FRUIT

Fertilize Strawberries mid-August

An August application of nitrogen on spring-bearing strawberries is important in order to increase the number of strawberries produced next spring. Plenty of daylight and warm temperatures during June, July and August promote the growth of new runner, or daughter, plants. As daylight hours dwindle and temperatures grow cooler in September and October, fruit buds for the next year's fruit crop develop. To get a good berry crop next spring, it is important for strawberry plants to be vigorous during this period of fruit bud development. Nitrogen, applied mid-August, will help promote fruit bud development. A general application rate is ½ to ¾ pound of actual nitrogen per 100 feet of row. The nitrogen may be in the form of a fertilizer mixture such as 12-12-12, or in a fertilizer containing only nitrogen such as urea (46-0-0) or ammonium nitrate (33-0-0). Some specific examples would include:

- Iron + (11-0-0) at 6 pounds per 100 feet of row
- 12-12-12 at 5.5 pounds per 100 feet of row
- Nitrate of soda (16-0-0) at 4 pounds per 100 feet of row
- Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at 3 pounds per 100 feet of row
- Urea (46-0-0) at 1.5 pounds per 100 feet of row

On sandy soils, the rate may be increased by about a half. After spreading the fertilizer, apply at least a half-inch of water to move the nitrogen into the strawberry root areas. (WU)

Pear Harvest

Pears should not be allowed to ripen on the tree. They should be picked while still firm and ripened after harvest. Tree-ripened fruits are of poor...
quality because of the development of grit cells and the browning and softening of the inner flesh. Commercial growers determine the best time to harvest pears by measuring the decrease in fruit firmness as the fruit matures. This varies with growing conditions and variety. A Magness meter is used for testing and measures the pressure needed to push a 5/16-inch tip a specified distance into an individual fruit. Home gardeners can use these other indicators:

1. A change in the fruit ground color from a dark green to light green or yellowish green. The ground color is the "background" color of the fruit.

2. Fruit should part easily from the branch when it is lifted up and twisted.

3. Corking over of lenticels. Lenticels are the "breathing pores" of the fruit. They start out as a white to greenish white color and turn brown due to corking as the fruit nears maturity.

4. Development of characteristic pear aroma and taste of sampled fruit.

Pears ripen in one to three weeks after harvest if held at 60 to 65 degrees F. They can then be canned or preserved. If you wish to store some for ripening later, fresh-picked fruit should be placed in cold storage at 29 to 31 degrees F and 90 percent humidity. Ripen small amounts as needed by moving them to a warmer location and holding them at 60 to 65 degrees F. Storing at too high a temperature (75 degrees F and higher) will result in the fruit breaking down without ripening. (WU)

**Control Sooty Blotch and Fly Speck**

Apple cultivars that are three weeks or more from harvest may develop sooty blotch and fly speck on the fruit surface. Moderate temperatures, abundant rainfall and high humidity favor both diseases. Good pruning to facilitate drying is important in controlling the disease. An application or two of fungicide should prevent these fungus diseases from developing. Captan is an effective chemical control. (WU)
FLOWERS

Dividing Daylilies

Daylilies need to be divided every three to four years to maintain vigor. Though they may be divided in early spring before growth starts, it is more common to divide them at this time of year. Many gardeners cut back the tops to about half their original height to make plants easier to handle.

Daylilies have a very tough root system that can make them difficult to divide while in place. Dividing in place is practical if it hasn’t been long since the last division. In such cases, a spading fork can be used to peel fans from the existing clump. If the plants have been in place longer and are well grown together, it is more practical to divide them after the entire clump has been dug. Use a spade to lift the entire clump out of the ground. Although it is possible to cut the clump apart with a sharp spade, you'll save more roots by using two spading forks back-to-back to divide the clump into sections. Each section should be about the size of a head of cauliflower. An easier method involves using a stream of water from a garden hose to wash the soil from the clump, and then rolling the clump back and forth until the individual divisions separate.

