Video of the Week: Dividing Daylilies

VEGETABLES

Still Time for Salad Garden

Plant salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips, mustard and other greens now for a fall harvest. Cooler nights make this an ideal year to try a fall salad garden. Plant slightly deeper than you did in the spring. Water frequently (if needed) until seedlings start to emerge — which should be fast with our warmer soils. Reduce watering frequency after plants emerge. Plants may need to be protected from hungry rabbits. (WU)

Blossom Blast on Beans

Beans that blossom but don’t set pods are often suffering from a condition known as blossom blast. This is not a disease but is due to excessively high temperatures; not just during the day but also at night. The leaves and stems of beans are much more tolerant of heat than the flowers (and pollen) so the plants often look fine. Pole beans are more tolerant of this condition than bush beans but even they can be affected under extreme conditions. Once temperatures dip below 70 degrees at night, the beans should begin to set. (WU)
For Seeding Success, Pay Attention to "Other Crop" on the Seed Label

Fall planting time is close at hand, so it's time to talk about grass seed. Many people have the idea that all grass seed is basically the same. Big mistake! Choosing quality seed is one of the most important steps in successfully planting or overseeding your lawn. If you don't know what to look for, you may be introducing unwanted intruders into that new stand. In particular, we are concerned with seed contaminated with orchardgrass and/or rough bluegrass (also known by its Latin name, Poa trivialis, or Poa triv for short). These are both perennial grassy weeds that cannot be selectively controlled once they are in a lawn. Orchardgrass is a problem because it is faster growing and lighter green than our turfgrasses. It is a bunch grass and so doesn’t spread, but infested areas are still unsightly due to small tufts of this species pockmarking the lawn. Rough bluegrass is fine-textured and forms circular patches in the lawn. It blends in fairly well until summertime heat causes it to turn brown rapidly. If the rough bluegrass would just die in the heat, it would only be a temporary problem. Unfortunately, it usually just goes dormant, turning green again with cooler temperatures and rain.

Buying quality seed starts with knowing how to decipher the seed label. One of the most important things to look for is listed as "% other crop." "Other crop" refers to any species that is intentionally grown for some purpose. That would include turfgrasses (those species other than the one you are buying) and pasture grasses. Orchardgrass and rough bluegrass both are listed as “other crop” seed. Seed labels are required by law to show the percentage (by weight) of "other crop" in the bag, but unless a species constitutes 5% or more, the label doesn't have to list each species by name. How much "other crop" is too much? That’s a difficult question to answer, but the tolerance is very low. It depends on what the "other crop" actually is, and the quality expectations of the buyer. In practice, "other crop" may refer to something relatively harmless, like a small amount of perennial ryegrass in a bag of tall fescue, or it may refer to something bad, like rough bluegrass or orchardgrass. The homeowner really has no easy way of knowing what the "other crop" is, although there are some hints. If it is something bad, less than ½ of 1% can ruin a bag of seed. For example, if a bag of tall fescue seed contained 0.5% orchardgrass, the buyer would end up "planting" 12 to 16 orchardgrass seeds per square foot! Similarly, planting Kentucky bluegrass seed containing 0.5% rough bluegrass would result in about 25 to 35 rough bluegrass seeds per square foot of lawn. Obviously, if your expectations are high for the area you are planting, you would want the "other crop" to be as close to zero as possible. Good quality seed will often have 0.01% “other crop” or less.

I was looking at tall fescue seed this last weekend and noticed a blend of improved tall fescue varieties
that had 0.0% weed seed and 0.0% other crop seed. A bag of K-31 tall fescue right next to the improved tall fescue had more than 2.5% other crop seed. This is all too common with K-31. It is well worth the extra cost to purchase good quality seed. (WU)

PESTS

Brown Recluse Spiders

These spiders are reclusive, but they will bite if they are against your skin and movement is restricted. For example, if you put on a shirt with a spider in the sleeve, it will probably feel restricted and bite. Unfortunately, a brown recluse bite is serious requiring a visit to a doctor.

Brown recluse spiders vary in color with abdomens that may be straw-colored, pinkish-gray, pale to medium brown or slate gray. They have one distinctive characteristic – a dark, violin-shaped pattern on the front of the back. The neck of the violin points toward the rear of the arachnid.

Though structurally tight houses are less likely to have brown recluse populations, any home may be invaded. Houses with a number of unreachable spots may have standing populations that are difficult or impossible to eliminate. In such cases, it is important to reduce numbers and minimize the chances of being bitten.

Two strategies may help. Take advantage of the spiders' daily rhythm. Brown recluse normally hide during the day and don't come out until an hour or two after dark. The search-and-destroy strategy may prove effective if timed to coincide with their activity. Carry a crawling insect spray as you search for the spiders within a foot or two of walls. After destroying any spiders you find, look for a crack they may have been using to hide. Spray the insecticide into that crack and remember to caulk or otherwise seal it. Caulking shut the crack is best, but if caulking will ruin the aesthetics of the room continue to spray into it every 10 days or two weeks. You may want to log the number and date of spider kills to see if you are making progress.

The second strategy involves the use of roach or mouse glue traps. Place these in spots the spiders are likely to be, such as dark areas, around boxes, and close to walls and room corners. Again, track the catch to see if you are having an effect on numbers.

There are a number of insecticides labeled for spiders but spot treatment with synthetic pyrethroids such as Tempo (cyfluthrin) or Demon (cypermethrin) are especially effective. Cyfluthrin is packaged for homeowners as Bayer Home Pest Control Indoor/Outdoor Insect Killer and cypermethrin in Hi-Yield Pest Control Concentrate. Remember, it's best to study the problem and develop a strategy before
beginning control measures. For more information refer to publication, MF771, Spiders and Scorpions. You can find it on the Web at: http://kpbs.konza.ksu.edu/Spiderbites.pdf. (WU)

Pokeweed

A number of people have asked the name of the weed with the large leaves and purple-black berries that hang in a cluster. This perennial is known as pokeweed. All parts of this plant are poisonous, especially the roots. Signs of poisoning include abdominal cramps, diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, drowsiness and difficulty in breathing. One of the toxins found in pokeweed is the protein lectin, which can cause abnormalities in white blood cells.

Surprisingly, young leafy springtime shoots are sometimes eaten after thorough cooking. Though cooking eliminates most of the toxins, there is still a danger of being poisoned from handling and preparing the shoots as well as ingesting improperly cooked plants.

Berries can be attractive to children. Cut down and discard pokeweed that might come into contact with kids. This plant is a perennial. You may want to spray it with a herbicide next year before it is large enough to be attractive to children. (WU)

Emerald Ash Borer Comments

Dr. Bob Bauernfeind has written a very informative article on emerald ash borer in the Kansas Insect Newsletter. Numerous photos and maps are included that will help determine the risk to local trees. A companion article discusses other causes of ash decline and how to distinguish between these causes and emerald ash borer. These articles can be accessed at http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc3462.ashx (WU)

Contributors: Ward Upham, Extension Associate

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

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

For questions or further information contact: wupham@ksu.edu
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