Horticulture 2012 Newsletter  
No. 30     July 31, 2012

Video of the Week:  Tips on Harvesting Pears

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grape Growing Workshop on Wednesday
Highland Community College, in conjunction with Kansas Department of Agriculture and Kansas State University Research and Extension, will be hosting a vineyard/winery workshop on August 1st, 3-6pm at Diamond S Vineyard & Winery in Russell, KS  (http://www.diamondsvineyardwinery.com/).  This workshop is in addition to the original nine workshops scheduled for 2012.  We will discuss several pre-harvest topics such as excessive vigor, fruit sampling, irrigation to delay or prolong harvest, proper fruit ripeness, vineyard/winery relations, and more.  Please RSVP by emailing or calling Scott Kohl at kohl@highlandcc.edu or 785-456-6006.

Kansas Turfgrass Field Day  
Thursday, August 2, 2012  
Rocky Ford Research Center, Manhattan  
8:00 a.m. - Noon     Cost: $30 (includes lunch)

The Kansas Turfgrass Field Day program is designed for all segments of the turfgrass industry – lawn care, athletic fields, golf courses and grounds maintenance.   Included on the program are research presentations, problem diagnosis, commercial exhibits and equipment displays.  Recertification credit hours for commercial pesticide applicators: 1.5 hrs in 3B and .5 hr. in 3A.  There will be time to see current research, talk to the experts, and get answers to your questions.

Tour Highlights:  
* Living and Dying with Poa trivialis  
* Buffalograss Establishment on Turf Mats After Storage  
* Kentucky Bluegrasses for Kansas  
* Turf Disease Management Update  
* Weeds, Weeds, Weeds  
* Turf & Ornamental Insect Control Update  
* Irrigation Effects on Nitrogen Leaching and Mowing Requirements
VEGETABLES

Tomato Fruit Problems

Extreme heat and bright sunlight can sunscald tomato fruit, leaving a light yellow to white sunken spot that resembles a blister. Eventually this area may allow black mold to invade and cause the tomato to rot.

Sunscald most often happens to fruit that is exposed to full sun after losing foliage to disease, hail or tomato hornworms. Exposed fruit may be shaded with cheesecloth to prevent injury. Remove affected fruit to encourage more fruit set. Sunburned fruit are rarely usable if the damage is extensive. Tomatoes with little damage can be used if sunscalded areas are cut out.

We have also seen bird damage to tomatoes. In these cases, the fruit is pecked and appears to have been stabbed through the skin, exposing the pulp. Several peck marks can merge, resulting in a large wound. Fruit is often “safe” from damage until it begins to ripen. Tomatoes can be protected with bird netting. The netting can be draped over the plants but is easier to work with if supported by wooden stakes. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Crape Myrtles Beat the Heat

I'm melting. You're melting. The plants are melting. We're ALL melting! This heat and drought is killer, isn't it? At least we have access to airconditioning, unlike the plants out there baking in sun. Makes you want some ice cream, doesn't it?

How about this: Raspberry Sundae® Crape Myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica 'Whit I'). Bred by Dr. Carl Whitcomb (www.LacebarkInc.com) in Stillwater, Oklahoma.
Crapemyrtles are one of the few plants that absolutely shine in our current climactic conditions. They are soil pH adaptable and prefer full sun with a moderate amount of water. There are so many cultivars of crapemyrtle that it's impossible to share them all here. Suffice it to say, you can get just about any flower color (white, pink, purple, deep red, and combinations) and plant size (dwarf, shrub, tree) that you like.

You can prune crapemyrtles into either a tree form or a shrub form. In the South, crapemyrtles are most often seen as trees. In fact, they are taught as small trees in plant identification courses. It's funny to take students to the South and see them struggle to identify a tree-form crapemyrtle. They are huge compared to what grows here. That's because our winters can get too cold for crapemyrtle and they often die back to the ground, making them more like a perennial, resulting in fairly small plant size. In many parts of Kansas, crapemyrtles are marginal, but you can successfully grow them in a protected spot (next to a building or in the understory of larger trees).

