UPCOMING EVENTS

Kansas Turf Conference in conjunction with KNLA
December 4, 5 & 6, 2018
Kansas Expocentre, Topeka

Mark the date to attend the Kansas Turfgrass Conference in conjunction with KNLA on December 4, 5 & 6 in Topeka.

The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf, nursery and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest equipment and supplies from local and national vendors.

The conference has been approved for Commercial pesticide recertification hours:
1 Core hour       3A - 7 hrs       3B - 7 hrs

International Society of Arboriculture CEUs and GCSAA education points will also be available by attending the conference.

Download a copy of the program, get exhibitor information, or register online http://www.kansasturfgrassfoundation.com/annual-ktf-conference.html

ORNAMENTALS

Questions on Ornamental Grasses

We are starting to receive questions on whether it is best to cut back ornamental grasses in the fall or spring. As a rule, ornamental grasses should not be cut back while green because they need time to move the energy found in the foliage into the roots. Even when browned by cold weather, most gardeners will leave the foliage until spring because of the interest it adds to winter landscapes. Early March is the preferred time to cut back these plants. However, dry foliage is extremely flammable and should be removed in the fall from areas where it is a fire hazard.
Another question we often receive is whether we can divide ornamental grasses in the fall. Spring is the preferred time because divisions done in the fall may not root well enough to survive the winter. (Ward Upham)

**Preventing Sunscald on Thin-Barked Trees**

Many young, smooth, thin-barked trees such as honeylocusts, fruit trees, ashes, oaks, maples, lindens, and willows are susceptible to sunscald and bark cracks. Sunscald normally develops on the south or southwest side of the tree during late winter. Sunny, warm winter days may heat the bark to relatively high temperatures. Research done in Georgia has shown that the southwest side of the trunk of a peach tree can be 40 degrees warmer than shaded bark. This warming action can cause a loss of cold hardiness of the bark tissue resulting in cells becoming active. These cells then become susceptible to lethal freezing when the temperature drops at night. The damaged bark tissue becomes sunken and discolored in late spring. Damaged bark will eventually crack and slough off. Trees often recover but need TLC — especially watering during dry weather.

If you have seen this type of damage in previous years or fear you have susceptible trees, preventative measures are called for. Applying a light-colored tree wrap from the ground to the start of the first branches can protect young and/or recently planted trees. This should be done in October to November and removed the following March. Failure to remove the tree wrap in the spring can prove detrimental to the tree. (Ward Upham)

**It's Pine Wilt Time Again**

This is the time of year that we see an increase in pine wilt symptoms. However, this year is worse than normal due to the stress from the extreme drought from late last fall through much of this summer. Though sometimes detected in white pine and Loblolly pine, Scots pine, and to a lesser extent, Austrian pine, are the primary hosts. Needles on affected trees initially turn a dull gray-green. In most cases, the foliage on the entire tree is affected at the same time, although sometimes you will see individual branches affected first. As pine wilt progresses, the needles turn from dull green to brown and remain attached to the tree. The color change normally occurs within a couple of weeks but occasionally may be stretched out over several months. Eventually, the tree dies.

This year, we may see pines appear to die from pine wilt but may simply succumb to environmental stress. Regardless, any tree in which the twigs become brittle, is dead.

Trees with pine wilt cannot be saved. Any tree suspected of having this disease should be cut at ground level and removed from the site. Do not save the wood for firewood because it serves as
a breeding ground for the pine sawyer insect. Diseased trees may be chipped, but compost the chips for several months before using them in the landscape. Currently, there are no chemical controls that will cure pine wilt in an already infected tree. However, we do have a couple of products that are partially effective as preventative injections. Greyhound and Pinetect both resulted in an 80 to 90 percent survival rate as opposed to 40 to 50 percent in untreated trees.

The beetles that carry this disease are attracted to stressed trees. Watering during dry periods can help prevent infections. (Ward Upham)

**Summer Stresses on Pine, Spruce and Fir**

Our heat and drought this year has been very tough on trees; especially some of the evergreens. Spruce, fir and pine are not well adapted to Kansas conditions and high stress years like this one can lead to decline and death. However, there are natural conditions that can look like the tree is dying that actually are not harmful. How can you tell the difference?

If the needles are browning just on the inside of the tree, but the needles farthest out on the branches remain green, the tree is going through natural needle drop. Natural needle drop does not harm the health of the tree and is a normal process as two- and three-year-old needles are shed. Drought may increase needle drop but this, in itself, does not harm the tree. But in some cases we are seeing all the needles on a branch turn color. On pines, this may be due to pine wilt, a fatal disease that is found primarily on Scots and Austrian pines. However, the heat and drought of this summer has caused more trees than normal to be affected. See the accompanying article on pine wilt for more information.

