Horticulture 2011 Newsletter
No. 27   July 5, 2011

Video of the Week: Watering Young Trees

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bedding Plant Field Day
July 28, 2011
K-State Research & Extension Center, Olathe
For more information, go to http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc3195.ashx

VEGETABLES

Harvesting Potatoes

Potatoes are ready to harvest when the vines are about half dead. Potatoes dug too early have tender skins and are easily bruised. Delaying digging will allow the soil to heat because it is no longer shaded by foliage. High soil temperatures can lead to sprouting potatoes. Allow potatoes to "set" by keeping them in a shady, dry location for a day or so. Move them to a cool, moist environment such as a cellar or cool basement for longer storage. (WU)
Pulling Onions

Onions are ready to harvest when about half the plants have tops that have fallen over. This is a sign that the onions are mature and need to be pulled out of the ground. Bulbs may sunburn without the foliage to protect them. The secret to onions keeping well is to allow the tops to dry completely before storage. Move onions to a shaded, well-ventilated area after harvest. After tops are completely dry, store in a cool, dry location. Large-necked onions take more time to dry than small-necked onions such as Bermuda types. Avoid storage in plastic bags because the lack of air circulation will shorten storage life. Use an open, mesh bag instead. (WU)

FRUIT

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 the berry 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)
Watering Fruit Plants

When temperatures exceed 90 degrees F, fruit plants lose water quickly. When this happens, moisture is withdrawn from the fruit to supply the tree. Stress from high temperatures, along with a moisture deficit in the root environment, may cause fruit to drop or fail to increase in size.

The stress may also reduce the development of fruit buds for next year's fruit crop. If you have fruit plants such as trees, vines, canes, and such, check soil moisture at the roots. Insert a spade or shovel or a pointed metal or wood probe. A long screwdriver works well for this. Shove these into the soil about 8 to 12 inches. If the soil is hard, dry, and difficult to penetrate, the moisture level is very low, and plants should be irrigated to prevent drooping and promote fruit enlargement.

Water can be added to the soil using sprinklers, soaker hose, drip irrigation, or even a small trickle of water running from the hose for a few hours. The amount of time you irrigate should depend upon the size of plants and the volume of water you are applying. Add enough moisture so you can easily penetrate the soil in the root area of the plant with a shovel, spade, or probe. When hot, dry weather continues, continue to check soil moisture at least once a week.

Strawberries have a shallow root system and may need to be watered more often, maybe twice a week during extreme weather. Also, newly planted fruit trees sited on sandy soils may also need water twice a week. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Watering Newly Planted Trees and Shrubs

Newly planted trees have not established the extensive root system needed to absorb enough water during hot, dry, windy summers. Even trees two or three years old should receive special care.

Deep, infrequent watering and mulching can help trees become established. 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 to the tree’s roots longer. 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 two to three years ago will require more water.

A perforated soaker hose is a great way to water a newly established bed or foundation planting. In sunbaked soil, you may need to rough up the surface with a hoe or tiller to get 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 the tree 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. (WU)

**PESTS**

**Squash Bugs**

Squash bugs are the grey, shield-shaped bugs that feed on squash and pumpkin plants. If you have had problems with these insects in the past, you know they are almost impossible to control when mature. This is because the squash bugs have a hard body that an insecticide has difficulty penetrating. Spraying when the insects are small is important. Nymphs of the first generation are appearing now. They will eventually become adults and lay eggs that will become the second generation. The second generation often is devastating. It is important to control as many squash bugs as possible now.

Because squash bugs feed by sucking juice from the plant, only insecticides that directly contact the insect will work. General use insecticides such as permethrin (Bug-B-Gon Multi-Purpose Garden Dust, Green Thumb Multipurpose Garden and Pet Dust, Bug-No-More Yard and Garden Insect Spray, Eight Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Concentrate, Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control, Lawn and Garden Insect Killer), malathion, rotenone, and methoxychlor provide control if a direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs. This means that you MUST spray or dust the underside of the leaves because this is where the insects live. (WU)
Be looking for tomatoes with golden-yellow, pink, or white spots on the fruit. This type of damage is often caused by stinkbugs, the shield-shaped insects that emit a foul odor when disturbed. The stinkbug injures the fruit by using its mouthparts to probe. Color development is affected where probing occurs, which results in the off color, cloudy spots. Heavy feeding causes the spots to spread, so tomatoes may develop a golden color. If you look closely, you can see the pinprick-sized puncture wounds in the middle of the spots. Hard, whitish, callous tissue develops beneath the skin at the area of wounding. By the time spots are noticed, the stinkbugs are often gone, so control is impossible. Affected tomatoes are safe to eat. (WU)

Treat Bagworms Now

Most calls on how to control bagworms come in late July to early August when damage appears. Bagworms are difficult to control when they are that large. They are much easier to kill while small. Bagworms overwinter as eggs inside the dead female’s bag. Young larvae normally hatch and emerge during mid to late May in Kansas. Now would be a good time to use control measures if you haven’t already sprayed. Look for a miniature version of the mature bagworm. Check to be sure the bagworms are alive before spraying. Predators and parasites can sometimes naturally control this pest.

Insecticides commonly used for controlling bagworms include acephate (Orthene), permethrin (numerous trade names), cyfluthrin (Bayer Multi-Insect Killer), bifenthrin (Bug Blaster II, Bug-B-Gon Max Lawn and Garden Insect Killer), lambda-cyhalothrin (Spectracide Triazicide, Bonide Caterpillar Killer) and spinosad (Conserve; Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer and Tent Caterpillar Spray; and Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew). Thorough spray coverage to foliage is essential for good control. (WU)

Contributors:
Ward Upham, Extension Associate

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

Horticulture 2011 E-mail Subscription
For questions or further information contact: wupham@ksu.edu

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