Peaches and Apricots

It is relatively rare in Kansas to have both a peach and apricot crop that isn’t badly hurt by late frosts. This seems to be one of those “good” years in much of Kansas. Therefore, we want to take advantage of our good fortune. Following are certain things that should be done as the fruit matures to insure a good harvest.

Control insects and diseases: Though we are too late to control peach leaf curl (see related article), we do need to control scab and brown rot. The insects we need to be concerned with are plum curculio, oriental fruit moth, plant bugs and stink bugs. Use Captan or Immunox to control the diseases and malathion to control the insects. Spray every 10 to 14 days. Pay attention to the waiting period between the last spray and harvest. See our publication, “Fruit Pest Control for Home Gardens” at http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/hort2/c592.pdf for more detail including organic controls.

Thin peaches: You may want to thin your peaches to 1 every 4 inches to maximize fruit size and to decrease the load on the branches. Peaches are borne in clusters, so calculate how many a branch can support by dividing the length of the branch in inches by 4. As long as there is an average of 4 inches of branch length per peach, it doesn’t matter whether the peaches are in clusters or not.

Prop up branches if needed: Prop up branches if the fruit load is so heavy that the tree may break apart. Use boards with a “V” cut in one end to support the branch. (WU)
Be on the Lookout for Peach Leaf Curl and Plum Pocket

Peach leaf curl is a fungus disease that causes developing peach leaves to become puckered and distorted and show a reddish-green hue. A similar disease called plum pocket may develop on American and sand hill plums. Plum pocket results in formation of distorted, light green, bladder-shaped fruit. Asian and European plums are not susceptible to the local strain of plum pocket. It is too late to control these diseases with fungicides this year.

Trees that are severely infected with peach leaf curl are likely to lose many leaves. If trees are healthy, new leaves will grow. Indicators of a healthy tree are large leaves with a deep green color and last year's growth being at least 18 to 24 inches long. If these tree vigor indicators are not present, especially if there was only 12 inches or less of growth last year, then a fertilizer application would be helpful. The fertilizer should be spread on the soil under the branch area. Apply 1 and 1/3 to 2 cups of a 13-13-13 fertilizer under the branch area. If a soil test indicates that only nitrogen is needed, use 1/3 to 1 and ½ cups of nitrate of soda (16-0-0) instead of the 13-13-13. You may also substitute a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-4, 30-5-4 or something similar for the 13-13-13 but use only half the amount used for nitrate of soda. The sooner fertilizer is applied, the more immediate benefit it will have in promoting new leaf growth. Both peach leaf curl and plum pocket can be controlled with a single fungicide application applied this fall after leaf drop or early next spring before bud swell. Effective fungicides include Bordeaux, liquid lime sulfur and chlorothalonil (Bravo, Daconil and others). Be sure to cover the entire tree including the bark and trunk. (WU)

TURFGRASS

Powdery Mildew on Lawns

Powdery mildew is active right now. In turfgrass, powdery mildew is most common on Kentucky bluegrass in areas that are shady and/or have poor air movement. It can look dramatic but rarely causes lasting damage to the turf. The infected leaves will eventually shrivel and die, but the crown and roots are not affected. Usually the disease is active only in spring and fall.

If you have an area with chronic powdery mildew one option is to switch to another type of turf that is less susceptible, such as tall fescue. Another good cultural practice is to try to improve air circulation, and avoid excessive N. Finally, there
are several demethylation inhibitor (DMI) fungicides available both in homeowner and commercial formulations. For example, products with the active ingredients myclobutanil, propiconazole, and triadimefon are effective against powdery mildew.

Now that I’ve mentioned the practical aspects of turf powdery mildew, I wanted to include some information about the biology of powdery mildew. Many of you deal with powdery mildews on other types of ornamentals, shrubs, etc.

