Correction to Last Week’s Newsletter

Last week’s newsletter contained an article on controlling Cherry Leaf Spot. Recommendations included chlorothalonil with one of the trade names being Dacthal. That is incorrect. Dacthal is a preemergence herbicide. I should have said Daconil. I apologize for the mistake. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Outside Plants May Need to be Watered

As we mentioned in an earlier newsletter, waterlogged soils push oxygen out of the soil that roots need to survive. Every living cell in a plant must have oxygen or it dies. Numerous parts of Kansas have had such a wet winter and spring that plants are entering the summer with weakened root systems. Therefore, even in areas with good subsoil moisture, plants may need additional water until the root system recovers to prevent leaf scorching and/or excessive leaf drop. This will be especially important for trees and shrubs that have been planted in the last few years.

Newly transplanted trees need at least 10 gallons of water per week, and on sandy soils they will need that much applied twice a week. The secret is getting that water to soak deeply into the soil, so it evaporates more slowly and is available longer to the tree’s roots. One way to do this is to punch a small hole in the side of a 5-gallon bucket and fill it with water. Let the water dribble out slowly next to the tree. Refill the bucket once, and you have applied 10 gallons. Very large transplanted trees and trees that were transplanted 2 to 3 years ago will require more water.

A perforated soaker hose is a great way to water larger trees, a newly established bed or a foundation planting. In sun-baked soil, you may need to rough up the surface with a hoe or tiller to get the water to infiltrate easily. It may be helpful to set the kitchen oven timer, so you remember to move the hose or shut off the faucet. If you are seeing surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of small trees to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.

Regardless of method used, soil should be wet at least 12 inches deep. Use a metal rod, wooden
dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet. Water established trees once every two weeks if rainfall is insufficient. (WU)

**FRUIT**

**Summer Care of Strawberries**

Taking good care of strawberries this summer and fall will make a difference in the amount of fruit you harvest next spring. Next year's fruit buds will be set in September and October. Larger, healthier plants set more fruit buds.

If you use a garden cultivator, rototiller or hoe for weed control in and between rows, throw about a half-inch of soil over the crowns. Strawberry plant crowns continue to develop at the top, and new roots are initiated above old roots on the crown, so they need about a half-inch to an inch of soil covering the crown. You will provide a good rooting medium for new runner plants by keeping the soil pliable or resilient rather than allowing it to harden on the surface. Remember to keep soil moist. Strawberry plants need about 1½ inches of moisture each week when temperatures reach 90 degrees. (WU)

**Prop Up Fruit Tree Limbs if Needed**

Heavy fruit loads this season may cause tree limbs to break without added support. This is especially true for apricots and peaches that haven't had to support a heavy fruit crop in a number of years. As fruits increase in size, the weight borne by an individual branch can increase substantially. For added support use 1-inch thick boards to prop limbs. Cut a V in the top edge of the board and rest the limb on it so it doesn't slip off. Long limbs loaded with fruit may need a prop in the center and another on the outer part of the limb.

Another technique is to tie plastic belting material that is about 2 inches wide to a heavily loaded limb, then to a large diameter limb above for support. When using a large limb for support, tie it to limbs on opposite sides so the weight is balanced. Another option is to wrap tape or belting material around the tree in a spiral to prevent limbs from bending until they break. Heavy twine also can be used, but be sure to remove it at harvest or soon after so it does not cut into the bark on the limb. Check trees regularly, maybe twice a week, during the last month fruit are maturing. You will find additional limbs that need support. This attention given to the heavily loaded tree limbs will reduce the number of broken limbs and help keep a balance of the fruiting wood in your tree. (WU)
When to Pick Blackberries

