing and day neutral strawberry plants should also have fruits removed for the first 4 to 6 weeks after

planting (until about July), in order to develop a strong root system. Also remove all runners during the first growing season for everbearing strawberries planted in a hill system. This forces multiple crowns which will increase fruit production.

Whether June-bearing or everbearing, all strawberry plants tend to be shallow-rooted plants and require frequent watering after transplanting. Water at least once a week during the spring, early summer, and early fall, and twice per week in July and August. Survival, root development, and fruit bud formation of strawberry plants and runners depend on adequate soil moisture.

Visit our [Strawberries publication](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/strawberries_MF598.pdf) for more growing tips:
https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/strawberries_MF598.pdf



Flowers:

Rose Slug Damage On Rose Bushes:



Now is the time of year to be looking for damage on the leaves of rose bushes caused by the rose slug. Rose bush leaves appear skeletonized, with a windowpane appearance, with severe infestations leaving plants with holes in the leaf.

Three species of rose slug can be commonly found in Kansas, the Rose Slug (*Endelomyia aethiops*), the Bristly Rose Slug (*Cladius difformis*), and the Curled Rose Slug (*Allantus cinctus*), all causing similar damage. While all three insects have the word “slug” in their name, none of them are true slugs. All rose slugs are the larvae of a tiny wasp called a sawfly.

In early spring adult sawflies emerge and lay their eggs in the rose leaf, along the margin. Larvae emerge and begin feeding on the underside of the leaf. All three rose sawfly larvae are yellow-green in color and grow up to ½ to ¾ inch in length. At maturity, larvae fall to the soil and pupate underground.

The bristly rose slug (*Cladius difformis*) can produce up to six generations per year and is identifiable by the bristle-like hairs covering the body. Rose Slugs (*Endelomyia aethiops* – which lack hairs) produce one generation per year, while Curled Rose Slugs (*Allantus cinctus* – which curls up its body when resting) produce one to two generations per year.

As rose slugs feed, the sawfly larvae have various stages of damage. Young larvae feed by only removing the green layer of leaf tissue, leaving behind veins and a clear leaf surface. This provides a scorched appearance to the plant from a distance. As the larvae mature, they feed more aggressively and make holes in





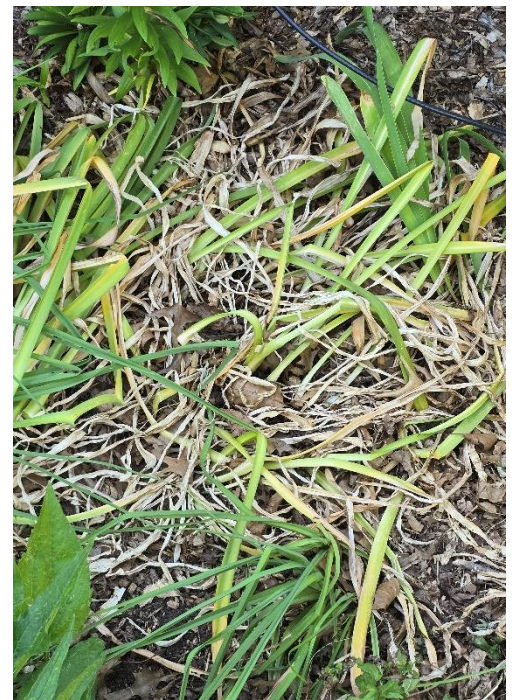
the leaf. In some cases, larvae may consume all of the leaf except major veins.

In general, light to moderate infestations are cosmetic in nature and rarely harm rose plants. Heavier defoliation, however, may weaken plants. Control by scouting the undersides of rose leaves frequently this time of year. Hand pick or squish larvae. A strong spray of water to the undersides of rose leaves will dislodge the larvae and make it difficult for them to return to the plant. Products such as insecticidal soap, horticultural oils, spinosad or permethrin could also be used for effective control, but are generally not required. It is important to note that since rose sawfly larvae are not caterpillars, *Bacillus thuringiensis* will have no control of rose slug.

Removing Leaves From Daffodil & Other Spring Flowering Bulbs:

Daffodils, tulips, crocus and many spring flowering bulbs still have leaves present in the landscape, long after the flowers have faded. While these leaves tend to become floppy, unsightly, and somewhat unruly, it is critical that the foliage should not be removed until the leaves have turned entirely brown and died.