There are a lot of species of powdery mildew and all are host specific. That is, the fungus that causes powdery mildew on turf will not cause powdery mildew on rose, and that one will not cause powdery mildew on lilac. Another interesting trait of powdery mildews is that they require a living host. Though the plant tissue eventually dies, the powdery mildew needs the host to stay alive while it is feeding on it. And, because it needs a living host, it is impossible for us to culture powdery mildews in the lab in petri plates. (MK)

VEGETABLES

Protecting New Vegetable Transplants from the Wind

New transplants, even those hardened off in a cold frame, may need protection from strong winds when set out. Wooden shingles placed to block the wind used to be the standard recommendations but are now difficult to find. Try a plastic milk jug or a 2-liter soda bottle with both the bottom and top cut off. Push the jug or bottle into the soil far enough so it won’t blow away. In windy conditions, it may need to be stabilized with a wooden dowel or metal rod. (WU)

PESTS

Bagworms, It's Still Too Early to Spray

Timing is critical in many things, including controlling bagworms. Though handpicking is effective through much of the year, often it is impractical because of the sheer numbers of bagworms. But if you only see a few bags, now would be a good time to pick them off and destroy them.

New bagworms will likely hatch and leave the mother's bag in May, but spraying is not usually
recommended until some time in June. Spraying now will be ineffective. The bagworms are too well protected inside their mother's bag. Closer to hatch, watch for an article on when and what to spray. (WU)

**Cabbage Worms**

![Imported Cabbageworm](image)

This is the time of year we normally start seeing damage from cabbage worms. The imported cabbage worm is usually the first cabbage worm species to appear and is a fuzzy, elongated green worm. Larvae come from eggs laid by the white butterfly often seen flitting around the plants.

Early control is essential to reduce injury. BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) and spinosad (Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer & Tent Caterpillar Spray; Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew) are effective organic products that are labeled for this pest. BT can be found in Dipel, Thuricide and other similar materials. Direct sunlight deactivates BT quickly so it is helpful to spray late in the day or on a cloudy day. For an excellent overview of BT and its use, see Raymond Cloyd’s article in the April 30, Entomology Newsletter at: http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=4749

Conventional insecticides such as carbaryl (Sevin), malathion and methoxychlor are also effective but will kill natural enemies of these pests as will rotenone, an organic product. Be sure to hit the underside of leaves where insects feed. Note that hitting the underside of leaves is easier when using a dust applied with a duster than when using a liquid spray. (WU)

**White Grubs in Gardens and Flower Beds**

![White Grub](image)

We have had a number of calls this spring from gardeners who are finding white grubs in the vegetable garden or flowerbed. Usually, populations of grubs are low enough that they will not cause appreciable damage. Unfortunately, if populations are high, there isn't much you can do once the garden is planted other than try to keep the plants healthy until the grubs pupate. I have not been able to find information on how many grubs per square foot are needed to damage vegetables. In turf, you normally assume it will take 9 to 10 southern masked chafer or 3 to 4 May beetle grubs per square foot to cause damage.

White grubs are most often a problem when a lawn is converted to a garden or flower area in the spring. If the lawn was heavily infested with grubs, many survive to cause problems for the new
plants. Working lawn areas in the fall that you plan to convert to another use the next spring can help prevent problems by eliminating food for the grubs and exposing the insects. (WU)

MISCELLANEOUS

A Word of Caution About Drive (quinclorac)

We mentioned Drive (quinclorac) as a herbicide for bindweed in last week’s newsletter. Though Drive works well on bindweed and crabgrass, there are a number of precautions that MUST be observed when using this product. Note that Drive is packaged for homeowners from Monterey Lawn and Garden (www.monereylawngarden.com ) and is also in homeowner combination herbicides that contain Drive such as Ortho Weed-B-Gon Max + Crabgrass Control and Bayer All-in-One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer.

Drive is very stable on grass clippings and therefore such clippings must not be used as mulch or in compost. We recommend clippings be returned to the lawn anyway but if they are bagged, they should be discarded.

Do not apply this product over exposed roots of trees and ornamentals. It would be best to avoid spraying beneath the canopy of any trees to avoid possible damage.

If there are plans to convert a section of lawn to a vegetable garden, do not use Drive on that area. Eggplants can be damaged if planted within 12 months of areas treated with Drive and tomatoes can be damaged if planted within 24 months.

Finally, spray only on calm days. Drift can damage nearby crops, especially members of the Solanaceae family (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, potatoes). Note the combination products mentioned above also contain 2,4-D whose drift can also damage most vegetable plants.

Remember the best weed control in a lawn is a good, thick turf. A well-maintained lawn often needs no weed control or needs only directed treatments in high stress areas such as roads, driveways and sidewalks. (WU)

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