Horticulture 2011 Newsletter
No. 31  August 2, 2011

Video of the Week:  Dividing Daylilies

UPCOMING EVENTS

Turf & Ornamentals Field Day -
Thursday, August 4
Olathe K-State Research & Extension
Center
For more information, go to
http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc3157.ashx

FRUIT

Fertilize Strawberries mid-August

An August application of nitrogen on spring-bearing strawberries is important 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 3/4 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). Here are examples:
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)

PESTS

Honeydew

If you have ever walked under a tree and noticed the lower leaves and anything else under the tree covered with a shiny, sticky substance, then you have seen honeydew. Honeydew is actually plant sap that has passed through the body of an insect. Though aphids are the usual culprit, other members of the insect order Homoptera also can produce honeydew, including planthoppers, soft scales, mealybugs, whiteflies, psyllids, and some leafhoppers. All these insects have sucking mouthparts and usually have little impact on the landscape. The honeydew they produce is considered a nuisance because of its sticky nature. But the high sugar content of the honeydew encourages the growth of a fungus called sooty mold. Sooty mold turns anything on which it grows a black color, making it much more objectionable to people. We normally do not recommend control of these insects because populations are usually controlled naturally. Adverse environmental conditions, predators, parasites, and fungal diseases often cause populations to crash. But if you feel control is necessary, a heavy spray of water will help remove insects and honeydew from small plants. A wide range of insecticides, such as acephate (Orthene), horticultural oils, and malathion are labeled and can be used on larger plants, but again this is rarely necessary. (WU)

Lovebug Invasion

The Wichita area has seen an invasion of lovebugs (Plecia nearctica Hardy) with large populations occurring in small pockets. In other words, those that have these insects, usually have large numbers. These 3/8 inch, mostly black flies have a reddish-orange thorax. Like all flies, lovebugs have only one pair of wings. Their name derives from their habit of flying while still coupled during mating. Short-lived, lovebugs are usually only present for a few weeks.

Lovebugs do not harm plants and do not bite, sting, or transmit
disease. Large numbers can be a significant nuisance due to clogged radiator grills and bug-splattered windshields obscuring vision. Also dead insects that are allowed to dry on a car can result in damage to the finish when removed.

Because this insect is only a nuisance pest, pesticide controls are not recommended. (WU)

**ORNAMENTALS**

**Squirrel Damage to Trees**

Tree squirrels can cause a couple types of tree damage. Most commonly they clip the tips of branches. The length of severed branches is often 2 to 3 feet though they can be longer or shorter. When squirrels snip off a branch, they cut it at about a 45-degree angle and the cut is rather tattered. This is a nuisance type of damage and normally does not hurt the health of the tree.

More serious damage is caused when squirrels strip the bark off of limbs or rarely, the trunk. Wounds can be quite large and the squirrel can effectively girdle the branch by removing all the bark completely around the circumference. Branches girdled in this way will die and the tree may be ruined if those branches are major.

Why squirrels do this is still a bit of a mystery. Some people think it is simply a means to sharpen their teeth or that they are seeking nesting material or water. Other people think that there are certain squirrels that are high-strung and cause this damage out of nervous energy.

If the damage is limited to snipping the ends off of branches, it is probably best to ignore the activity as the tree suffers little harm. But if real damage is occurring due to extensive bark removal, try feeding and watering them. If that doesn’t work, control may be necessary. Fox and gray squirrels are game animals and can be hunted in season where it is legal and safe to do so. They can also be trapped and moved away from the area they are causing damage. For more information on control, see http://www.wildlife.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=20 (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)

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To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe

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