The amount of time it takes for the leaves of spring flowering bulbs to die back depends on many factors, including the bulb type, weather, and exposure to sunlight. Most spring flowering bulb leaves persist at least 4 to 6 weeks after flowering, with many bulbs keeping green leaves until mid-May to late June in Kansas. Keeping the foliage of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs during this time is essential. These remaining green leaves are actively photosynthesizing, creating energy within the plant to produce next spring's flowers. Removing these leaves too early will reduce the bulb's size and overall vigor, resulting in fewer flowers the following spring.



While it is tempting to cut off or prune back these leaves, it is important to allow leaves to photosynthesize as long as possible before the summer heat dries them out. During this time do not braid, bundle, or tie together foliage from daffodil or other spring flowering bulbs. This minimizes the surface area of the leaf exposed to sunlight, reducing the ability of the plant to photosynthesize and produce flowers for next year.

Only after the leaves of our spring flowering bulbs have turned entirely brown on their own is it safe to remove foliage by raking it from the soil surface or cutting them off at ground level and composting the debris.

Turf:

Little Barley: Recommendations & New Research:



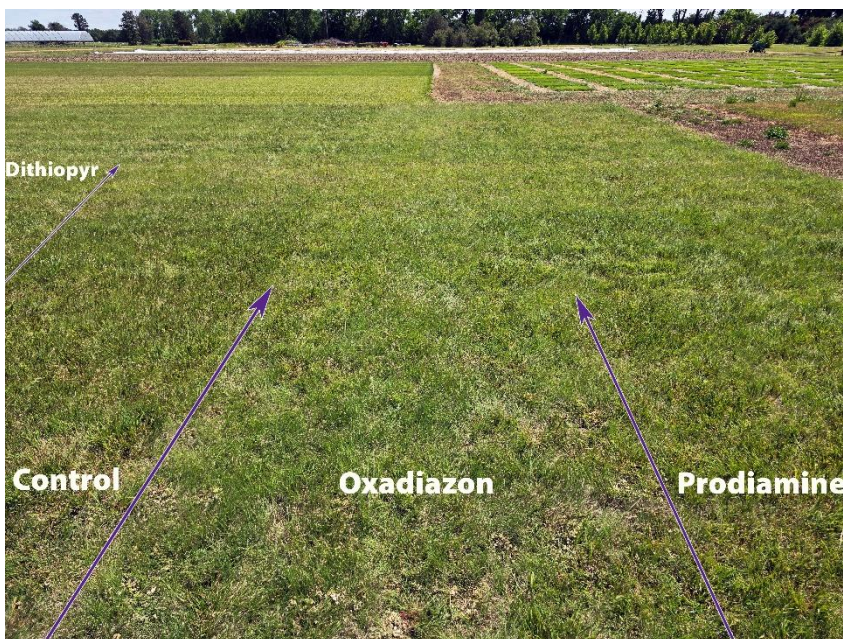
Little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) is a difficult to control grassy weed that commonly infests warm season lawns in Kansas. Not only can it decrease lawn quality, but little barley is also a concern for pet owners in early summer as the seedheads can become lodged between a dog's paw pads, causing discomfort or injury.

Little barley is a winter annual, bunch-type grass spread by seed. Little barley is thought to germinate September to October and spends the winter as a small plant. In the spring, it thrives in cooler temperatures, growing rapidly in size and forming seedheads. Plants often go unnoticed until May and June when they form seedheads, turn brown, and become more visible in lawns. With the onset of summer heat, little barley matures, drops its seed, and disappears.

Traditional recommendations for little barley control start with growing a thick and healthy lawn. Little barley has a shallow root system, and can be easily hand pulled, especially when soil is moist. Additional control can be provided by making a pre-emergent herbicide application in early fall (late August through early September), however, there are very few products labeled for pre-emergent control of little barley. Dimension (active ingredient: dithiopyr) is one of a few pre-emergents labeled for little barley control. Be sure to water in products after application to activate pre-emergent products.



To determine if other pre-emergent herbicides might provide adequate control of little barley, new research was conducted this past winter at the John C. Pair Horticultural Center. Four common pre-emergent herbicides known for their control of annual grassy weeds were applied in August of 2025 to test for little



barley control. Learn more about the surprising findings of this research trial over on the [KSU Turfgrass Blog: https://blogs.k-state.edu/turf/research-update-pre-emergent-control-of-little-barley-hordeum-pusillum/](https://blogs.k-state.edu/turf/research-update-pre-emergent-control-of-little-barley-hordeum-pusillum/)

While the results of the trial were surprising, it highlights the continued need for horticulture research in Kansas. If little barley is a weed you struggle with remember: thicken turfgrass coverage, apply pre-emergents before little barley germinates in the fall, water in pre-emergents after application to activate, and stay tuned for future research findings.

