Controlling Weeds in Strawberries

Strawberries are one of the most popular fruits, but gardeners often have problems with weed control. Strawberries form a mat of plants, so hoeing is difficult, and gardeners must pull weeds by hand or use herbicides. Unfortunately, homeowners do not have any weed preventers available for use on strawberries. However, we do have an herbicide that is a grass killer. Poast (sethoxydim) can only be used after the weedy grasses have emerged. Poast can be sprayed directly over the strawberries without harm. Do not use within 7 days of harvest. You can find Poast in Hi-Yield Grass Killer and Monterey Grass Getter. (WU)

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.oznet.ksu.edu/library/hort2/c592.pdf (WU)
**Remove Blossoms on Newly Planted Strawberries**

Spring-bearing strawberry plants that were set out this spring should have blossoms pinched off. New plants have a limited amount of energy. If blossoms remain on the plants, the energy that should go to runner development is used to mature fruit instead. For a good strawberry plant population and a good strawberry crop next year, early runner development is necessary. Early developing runners will produce the most strawberries next spring. Newly planted everbearing plants also should have the fruits removed for the first 4 to 6 weeks after planting so they develop a strong root system. (WU)

**PESTS**

**Ash/Lilac Borer**

If you have had problems with canes or stems of lilac and privet suddenly wilting, or ash trees that show borer holes in the trunk and larger branches, the ash/lilac borer may be to blame. This insect causes the base of infested lilac stems to swell and the bark to separate from the wood. A fine sawdust-like material is present around holes in the canes. Ash and mountain ash also are affected. The borer attacks the trunk, which may cause bark to swell and crack if there are repeated infestations.

Ash/lilac borers overwinter as larvae in infested trees and shrubs. Moths generally begin to emerge in mid to late April. Emergence peaks in May, dwindles by mid to late June and ends by the first week of July. The moth has clear wings and resembles a wasp. There is one generation per year.

Public and commercially managed properties often use pheromone traps to determine the presence of adults. Spray treatments are started seven to 10 days after capture of the first moths. Sprays also can be timed using phenology, the practice of timing one event by another.

The first spray for ash/lilac borer should be applied when the Vanhoutte spirea is in full to late bloom, probably by about May 1 this year (if it blooms). Apply a second spray four weeks after the first. Thoroughly treat the trunk and larger limbs of ash or the lower portion of the stems of lilac or privet. Heavily infested ash should be cut and burned during the fall and winter.

Infested stems of lilac or privet should be removed as well. Permethrin (Hi-Yield Garden, Pet,
and Livestock Insect Control) is labeled for control. Though there are a number of other homeowner products that contain permethrin, the product listed above is the only one I've found that specifically lists the ash/lilac borer on the label. (WU)

**Borers on Pines?**

If you see a row of holes on pine trees, the problem is not borers. Borer holes will be randomly spaced over the trunk. Holes that are in a horizontal (most common) or vertical row are caused by the feeding of the yellow-bellied sapsucker. This woodpecker makes shallow holes and then feeds on the sap released from the wounds or on insects attracted to the site.

Other trees this bird often attacks include maples and Bradford pear, but about any tree species is a potential target. Surprisingly, certain trees may become favorites to the exclusion of nearby trees of the same species. Damage to mature, established trees is usually slight and temporary though small trees may be girdled and killed. To control them, you have a couple of options:

- Wrap the trunk with fine wire mesh in the area of damage. This may discourage them if left in place for several months. The mesh MUST be adjusted every six months or removed when no longer needed. If the mesh is left in place, the tree will likely be girdled.

- Use Tanglefoot on the area of damage. This is a sticky material that is applied to tree trunks to capture insects that crawl up the trunk. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers do not like to put their feet in the sticky material. (WU)

**Mole Control**

Though moles spend most of their time underground, the damage they cause aboveground is all too visible. Meandering paths of upheaved soil are evidence of the small mammals foraging for food. Some tunnels may be abandoned soon after being built while others are travel lanes and used for a longer period of time. Even though moles do not feed on plant matter, they can still cause damage by disturbing roots and uprooting small plants.

Numerous home remedies have been concocted to control moles including chewing gum, noisemakers, broken glass, bleaches, windmills, and human hair. None have been found to provide consistent and reliable control. Poison baits also fail to work because moles feed on earthworms and grubs, not vegetable matter. Even grub control products are ineffective as they do not
control earthworms, and earthworms are the primary food source for moles.

The best control method is the use of traps. There are three types of traps (harpoon, choker, and scissor-jawed) and each can be effective but may take some time to master. Try the following suggestions.

Moles use some tunnels more than others. Use a broomstick or something similar to poke holes in a number of runs. Check a day later to see which runs have been “repaired.’ These are the active runs and should be used for trap placement.

Place a trap in an active run by excavating soil, placing the trap and then replacing loose soil. Secure the trap so that the recoil will not lift the trap out of the ground. Make sure the triggering mechanism is in the center of the run.

Finally, push down two more holes, one on each side of the trap. Moles should be caught when they try to repair the tunnel. Move traps if no moles are caught within three days. (WU)

MISCELLANEOUS

Growing Healthy: Inspect Before You Buy

The best insurance for having a great garden is to start with healthy, disease-free plants. How can you tell if you are purchasing healthy, disease-free plants? The first step is to go to a garden center where you have had great luck in the past. The next step is to carefully inspect the plants you intend to buy. Avoid plants that look sickly and off color. Buying plants on sale can be risky unless they look vigorous and healthy. You never know what disease or insect problem you might be bringing into your growing location or if you will ever get rid of it.

Check the entire plant, including foliage, stems, and roots. Foliage should have good color – frequently green, although plants come in all colors. Avoid plants that have symptoms of leaf spotting, mottling, and leaf yellowing or scorching. Look closely into the foliage and flowers for the presence of insects such as aphids or thrips. They can cause direct damage by feeding on the plants and potentially transmit virus diseases.

It is okay to pop a plant out of the pot and check the roots. Healthy plants should have lots of fuzzy roots. On annual plants and many perennials, healthy roots have a white color. On some woody perennials, healthy roots can have a dark color on the outside, but they will always be white on the inside. You can check this by scraping the roots with your thumb. Plants with poor root health have very few roots and those are discolored (tan, gray, brown or black). Plants with
root damage usually don’t have very good growth or color on the top.

One last tip is to look for uniformity. If you buy transplants in four or six-packs, a sign of plant health and vigor is uniformity in emergence, height, and color. If you are selecting a six-pack, there should be six plants not five or four. Sometimes a root rot problem can take out one or two of the transplants. If one is missing make sure to check the root health of remaining plants. A healthy six-pack should all be the same height, have a good uniform color and healthy roots.

Starting with healthy, vigorous plants will increase the success of your gardening efforts. (JO)

**Contributors:**
Ward Upham, Extension Association, Judy O’Mara, Director, Plant Disease Clinic

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