Horticulture 2012 Newsletter  
No. 27     July 10, 2012

Video of the Week: How Often to Water Your Lawn

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grape Growing Workshop to be Held

A Vineyard Workshop is to be conducted on Monday, July 23rd, hosted by Highland Community College in cooperation with K-State Research and Extension - Douglas County, and Kansas Department of Agriculture. The workshop is free to the public and will run 3:00-6:00pm at Davenport Vineyard & Winery located at 1394 E. 1900 Rd., Eudora, KS 66025. Dominic Martin, HCC Vineyard Manager and Viticulture-Enology Instructor, will conduct the workshop discussing pre-harvest topics such as excessive vigor, fruit sampling, irrigation to delay or prolong harvest, proper fruit ripeness and more. To RSVP, please contact either Scott Kohl at HCC at 785-456-6006 / skohl@highlandcc.edu or Douglas County Extension Agent Jennifer Smith, 785-843-7058 / smithjen@ksu.edu. Go to http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc3333.ashx for more information about the entire schedule of workshops and list of topics.

FRUIT

When to Pick Peaches

Peaches are best when ripened on the tree but fruit growers may wish to pick a bit early to prevent damage from birds, have a higher pectin content for jams and jellies or to have firmer fruit for canning.

Peaches that are mature enough to pick are still hard. They do not give when lightly squeezed. However, these peaches will ripen off the tree and will have very good quality. They may not be quite as sweet as a tree-ripened peach but are still very good. So what do we look for to tell if a peach is mature enough to harvest? Let’s look at a couple of factors.
**Color:** The reddish coloration is not a good indicator. Look instead for what is called the “ground color.” This is the part of the peach that does not turn red; for example around the stem. The ground color of the peach will lose its greenish tinge and turn yellow when the peach is mature enough to harvest. I use this characteristic more to determine when NOT to pick a peach. If there is any green in the ground color, it is too early. If the ground color is yellow, then I move to the next characteristic.

**Ease of Removal:** A mature peach will separate easily from the branch if the peach is lifted and twisted. If it doesn’t, it is not mature enough to pick yet.

All peaches will not be ready to pick at the same time. Pick only those that are ready and come back later for more. It often takes 3 to 5 pickings to harvest a peach tree.

Peaches that are picked early but will be used for fresh eating should be allowed to ripen inside at room temperature. Once they are ripe, they can be refrigerated to preserve them for enjoyment over a longer period of time. (WU)

**Get Your Fruit Fix at U-Pick Farms and Fruit Festivals**

There's nothing better than eating fresh fruit right off of the plant! If you've been following the Hort Newsletter for long, you are probably well aware of all the options for growing fruit in Kansas: brambles (blackberries, raspberries), strawberries, blueberries, grapes, peaches, apricots, pears, apples, plums and cherries.

Growing fruiting plants takes planning, soil preparation, plant care and time, but not a whole lot of any of those things-growing fruit is pretty easy! Point your browser to [bit.ly/MhFPG](http://bit.ly/MhFPG) for the online version of the Midwest Home Fruit Production Guide for more information. If you can't find the cultivars mentioned in the guide locally, there are several online mail-order nurseries that can meet your needs.

Many home landscapes are getting smaller and smaller. If you don't have a lot of space in your yard for growing fruit, you could rent a plot in a community garden (check out [www.KansasCommunityGardens.org](http://www.KansasCommunityGardens.org) for one near you), which can provide more space and resources.

While you are planning your fruit gardens, get your fruit fix by checking out the State of Kansas' Agritourism website ([www.KansasAgritourism.com](http://www.KansasAgritourism.com)) travel site ([www.TravelKS.com](http://www.TravelKS.com)) and [www.PickYourOwn.org/KS.htm](http://www.PickYourOwn.org/KS.htm) to search for U-Pick operations across the state. Here are just a few:
Brenda's Berries and Orchards, Chetopa: Apples, blackberries, plums, raspberries (red, yellow, purple and black), strawberries, peaches and pears. [BrendasBerries.blogspot.com and www.facebook.com/brendas.berries.5]

Chautauqua Hills Farm, Longton: Blueberries and blackberries. [ChautauquaHillsFarm.com and www.facebook.com/chfarm]


If you're thinking of a destination fruit festival trip to celebrate summer, you could check out the Blackberry Festival at Summit Hill Gardens in Chanute (July 15th) or you can travel just a bit to Oklahoma and enjoy these festivals: Porter Peach Festival (July 19-21) www.porterpeachfestivals.com, or Rush Springs Watermelon Festival (August 11).