Trees & Shrubs:

Monitor Now For Euonymus Scale Crawlers:

Late Spring is a key period to watch for euonymus scale, a serious insect pest of euonymus shrubs (*Euonymus japonicus*), as well as occasionally Japanese pachysandra, holly, and privet. Left unmanaged, this tiny scale insect can cause significant aesthetic damage, branch dieback, and even plant death.

Euonymus scales are easy to overlook but distinctive once you know what to look for. Adult females are dark brown, flattened, and shaped like tiny oyster shells, about 1/16 inch long. Adult males are white, have an elongated shape, and are much smaller (1/32 inch long). Large numbers of both males and females can be found congregated on the upper and lower sides of leaves, stems, and branches. Males eventually become winged, mate, and die, while fertilized females remain attached to the plant and lay eggs underneath their body covering. As spring begins yellow nymphs (crawlers) emerge from the eggs and crawl along the plant looking for a place to feed. It takes approximately 60 days to complete the lifecycle.



Damage on the plant first appears as white or yellow spotting on leaves. Heavy infestations may result in leaves and branches coated with scales, followed by defoliation and branch dieback. In Kansas, euonymus scale can produce up to five generations per year, allowing populations to build rapidly.



As euonymus scale develop, they produce a thick waxy covering, which protects the scale and makes control difficult. This makes early detection and proper timing essential. The most vulnerable lifecycle stage is the crawler (nymph) stage. Starting in mid- to late spring, eggs hatch over a two- to three-week period, producing yellow-orange crawlers that move across leaves and stems for several days before settling to feed. Emergence typically occurs around the bloom of northern catalpa tree or the end of flowering on green hawthorn (between 500–700 growing degree days [GDD50]), creating a useful visual cue for timing monitoring and treatments.

Now is a good time to monitor for crawler activity. To help, apply double-sided sticky tape around the branches of euonymus shrubs with scale problems. As nymphs move across the plant looking for a place to feed, they will be captured when crossing the tape. Check the tape for nymphs at least once a week and apply an insecticide when nymphs are present. Use insecticides that contain active ingredients such as acephate, permethrin or cyhalothrin. Three to four treatments at 7- to 10-day intervals may be required for heavy infestations.

Crawler activity will continue through the summer months, so reapply when later generations of crawlers are present. Thorough coverage of leaves, stems, and branches is essential. Prevent plant damage from insecticide sprays by watering plants thoroughly 24 hours before spraying.

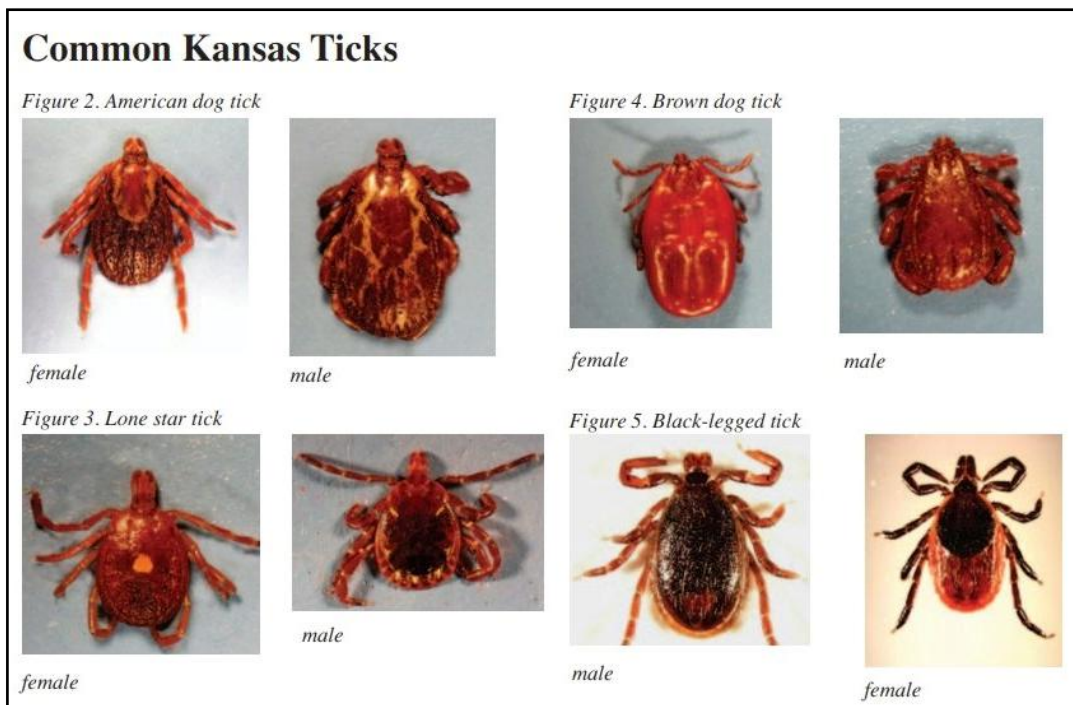
Always read and follow label directions, and keep in mind that soil-applied systemic insecticides are ineffective