The flowers last a really long time, starting in June/July and lasting into September and sometimes frost. As you can imagine, the plant gets its name from the shape of the flowers, which look like crepes. Fall color ranges from yellow to orange and red. Crapemyrtles also have decorative bark for winter interest.

Humor me for a moment and let's talk about…"Crape-Murder!" [cue the horror movie soundtrack]. This is a term horticulturalists use for the pruning technique of trimming crapemyrtles back to 3-4 large, fist-sized stems and cut off about 3-4 feet high, allowing watersprouts (weak growth, prone to disease) to grow from the stubs. In fact, Dr. Michael Dirr in his widely revered book "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants," refers to this practice as a "brutal massacre." New sprouts from this growth are weak and often cannot support the heavy weight of the large blooms. Instead, leave them alone or prune crapemyrtles at the base (soil level) to grow a beautiful, vase-shaped, multi-trunked shrub.

Ice cream flowers…that ought to cheer us up! (CRB)

**Summer Branch Drop**

The extreme heat and drought can cause some rarely seen phenomenon. Chris Starbuck with the University of Missouri Extension Service reported a case of an apparently sound branch breaking out of what appeared to be a healthy pin oak during hot, calm weather in Missouri. There was an article written by Richard Harris, the author of a standard Arboriculture text that describes this phenomenon. His observations are summarized below.

This type of damage has been reported on both landscape and forest trees. The landscape trees were found in irrigated and unirrigated situations.

These limbs can be huge; up to 3 feet in diameter. Most often the break occurs 3 to 12 feet from where the branch attaches though at times the branch may break at the attachment. Though breaks do occur in decayed wood, often the broken branch shows no sign of weakness or decay.

No firm explanation of a cause has been established though buildup of pressure within the branch has been noted. In some cases, the branch seems to explode and then drop. The reason for this
pressure buildup is unclear though several ideas have been put forth.

Certain species are more susceptible to this condition including oaks, poplars, cottonwood, willows, ash, sycamore and Japanese Pagodatree.

Be cautious around these trees through early fall during hot, calm weather. You will find more detail in Richard Harris’ article at http://artistictreeworks.com/harris.html (WU)

PESTS

**Emerald Ash Borer Found Near Kansas City**

We have reproduced below a press release describing a new Emerald Ash Borer discovery near Kansas City.

Insect Threat to Missouri’s Ash Trees Expanding, Survey Underway
New populations found in Platte and Reynolds Counties

(JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.) – One of the top threats to Missouri’s hundreds of thousands of ash trees has extended its reach beyond the existing quarantine area. The Emerald Ash Borer has killed more than 50 million U.S. ash trees in the last 10 years and researchers have now found signs of the invasive insect near Kansas City as well as signs of an expanding population in southern Missouri.

A single Emerald Ash Borer was identified in the Kansas City area last week by an alert arborist, near Parkville. Staff from the Missouri departments of Agriculture and Conservation and the USDA immediately joined that individual at the site. Emerald Ash Borers were also identified in Reynolds County last week through routine surveillance, adjacent to the known population in Wayne County. The Wayne County population was first identified in 2008.

The Missouri departments of Agriculture and Conservation work with federal staff from USDA Plant Protection and Quarantine and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as researchers at the University of Missouri to monitor Missouri’s forests and urban areas for signs of the insect, as well as to inspect incoming shipments of nursery stock which may harbor the borers.

Representatives from those organizations, as well as other members of Missouri’s Invasive Forest Pest Council, will be collaborating on possible changes to Missouri’s Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine as a result of finding the insect in two new locations within the state this month. The group has already begun work on a survey to determine the extent of infestation in Platte and Reynolds counties. Those surveys will be ongoing throughout the summer and fall in a cooperative effort by local, state and federal agencies.
Wayne County is currently under federal and state quarantines, which prohibit moving hardwood firewood and living or cut ash trees and ash wood to prevent the accidental spread of the borer.

