Henbit in Lawns

The plants with the little purple flowers that are starting to make themselves known in home lawns are called henbit. If you are not sure this is what you have, check the stems. If they are square rather than round, you have henbit. Though it actually comes up in the fall, most people do not pay much attention to this weed until it starts to flower. Trying to kill it at this late stage with an herbicide usually is a waste of time and money. Though the plant may be burned back, it will rarely be killed. So what do we do? Remember, this is a winter annual; it comes up in the fall, matures in the spring and dies as soon as it starts to get hot. All we can do now is keep it mowed until nature takes its course.

However, we can do something next fall that will help next spring. Henbit usually germinates about mid-October. Spraying with 2,4-D, Weed-B-Gon, Weed Free Zone, Weed Out, or Trimec in early November can go a long way toward eliminating henbit next spring. Plants are small during the fall and relatively easy to control. Choose a day that is at least 50 degrees F so the henbit is actively growing and will take up the chemical. Spot treating will probably be needed in the spring to catch the few plants that germinate late. Use Weed Free Zone, Speed Zone, Weed Out, Weed-B-Gon, Trimec, or one of the special henbit herbicides early before the henbit has put on much growth. (WU)
The Bulbs are Blooming!

The recent warm up and arrival of spring has many of the spring harbingers in full force. The small, early bulbs of crocus and snowdrops have faded for the most part, although a few linger here and there. The next wave of bulbs includes the daffodils and hyacinths, followed by tulips. Many of the daffodils are coloring up very nicely!

Fall is “the” planting time for spring blooming bulbs. Now, if you forgot to plant bulbs last fall, no doubt you are being reminded of that as you are out and about. Alas, you don't have to wait until this fall to buy some bulbs! Besides enjoying your neighbor's spring beauties, you do have the opportunity to plant some tulips, daffodils, and hyacinths in your landscape!

Greenhouse growers have realized that, remembering to order, buy and plant spring flowering bulbs in the fall is sometimes a challenge. So, they have managed to commercially force some of these bulbs for you! Right now, in different garden centers, one can find already chilled, emerging, ready to bloom bulbs for sale as individual bulbs or small bulb pans! You just have to decide how many to purchase. Then, take them home and either plant in the ground or bury them under a mulched area. And voila! You have your very own spring bulbs that you forgot last fall!

Also, while you are out and about getting the yard and garden ready for this year, be sure to look for your summer-blooming bulbs - dahlias, gladiolus, lilies, etc. that are in the garden centers right now! And be sure to look for your spring-blooming bulb catalogs in the mail very soon. Or better yet, check out some bulb companies online for their pre-fall orders going on right now!

(CM)


Care for Spring-flowering Bulbs

As spring-flowering bulbs go through the flowering process, keep three care tips in mind:

1. If practical, remove spent flowers with a scissors or a hand pruner. This allows the plant to conserve its energy for bloom the next year rather
than using it to produce seed.

2. Be sure to allow foliage to die naturally — it is needed to manufacture food that will be stored in the bulb and used for next year's flowers.

3. Don't fertilize. The roots of these plants start to shut down after flowering. Fertilizer applied at this time is wasted. Instead, fertilize during the fall at the time bulbs are normally planted and again in the spring when new growth pokes out of the ground. (WU)

VEGETABLES

Asparagus Time!

Asparagus is one of those vegetables where freshness is incredibly important. If you have never eaten asparagus fresh out of the garden, try it. It may convince you to grow some of your own.

For those who have an asparagus patch, the new spears are starting to emerge or are close to doing so. The first asparagus that comes through the ground always seems to take a long time to reach harvest size. That is because asparagus growth is temperature dependent. The higher the day and nighttime temperatures, the faster it grows. Also, the longer the spear, the quicker the growth. As the season progresses and spears get longer, the growth rate increases.

Harvest asparagus by snapping or cutting. Snapping is quick and easy. Simply bend the stalk near the base until it breaks. Snapped ends dry quickly so refrigerate or use soon after harvest. If you cut asparagus, use a sharp knife to detach the spears slightly below ground level. This base is woodier than snapped asparagus, so it doesn't lose water as quickly. Woody ends should be cut off before cooking. (WU)

Fertilizing Cole Crops

If you planted cole crops such as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower around St. Patrick’s Day, we are near the time when they will need a little fertilizer boost. These plants need to mature before summer heat arrives, so they must grow quickly while the weather is cool. A sidedressing of fertilizer about 3 weeks after transplanting helps plants continue to grow rapidly.

Use fertilizers high in nitrogen for sidedressing such as nitrate of soda or blood meal at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 feet of row.
You may also use lawn fertilizers that have close to 30 percent nitrogen such as a 30-3-4 or 29-5-4 but the rate should be cut in half to 1 pound per 100 feet of row. Do not use lawn fertilizers that have weed killers or preventers. Fertilizer must be watered in if timely rains don't do that job for you.

We have a sheet available that gives recommendations on how to sidedress specific vegetable crops. It can be found at: http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc1991.ashx (WU)

**ORNAMENTALS**

**Brown Coloration on Junipers**

Certain eastern redcedar and various other junipers are showing a brownish cast when viewed from a distance. This may be the male flowers. Male flowers are on the tips of the leaves and look somewhat like a cross between a miniature hand grenade and a pinecone. Shaking the branches on dry days will often result in a cloud of pollen being released.