against this pest. Careful monitoring and well-timed action now can prevent severe euonymus scale problems later in the growing season. Heavy pruning and dormant oil applications can provide further control in late winter months. [Visit our Euonymus Scale publication for more information:](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/euonymus-scale-insect-pest-of-euonymus-plants-grown-in-landscapes_MF3586.pdf)
https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/euonymus-scale-insect-pest-of-euonymus-plants-grown-in-landscapes_MF3586.pdf

Miscellaneous:

Watch For Ticks When Outdoors This Spring:

The return of warmer days draws us back outside to our yards, gardens, trails, and pastures, but it also increases our likelihood of encountering ticks. While ticks are active for much of the year in Kansas, the early summer months are when many people begin to encounter more ticks as a result of spending more time outdoors. A simple walk through tall grass or gardening in tall weeds all have the potential to encounter ticks while outdoors. Given the possible long-term health concerns associated with tick bites, vigilance must be an essential part of safe springtime routines outdoors.



In Kansas there are four common tick species, the American dog tick, brown dog tick, lone star tick, and the black legged tick (aka deer tick). The activity and lifecycle of each tick varies by species and time of year, however all four ticks feed on blood as larva, nymphs, and adults. These ticks can be found nearly any time of year outdoors, but they all become most active April

through November as they look for animals or humans to provide a blood source for food. Temperatures, moisture, and the amount of tall grasses and weeds for habitat all further influence tick activity.

When spending time outdoors, it is important to know where ticks will be most commonly found. Ticks are wingless and slow crawling insects, that most commonly use an ambush technique to find potential food sources. Ticks perch themselves on the ends of tall grass blades, the leaves of tall weeds, or on the foliage of low bushes and wait patiently until an animal comes along and brushes up against that plant. At that time, ticks transfer from the plant to the host, where they crawl around looking for a suitable site to feed. Ticks can also crawl several feet in response to stimuli such as carbon dioxide and host odors, but ticks do not jump or drop from trees.

To protect yourself from ticks while outside this summer, take the following steps:

- Avoid areas of tall grass, high weeds, or brushy plants, as these will be the primary habitats ticks will be found in. Regularly mowing areas can reduce tick habitat and expose ticks to sunlight, which can result in tick desiccation and death.
- Use insect repellents when outdoors, as they are highly effective in keeping ticks away. Use insect repellents that contain DEET or picaridin as the active ingredient. Permethrin-based insect repellents can also be used on clothing but should not be applied directly to the skin.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks are easily spotted and removed before they reach the skin and feed.
- Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants to reduce exposed skin. Tuck pant legs into socks for additional protection.
- When returning from areas that are potentially infested with ticks, inspect your skin and clothing thoroughly. Shower and change clothes. Wash clothing and dry on a high heat cycle.
- Remove any ticks you find immediately. Preserve ticks in a jar of rubbing alcohol or frozen in a plastic bag in the freezer for at least two weeks. This will allow the opportunity to have the tick identified if medical reactions occur.
- Frequently inspect pets when they return inside from the outdoors as well. Cats, dogs, and other pets can be frequent hosts for ticks as well, and a common way ticks are introduced into homes.

Winter ticks, spinose ear ticks, and other soft ticks are also present in Kansas. These ticks can be avoided using the same recommendations above. Visit our [Ticks In Kansas publication](#) for more information about ticks, their lifecycles, and how you can stay safe: https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/ticks-in-kansas_MF2653.pdf

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