Although the Emerald Ash Borer can fly short distances on its own, much of its spread is due to humans transporting it burrowed under the bark of firewood, logs and tree debris. Consumers are encouraged to use other native tree species, rather than Ash trees, in their landscape plantings and to purchase firewood harvested near their destination when traveling and camping. Individuals can also check their trees for signs of the Emerald Ash Borer using the online guide available at eab.missouri.edu and report concerns about their trees by calling (866) 716-9974.

Researchers have not been able to determine exactly how or when the Emerald Ash Borer came into Missouri, but it’s believed the insect hitchhiked into the state in a load of firewood carried by a vacationer from another area, as signs of the insects were first found at a campground in Wayne County near Wappapello Lake. The Emerald Ash Borer was first discovered in the U.S. in 2002, in Michigan. It has since spread to more than 15 states, including Missouri and Illinois, and Canada. (End of press release)

If you find what appears to be an emerald ash borer, take it to your local county extension office and have it sent to K-State for positive ID. County extension office addresses can be found at http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/Map.aspx . (WU)

Bagworm Control

In Kansas Insect Newsletter #14 (June 15th), I stressed that the control of bagworms was more contingent upon the timing of a spray treatment and the thoroughness/coverage achieved rather than the product/active ingredient used. Currently in Kansas, 501 products are registered for use against bagworms. In KIN #15 (June 22nd), Dr. Cloyd listed a number of active ingredients registered for use on bagworms, but also noted that not all of those listed AI’s were in products available to homeowners.

I shopped-the-shelves in local retail outlets in Manhattan and found products containing the active ingredients acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, gammacryhalothrin, malathion, permethrin and spinosad. (Although aware that some products containing cyfluthrin and deltamethrin also list bagworms on their labels, I found none of those products on-the-shelves in Manhattan--at least the 10 retail outlets visited).

The trial was very simple ----- 4 trees were randomly designated/market to receive an insecticide treatment. No attempt was made to assess levels/numbers/populations of bagworm on each tree ----- other than noting, again, that on May 2, all trees were infested with bagworms. A knapsack sprayer
was used to apply treatments on June 18th. Adequate amounts of spray mixtures ensured thorough coverage/distribution of each product.

On July 18th, trees were inspected and rated as either clean or infested. Other than an occasional “escape,” bagworms were only found on untreated trees. All products performed equally well. (BB)

FRUIT

Pear Harvest

Pears should not be allowed to ripen on the tree. They should be picked while still firm and ripened after harvest. Tree-ripened fruits are of poor quality because of the development of grit cells and the browning and softening of the inner flesh. Commercial growers determine the best time to harvest pears by measuring the decrease in fruit firmness as the fruit matures. This varies with growing conditions and variety. A Magness meter is used for testing and measures the pressure needed to push a 5/16 inch tip a specified distance into an individual fruit. Home gardeners can use these other indicators:

1. A change in the fruit ground color from a dark green to light green or yellowish green. The ground color is the "background" color of the fruit.

2. Fruit should part easily from the branch when it is lifted up and twisted.

3. Corking over of lenticels. Lenticels are the "breathing pores" of the fruit. They start out as a white to greenish white color and turn brown due to corking as the fruit nears maturity.

4. Development of characteristic pear aroma and taste of sampled fruit.

Pears ripen in one to three weeks after harvest if held at 60 to 65 degrees F. They can then be canned or preserved. If you wish to store some for ripening later, fresh-picked fruit should be placed in cold storage at 29 to 31 degrees F and 90 percent humidity. Ripen small amounts as needed by moving them to a warmer location and holding them at 60 to 65 degrees F. Storing at too high a temperature (75 degrees F and higher) will result in the fruit breaking down without ripening. (WU)

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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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