FRUIT

Remove Blossoms on Newly Planted Strawberries

Spring-bearing strawberry plants that were set out this spring should have blossoms pinched off. New plants have a limited amount of energy. If blossoms remain on the plants, energy that should go to runner development is used to mature fruit instead. Plants that are allowed to fruit will eventually produce runners, but those runners will not be strong enough to produce a good crop of berries the following year. For an adequate strawberry plant population and a good crop next year, early runner development is necessary. Early runners will produce far more strawberries than runners that form later in the season.

Newly planted everbearing plants also should have fruits removed for the first 4 to 6 weeks after planting so they develop a strong root system. (Ward Upham)

VEGETABLES

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
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](http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/doc1991.ashx)  (Ward Upham)

**PESTs**

**Ash/Lilac Borer**

*Note:* Ash/Lilac Borer is different than Emerald Ash Borer. Ash/Lilac Borer has been around for many years while Emerald Ash Borer has been confirmed in only Wyandotte, Leavenworth and Johnson counties in Kansas.

If you have had problems with canes or stems of lilac and privet suddenly wilting, or ash trees that show borer holes in the trunk and larger branches, the ash/lilac borer may be to blame. This insect causes the base of infested lilac stems to swell and the bark to separate from the wood. A fine sawdust-like material is present around holes in the canes. Ash and mountain ash also are affected. The borer attacks the trunk, which may cause bark to swell and crack if there are repeated infestations.

Ash/lilac borers overwinter as larvae in infested trees and shrubs. Moths generally begin to emerge in mid to late April. Emergence peaks in May, dwindles by mid to late June and ends by the first week of July. However, this varies by year. The moth has clear wings and resembles a wasp. There is one generation per year.

Public and commercially managed properties often use pheromone traps to determine the presence of adults. Spray treatments are started seven to 10 days after capture of the first moths.

Sprays also can be timed using phenology, the practice of timing one event by another. The first spray for ash/lilac borer should be applied when the Vanhoutte spirea is in full to late bloom. This is often about the third week in April but can be as early as late March and as late as mid-May. Apply a second spray four weeks after the first. To see a photo of Vanhoutte Spirea, go to: [http://plantsci.missouri.edu/ps2210/list9/spix_van.htm](http://plantsci.missouri.edu/ps2210/list9/spix_van.htm).

Thoroughly treat the trunk and larger limbs of ash or the lower portion of the stems of lilac or privet. Heavily infested ash should be cut and burned during the fall and winter. Infested stems of lilac or privet should be removed as well.

Bifenthrin or permethrin (Hi-Yield Garden, Pet, and Livestock Insect Control and 38 Plus Turf, Termite and Ornamental Insect Control) are labeled for control. Though there are a number of homeowner products that contain one or the other of these two active ingredients, the permethrin products listed above are the only ones I've found that specifically lists the ash/lilac borer on the label with directions for control. (Ward Upham)
Borers on Pines?

If you see a row of holes on pine trees, the problem is not borers. Borer holes will be randomly spaced over the trunk. Holes that are in a horizontal (most common) or vertical row are caused by the feeding of the yellow-bellied sapsucker. This woodpecker makes shallow holes and then feeds on the sap released from the wounds or on insects attracted to the site. Holes may vary in size as illustrated by the two photos above.

Other trees this bird often attacks include apples, maples, and Bradford pear, but about any tree species is a potential target. Surprisingly, certain trees may become favorites to the exclusion of nearby trees of the same species. Damage to mature, established trees are usually slight and temporary though small trees may be girdled and killed.

These birds are migratory and are usually present from October to April. Therefore, they should not cause any more damage until next fall. If you feel that damage is severe enough to warrant control, you may want to try one of the following remedies next October.

- Wrap the trunk with fine wire mesh in the area of damage. This may discourage them if left in place for several months. The mesh MUST be adjusted every six months or removed when no longer needed. If the mesh is left in place, the tree will likely be girdled. The mesh may potentially be more deadly than the sapsucker.

- Use Tanglefoot on the area of damage. This is a sticky material that is applied to tree trunks to capture insects that crawl up the trunk. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers do not like to put their feet in the sticky material. This material may lose stickiness due to dust or other materials and require additional applications. (Ward Upham)