Don't miss the opportunity to celebrate summer with fresh fruit! (CRB)

TURFGRASS

Is My Lawn Still Alive?

Normally, a healthy lawn can stay dormant for a good 5 weeks and still recover. After the five weeks are up, it is important to keep the crown hydrated because if the crown dies, the plant dies. Apply about 1/4 inch of water every two weeks to hydrate the crown. This will be enough to hydrate the crown but not enough to encourage weed germination and growth.

The recommendations differ for a lawn that was overwatered so that it had a limited root system. Such a lawn may die unless allowed to slowly enter dormancy. This is done by shutting off the water gradually. For example, instead of watering several times a week, wait a week before irrigating. Then don’t water again for two weeks. Thereafter, water every two weeks as described above.

If you are wondering if the turf is still alive, pull up an individual plant and separate the leaves from the crown. The crown is the area between the leaves and the roots. If it is still hard and not papery and dry, the plant is still alive.

When rains and cooler weather arrive, the turf should come out of dormancy. However, we will probably have to deal with weeds that germinate before the turfgrass grows enough to provide good cover. (WU)
VEGETABLES

Tomatoes Slow to Ripen?

The hot, dry weather we have had recently not only interferes with flower pollination (see June 19 newsletter) but also can affect how quickly fruit matures. The best temperature for tomato growth and fruit development is 85 to 90°F. When temperatures exceed 100 degrees, the plant goes into survival mode and concentrates on moving water. Fruit development slows to a crawl. When temperatures moderate, even to the low to mid 90s, the fruit will ripen more quickly.

Tomato color can also be affected by heat. When temperatures rise above 95 degrees F, red pigments don't form properly though the orange and yellow pigments do. This results in orange fruit. This doesn't affect the edibility of the tomato, but often gardeners want that deep red color back. Though you can't change the color of tomatoes that have completely ripened, you can pick them when they are just starting to turn and have them ripen in cooler temperatures (75 to 85 degrees F is best). Such tomatoes will develop normal coloration. (WU)

Bitter Cucumbers

A bitter taste in cucumbers is the result of stress that can be caused by a number of factors, including heredity, moisture, temperature, soil characteristics, and disease. Most often this occurs during the hot part of the summer or later in the growing season.

Two compounds, cucurbitacins B and C, give rise to the bitter taste. Though often only the stem end is affected, at times the entire fruit is bitter. Also, most of the bitter taste is found in and just under the skin. Bitter fruit is not the result of cucumbers cross-pollinating with squash or melons. These plants cannot cross-pollinate with one another.

Often newer varieties are less likely to become bitter than older ones. Proper cultural care is also often helpful. Make sure plants have the following:

– Well-drained soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Plenty of organic matter also helps.
– Mulch. Mulch helps conserve moisture and keeps roots cool during hot, dry weather.
– Adequate water especially during the fruiting season.
– Disease and insect control. (WU)
Fall Gardening: Cole Crops

Probably the last thing most gardeners are thinking of now is planting vegetables. However, for those hardy few, now is the time to start the cole crops such as cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. These members of the cabbage family can be either seeded directly in the garden or started in pots for transplanting about mid-August.

Plant slightly deeper than you would in the spring so the seed stays cooler and the soil around the seed stays moist longer. Plant more thickly and thin later. The plants may need to be protected from rabbits through the use of fencing.

Use light amounts of fertilizer before planting. For example, apply 1/4 cup of a low-analysis fertilizer (6-7-7) per 10 feet of row. Sidedress two weeks after transplanting or four weeks after sowing seed by applying 2 tablespoons of a 16-0-0 or 1 tablespoon of a 27-3-3, 30-3-4 fertilizer, or something similar per plant.

Watering must occur more frequently because seed should not be allowed to dry out. Overhead watering often causes soil to crust, making it more difficult for young, tender plants to emerge. Prevent this by applying a light sprinkling of peat moss, vermiculite or compost directly over the row after seeding. Even better, use a soaker hose right next to the row to allow water to slowly seep into the ground.

Plants should be ready for harvest in late September to early October, with broccoli side shoots developing well into November, weather permitting. (WU)

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

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