Space divisions 24 to 30 inches apart, and set each at its original depth. The number of flowers will be reduced the first year after division but will return to normal until the plants need to be divided again. (WU)

VEGETABLES

Fall Gardens

This is the time of year we normally think of planting a fall garden. Crops that can be planted now include lettuce, radishes, spinach, and similar crops. There still is time to raise another crop of green beans along with some summer squash (if your summer squash have bitten the dust already). If you can find plants, there still is time to grow cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower.

Planting a fall garden is just like planting a spring garden with some big advantages. You will find the weed pressure to be much less and insect problems may be far fewer than in a spring garden. Seeds will germinate rapidly, so you will have crops up and growing in just a few days – compared to several weeks in the spring.
There are a few drawbacks to fall gardening, and one of those is that you must provide regular, frequent watering (possibly daily) until the crops are up and growing. It is best to plant seeds deeper than you do for a spring garden because soil is cooler and moister down a little deeper.

As far as soil preparation is concerned, don't get too excited about deep tillage for a fall garden. Lightly work the soil enough to establish a seedbed; reserve your deep tillage for later in the fall. Also, don't concentrate on adding a lot of organic matter and fertilizer for the fall garden. The organic matter can be added later in the fall with the deeper tillage, and excessive fertilizer application in hot weather is not a good idea. If you have some crop residue to remove from a previous crop, chop the residue with a lawn mower and lightly till the soil surface after the residue has had a chance to dry for 2 to 3 days. (WU)

**PESTS**

**Fall Webworm**

Fall webworm feeds on almost all fruit, shade, and ornamental trees except conifers. This insect is present more often on trees that are not surrounded by other trees. The larvae begin by constructing small webs near the ends of branches. The insect will gradually increase the size of the web as the need for food increases. Mature caterpillars are yellowish with black and brown markings, and have many tufts of long hair. As larvae mature, they crawl down the tree and spend the winter as pupa in the leaf litter under the tree.

High populations of fall webworm can completely defoliate host plants but do not kill them. However, on pecan trees, nut production and quality can be reduced if webworms are not controlled. On ornamental plants, control is optional.

Pruning and destroying the infested portions of branches is a common control practice while webs are still small. Also, a stick or pole with a nail inserted crosswise can be used to snag individual webs. Twisting the pole after insertion will cause the web to wrap around the pole where it can be removed and destroyed. Instead of a nail inserted crosswise, some people use a toilet brush attached to the end of a pole. Insecticides can also be used for control but a commercial quality, high-pressure sprayer is needed to penetrate the webs. We normally consider fall webworm damage to be purely aesthetic, and control is not needed to protect the health of the tree. (WU)
Ground Beetles

Reports are filtering in of black beetles attracted to lighted areas especially around malls, convenience stores and downtown business areas. The beetles in question are “ground beetles,” a generic term applied to about 3,100 different species found in the United States and Canada.

The two current most commonly recognized species have no common name. Harpalus pensylvanica is the smaller of the two. Measuring ½ to 2/3 inch in length with reddish-brown underbody and legs, H. pensylvanica is a predator and, therefore, considered a beneficial insect. Harpalus caliginosus is totally black, measures 3/4 to 1 inch and feeds on seeds, calling into question its value.

Both are regarded as nuisance pests when they congregate near buildings and dwellings. Many people find them annoying. Others accept their presence outdoors but object when the beetles move inside.

Beetles gain access to buildings and homes by slipping through tiny cracks and crevices. It may be possible to exclude beetles by locating and plugging up portals of entry. A perimeter spray treatment may further reduce numbers of beetles. Frustrations arise when beetles appear indoors despite control efforts. High beetle populations can overwhelm when they manage to locate and exploit unseen entryways.

The good news is that the beetles are a nuisance temporarily. They do not pose a health threat (they don’t bite, sting or transmit disease). They will not survive and reproduce indoors. They are not fabric pests, so they will not chew or stain curtains, furniture, clothing or furs. They are not stored product pests that contaminate food. Sometimes insects prevail despite attempts to stave them off. The best we can do is gather them, by hand or vacuum, and dispose of them. (BB)

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