Carpenter Bees

Although carpenter bees look much like bumblebees, they are easy to identify if you know what to look for. Bumblebees have hairy abdomens that are usually yellow and black. Carpenter bees’ abdomens are shiny blue-black. Carpenter bees are solitary (do not form colonies) and are nonaggressive unless provoked. Only the female possesses a stinger. The male may act aggressive but is harmless. Carpenter bees get their name from
the ability of the female to bore into wood. Holes are about a half-inch in diameter and may be 6 inches deep. The female then builds six to eight cells off the main tunnel and lays an egg in each. Developing larvae feed off of "bee bread" (pollen and nectar) regurgitated by the female bee. Larvae become adults by late August and September, but do not emerge until the following spring. Individual holes may not cause much damage, but cumulative effects of numbers of bees can weaken structures. Painting wood surfaces can make them less attractive to bees. Stains seem to have little effect. Insecticides, such as Sevin, can be used to treat openings. Sprays and dusts are both effective but sprays may only last for 1 to 2 weeks and require retreatment. Dusts are most easily applied with a puffer duster. It is best to treat near sundown when the bees have returned to their tunnel. (Ward Upham)

Termites or Ants

Both termites and ants are able to swarm and may have wings during part of their lives. Since these insects are close to the same size, people often misidentify flying ants as termites. Since flying ants do not attack wooden structures like termites, it is helpful to be able to tell the difference.

Fortunately, there are several differences that can easily distinguish the two. For example, ants have a thin waist; the waist of a termite is thick. Also, ants' antennae are elbowed, while termites' are not. Thirdly, termites have two pairs of wings that are of equal length. Ants also have two pairs of wings, but theirs are of unequal length. Homeowners who find signs of termite activity should shop for a reputable pest control firm. (Ward Upham)

TURFGRASS

Controlling Broadleaf Weeds in Lawns in the Spring

Broadleaf weeds such as dandelion, henbit and chickweed become very visible in the spring but, unfortunately, are also very difficult to control. Early November is the most effective time to control these broadleaf plants. The winter annuals (henbit and chickweed) germinate in the fall and are weak and easily killed. The perennial dandelion moves materials from the leaves to the roots in the fall to survive the winter and will carry a herbicide into the roots and thereby kill the plant from the roots up.

So, what do you do in the spring? First, realize that even if you do everything right, you may not obtain good control. Let’s look at what we can do to maximize our chances of success.

Apply your herbicide early but be sure the weeds are actively growing. The better the weed is growing, the more herbicide is taken up and the more likely you are to see good control. Therefore, do not spray too early in the spring.
On the other hand, the longer the delay once weeds are growing well, the more time the weed has to build up energy reserves and the harder it will be to control. We must also be concerned with drift when we apply herbicides later in the spring. Certain plants are very sensitive to many of our broadleaf herbicides and can be harmed. For example, grapes, tomatoes and redbuds are indicator plants for 2,4-D damage. In other words, they will suffer greater harm than other plants from the spray. Try to apply your herbicide before the grapes and redbuds have broken bud and before tomatoes are planted.

The next question is what do we use? Use products that contain a mixture of herbicides such as Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out, Weed-Stop and Weed Killer for Lawns. These products contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Weed Free Zone (also sold under the name of Speed Zone) contains the three active ingredients mentioned above plus carfentrazone. It gives a quicker response than the other products mentioned and will work better when temperatures drop below 50 degrees.

As I mentioned before, even if everything is done correctly, success is difficult. Remember that henbit and chickweed are winter annuals and will die naturally when the weather turns hot.

The long-term solution for weeds is a good, thick lawn. Consider overseeding or redoing your lawn next September in order to avoid weed control problems. If you do have thin areas in the lawn and broadleaves invade, spray in late October to early November on a day that is over 50 degrees. Control at that time is easy and effective. The hard part is to remember to look for the weeds in the fall as they are small and easily overlooked. Mark your calendars now as a reminder. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Use a String Line and Planting Board**

Two simple tools can make planting a vegetable garden easier. A string line is used to ensure straight rows and a planting board can make spacing vegetables within a row easier. Most gardeners make their own string line. A very simple one can be made with a tent peg, a 12” piece of 1 x 2 lumber and some string. String is wound on the 1 x 2. Either notch each end of the board or drive a nail near each end to hold the string as it is wound. The end of the string is tied to the nail driven into the board. The other end of the string is tied to the tent peg. When marking out a row, drive the tent peg into the ground where you want the row to start. Mark the end of the row with a second tent peg and unwind enough string to stretch between them. Actually, you will want the string line offset where the plants will go by a couple of inches so that it isn’t in your way. In other words, you will make your row next to the string; not under it. You now have the means of making a straight row.

So, what is a planting board? A planting board is a 1 x 4 board that is four feet long. Relatively deep notches are cut every foot with shallow notches at 6 inches from each deep notch. Some gardeners also bevel the side opposite the notches so they can work the beveled end into the soil
to make a shallow trench for seed.

When planting, lay the planting board near your tent peg and align it with the string. It is now easy to place plants or seeds at the recommended spacing. Move the planting board with you as you progress down the row. (Ward Upham)

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