Most junipers are dioecious, meaning they have both male and female plants. About half the junipers (the males) will have this coloration. The female flowers are much less obvious. If you have clients who are concerned about this brown coloration, have them check the plants to ensure the male flowers are the cause. If they are, assure them that this is normal and will fade with time. (WU)

**Questions About Pine Tip Blight**

Pine tip blight is a fungal disease that can affect Austrian, Scots, ponderosa, and mugo pines. The disease is most severe on mature trees (20 years or older). Repeated infections over several years can kill large sections of trees or entire trees. Here are some Frequently-Asked-Questions about tip blight.

1) What is the pathogen?

Tip blight is caused by a fungus that has been called both Sphaeropsis and Diplodia over the years. Don’t let the name changes trouble you. The most important consideration is to recognize the disease, and to be able to distinguish it from other pine problems.
2) When does the disease occur?

Tip blight is a spring disease. The fungus survives the winter in previously-infected tissue. Then, during spring rains, the fungal spores splash around and infect the newly developing pine shoots (candles) just as they start to grow (usually in mid-late April).

3) What are the symptoms of pine tip blight?

The symptoms become obvious in late May or early June when the infected shoots and needles are not growing right. The shoots are stunted, and the emerging needles are stunted and brown.

Small, sticky resin droplets often form on the infected needles. The damage usually starts in the lower branches and works its way up over several years.

There are exceptions, though. There may be a lot of tip blight in the top of the tree:

In trees that have been repeatedly infected for many years, damage is distributed throughout the crown. In addition to infecting the newest growth, the fungus can invade older tissues when trees are highly stressed or if they are wounded (by hail, storm damage, etc.).

Interestingly, white pines are not susceptible to the tip blight phase, but they are susceptible to this “canker form” of the disease if they are wounded.

In late summer or fall, tiny black spore-producing structures (called pycnidia) are formed on the scales of 2-year-old cones — it looks like black pepper has been shaken onto the undersides of the cones.

Tip blight can be confused with winter damage or infestation by the pine tip moth. However, winter damage usually causes shoot or needle death before the new needles emerge in the spring, and it is sometimes restricted to one side of the tree (the side facing the prevailing wind). Unlike tip blight, the tip moth causes a hollowed-out area in the tip/bud area, and the larvae are sometimes present. Plus, tip moth is more common in young trees.

In extreme cases tip blight can be confused with pine wilt. To avoid confusion, look carefully at the symptoms and compare them to the descriptions and photos in the website listed below and in other resources. Pines can be infected with both diseases simultaneously. If there is any doubt, bring a sample to your local K-State Research and Extension office to be forwarded to the K-State diagnostic lab.

For more color images of tip blight, please visit the following website:

Printed copies of the fact sheet can be ordered by calling (785) 532-5830 (MK)

Managing Tip Blight
1) Does pruning help?

Removal of dead branches can improve the appearance of diseased trees but will not prevent infection. Many of the spores are produced on cones that remain attached to the tree. In addition, tissues that look healthy can secretly harbor the tip blight fungus. That is, there are “hidden infections” that we can’t even see. Usually, pruning for tip blight means pruning off lower branches first, since they tend to be the first to become infected. Then the pruning task moves up the tree as the disease progresses over the years. If a tree reaches a point where it is no longer pleasing or functional for the site, “one-cut pruning” (i.e., tree removal) might be the best possibility.

2) What other tree care should I provide?

Trees should be adequately (not excessively!) watered and fertilized to maintain tree vigor. This will help a tree fight off tip blight on its own.

3) Should I use a fungicide?

This is a tricky question. The trouble is, unlike smaller plants like wheat, tomatoes, or soybeans, there aren’t many studies out there to tell us about tip blight “thresholds.” As a general rule, if a tree has at least 30-50% of branches infected, the fungus is pretty well entrenched and it will be difficult for fungicides to really knock the disease down. And, if there is a lot of canker type infection, it is hard for fungicides to work. If a smaller portion of the canopy is affected, and it is mostly the tip-blight phase, fungicides are more likely to be successful over time. Finally, consider the aesthetics and site-enhancing value of the tree. In trees where the disease is caught early, and fungicides are used at the right time each year for multiple years, the disease can be managed successfully and it might be worth the investment.

4) Okay, so what is the right time?

The critical time for fungicides is when the new shoots are expanding in the spring. If fungicides are applied at this time, new disease can be prevented. It is not a one-shot-deal. Fungicides will likely be needed each year to protect new annual growth. Each year, the first application should be made when new shoots start to elongate, which is usually around the third week of April. The tree should be sprayed again 10 to 14 days later, and possibly again 10 to 14 days after that if it is a wet year and the site has a history of disease. The timing should be adjusted slightly depending on host development in the spring, since every year is different. Spraying after this critical time will not be effective, because infection has already occurred and cannot be “cured.” Once you see symptoms it is too late.

5) What should I spray, and how should I spray it?

Several fungicides are labeled for pine tip blight (Sphaeropsis/Diplodia). Thorough coverage is essential. A high-pressure sprayer may be needed to deliver the fungicide to the tops of tall trees. Homeowners should consider using a professional tree care service, especially for large trees.
where getting good coverage is difficult. Commercial products are listed in the website listed above in the companion article.

6) What about injections?

Fungicide injections have been studied, but so far results have been inconsistent and injections are not recommended at this time. (MK)

**Contributors:**
Ward Upham, Extension Associate; Megan Kennelly, Plant Pathologist; Chad Miller, Asst. Professor, Ornamental Horticulture

---

To view Upcoming Events: [http://tinyurl.com/fswqe](http://tinyurl.com/fswqe)

**Horticulture 2011 E-mail Subscription**

For questions or further information contact: Hort WebMeister.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”
Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
Brand names appearing in this newsletter are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Gary Pierzynski, Interim Dean.