The exact time to harvest blackberries varies by cultivar, with thorny blackberries normally ripening earlier than thornless types. But there are some general guidelines to keep in mind when harvesting blackberries. Do not pick blackberries too early or berry size and flavor will be sacrificed. Two major characteristics determining maturity for harvest are fruit color and ease of separation. Blackberries usually develop a dull, black color with plump, juicy fruitlets as they ripen. The berries soften and produce the characteristic flavor. Full color often develops before the berries separate easily. Pick the berries by gently lifting with the thumb and fingers. The receptacle, or center part of the fruit, remains in the fruit when blackberries are harvested, unlike raspberries, which leave the receptacle on the bush. Take care not to crush the berries or expose them to the hot sun. When possible, avoid picking berries when they are wet. They'll probably need picking every second or third day. Cool the berries immediately after harvest to extend shelf life. Keep them refrigerated under high relative humidity and use within three to five days. (WU)

Tan or White Drupelets on Blackberry and Raspberry Fruit

Blackberry and raspberry fruit will often develop white or tan drupelets on the berry. Though we are not completely sure of the cause, two commonly given reasons are stinkbug damage and sunscald. Damage is attributed to stinkbugs if the pattern of off color drupelets is random. Stinkbug damage is cause by the insect feeding on young fruit. Sunscald damage will be on the side of the fruit exposed to the sun and has several drupelets in a small area being affected. Neither condition affects the eating quality of the fruit but will certainly affect marketability for commercial growers. (WU)

VEGETABLES

"Tomatoes" on Potatoes

Under favorable weather conditions, potatoes produce fruit. These structures are borne on the top of the plant and look much like small tomatoes. (Tomatoes and potatoes are closely related). Potato fruits are not edible. They contain a toxic substance
(solanine) that can cause illness if eaten. Also, potato fruits should not be saved for seed because progeny does not come true. Rather, remove and dispose of fruit so children do not eat them. (WU)

PESTS

Hornworms on Tomato

Tobacco and tomato hornworms are the big green worms with spiny tails that cause rapid defoliation of tomato plants. By the time hornworms are detected, they are nearly full-grown and getting ready to pupate. The damage is done and there is little point in applying insecticidal sprays to kill them.

This early in the season you might wonder if you can prevent the appearance of these worms. From my tomato growing experiences, the answer is no.

Moths deposit eggs on tomato foliage. Although fairly large and readily visible without magnification, eggs are seldom seen because their green egg color helps them blend in to the leafy background. Newly hatched 1.5 mm long larvae are equally difficult to observe. Only after grown larvae have consumed foliage do they attract attention.

Despite knowing a big worm is present, finding it requires patience. If you do find one, there are two options – pick and discard, or let live. Although picking and discarding may seem satisfying — one less moth means fewer future worms — eliminating one worm will not make a big difference. It may be better to adopt the idiom “live and let live” and accept coexistence with these overall harmless creatures. (BB)

Picturewinged Flies Common This Year

The Insect Diagnostic lab has had several inquiries over the past few weeks about a fly that has been buzzing around outside of homes and is frequently seen in the garden, climbing around on plants. This pretty fly, commonly called a picturewinged fly, (Delphinia picta) is a common site in Kansas gardens and along the walls of buildings. (See photo.) Adults have a unique habit of moving their wings in a rowing motion as they walk around, earning them their common name. This fly is not considered a
pest and will not cause damage to plants, nor does it bite or sting. Females lay eggs into decaying organic vegetation, and larvae require a moist habitat where they feed on rotting vegetation, often on the surface of the ground or partially buried in the soil. Recorded observations show that adults feed on everything from nectar to sodden vegetation and fermenting dung, but do not feed on living plant tissue. Although this fly is around every year, it seems rainy conditions this spring throughout much of Kansas have provided an ideal habitat for the development and survival of these flies, leading to larger than normal populations. (HD)

**Walnut and Yellownecked Caterpillars**

I previously reported that I recovered walnut caterpillar moths from a light trap the evening of May 30. This was a week earlier than in 2009. Allowing a week to 10 days for egg hatch, larvae have been developing for a little over two weeks.

I returned to an old friend, a walnut tree that seems to harbor walnut caterpillars every year. I also decided to check a nearby oak tree that was defoliated by yellownecked caterpillars several years ago. From a distance nothing appeared wrong with either tree, but closer inspection revealed localized defoliation confined to just a few terminals.

I was not able to reach the walnut caterpillar masses because they were high up in the tree. But through binoculars, I saw the brick red larvae massed together as they fed. I was able to get an image of the yellownecked caterpillars due to their being on a lower branch.

It is doubtful we will receive reports of either species at this time. Unless specifically looking, they are undetectable. In 3 to 4 weeks I’ll begin getting calls about trees being defoliated by caterpillars, coinciding with their last frenzied feeding stage. At that time, there is little to do other than to allow them run their course.

Now is the time to control them. But I won’t suggest that for the trees I am watching. I’ll ask myself if the few populated terminals are sufficient to eventually strip an entire tree. It seems implausible, but I’ll keep tabs and keep you updated in future newsletters. (BB)
Spittlebugs on Eastern Redbud near Manhattan

The spittlebug derives its name from the white, frothy "spittle" the nymphs produce. Adults are large, black leafhoppers about 1/3-inch long with two red stripes that go crosswise across the back. The eyes and abdomen are bright red. Though the nymphs resemble the adults, they are smaller and wingless. Color varies from yellow to white to orange but the eyes are always red.

Spittlebug nymphs suck plant juices like aphids, but they remove so much water and carbohydrates that they produce excess fluid. They cover themselves with this fluid, and then produce the spittle by bubbling air from the tip of the abdomen into the liquid. The spittle mass helps protect the nymphs from drying and predators.

Spittlebugs normally do not achieve high enough populations to cause damage. If they do, forcefully hosing the plants with water several times may achieve the level of control needed. If not, carbaryl (Sevin) will kill them. (WU)

Raccoons and Sweet Corn

It seems the official sweet corn inspector should be the raccoon, which seems to harvest sweet corn the day before it is to be picked. The only effective control measure I have had success with is the electric fence. Here are some suggestions based on my experience. Other designs may very well work but this is what has worked in my garden.

– Two or more wires must be used. Place the first about 5 inches above the ground and the second 4 inches above the first (or 9 inches above ground). Raccoons must not be able to crawl under, go between or go over the wires without being shocked.

– Fence posts used for electric fences work well for this application (go figure), as do the insulators used to support the electric wire.

– It is much easier to use the woven electric wire with strands of wire embedded than to use a solid metal wire. The woven wire is easier to bend around corners and to roll up when done for the year.

– Though both the plug-in and battery operated fencers work, the battery operated types allow
more versatility in where corn is grown. One set of batteries is usually sufficient for the season. In my case, I pull the battery out of an old tractor that is not used much. It will also last the season if fully charged at the beginning. My fencer is probably on for a total of a month.

– Start the charger before the corn is close to being ripe. Once raccoons get a taste of the corn, they are more difficult to discourage.

– Control weeds near the wire. Weeds can intercept to voltage if they touch a wire and allow raccoons entry beyond the weed.

– Check the wire occasionally to make sure you have current. This can be done easily (but unpleasantly) by touching the wire. There are also tools that will measure the voltage available for sale. They are worth the money. (WU)

TURFGRASS

Grub Control

If you plan on using a grub preventative on your lawn, the first half of July is a good target date. Preventatives are normally used on areas that have had a history of grub problems. Traditional grub insecticides such as Dylox are normally applied in late July after grubs are present or as a rescue treatment once damage is seen. Products that contain Merit (imidacloprid) or Mach 2 (halofenozide) are considered grub preventers. Actually, neither product prevents grubs, but rather they kill grubs when they are quite small, and long before they cause damage. Merit and Mach 2 are safer to use around pets and humans than traditional grub killers. Merit can be found in Bayer's Season-Long Grub Control and Grub-Ex. Mach 2 is the active ingredient in Kill-a-Grub. Remember all grub products must be watered in before they are activated. (WU)

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