However, sometimes environmental stress may be severe enough to kill branches or entire trees. How can you tell if the tree will survive? First check to see if the branch with the browning needles is alive. Scrape off a small area of the "bark" of the branch with a sharp knife. There should be green tissue immediately under the bark. This green cambium layer is quite thin with the underlying woody tissue being white. If there is no green at all, the branch is dead. Also check the ends of branches. Dry, brittle twigs are a sure sign that at least that part of the tree is dead. Dead branches should be removed. Major branch removal may destroy the aesthetics of the tree making tree removal the only viable option.

What can you do to reduce stress? Concentrate on good watering. During dry weather (including winter), water the trees to a depth of at least 12 inches, with deeper watering preferred. You can check the depth the water reaches by pushing a long screwdriver, metal rod or wooden dowel into the soil. It will stop when it reaches dry soil. It will stop when it reaches dry soil. During hot, dry weather, trees may need watered once a week but cooler weather will only require watering every 2 to 3 weeks. If we have an warm, dry winter, water the trees once per month when the temperatures are above freezing. (Ward Upham)
 Twig Girdlers

We are starting to see damage from twig girdlers as evidenced by fallen twigs up to 3 feet long. The beetle *Oncideres cingulata* is most likely the culprit. Host trees include elm, oak, linden, hackberry, apple, pecan, persimmon, poplar, sour gum, honey locust, dogwood, and some flowering fruit trees. This insect is distributed throughout the eastern United States from New England to Florida and as far west as Kansas and Arizona. Adults are long-horned beetles with a grayish-brown bodies that are stout and cylindrical. The larvae are also cylindrical with small heads and shiny exteriors. Larvae can be up to an inch long and are light brown to brownish-gray.

Girdled twigs often remain on the tree until a strong wind blows them down. Large infestations can result in a high percentage of girdled twigs. Though this may reduce the vigor and appearance of the tree, the overall effect on the tree's health is not severe. Twigs are unsightly and do not fall all at once, so clean up is a drawn out process.

This beetle has a one-year life cycle. Late in the growing season, the female deposits eggs in small scars chewed through the bark and then chews a continuous notch around the twig, girdling it. The notch is cut below the site of egg deposition apparently because the larva is unable to complete development in the presence of large amounts of sap. Girdled twigs die and fall to the ground where the eggs hatch.

Girdled twigs look like a beaver has chewed on them, only in miniature. The outside of the twig is smoothly cut, but the center of the twig appears broken. The larvae begin feeding on dead wood inside the twigs the following spring and continue through most of the summer. Pupation takes place inside the feeding cavity. Development is completed during August when the adult emerges to repeat the cycle.

Though adults feed on the bark of host twigs, damage is minimal until the female starts girdling. Chemical control is impractical, so gather and dispose of fallen twigs in the fall or spring to destroy the larvae inside. Often, natural mortality is high because fallen twigs are excessively dry or carry too many larvae per twig. (Ward Upham)

FRUIT

Fruit Planting Preparation

If you plan to develop or add to your fruit garden next year, now is a good time to begin preparing the planting site. Grass areas should be tilled so grass does not compete with the fruit plants for soil moisture and nutrients. Have the soil analyzed for plant nutrients. Your local K-State Research and Extension agents have information to guide you in taking the soil sample. From that sample, the agent can provide recommendations on what and how much
fertilizer to add to correct nutrient deficiencies. Organic materials such as compost, grass clippings, leaves, hay, straw or dried manure, can be tilled into the soil to help improve its condition. Time and weather conditions generally are more suitable in the fall than in the late winter and spring for preparing soil. If fruit plants can be set by early April, they will have developed a stronger root system to support plant growth than they would if planted later.

If there are only a few plants to be planted, consider tarping each planting area to guard against a wet spring delaying planting after plants are shipped and received.

Also, fruit tree planting can be done in the fall but plants may need to be watered during the winter if the weather is warm and dry. (Ward Upham)

**FLOWERS**

**Amaryllis, Bringing it Back In**

With proper care, amaryllis will bloom year after year. Bring the pot in before the first frost and place in a dark location. Withhold water so leaves have a chance to dry completely. Then cut them off close to the top of the bulb. Amaryllis needs to rest for at least a month before the plant is encouraged to grow. It takes an additional six to eight weeks for the plant to flower.

When you are ready for amaryllis to resume growth, water thoroughly and place the plant in a warm, sunny location. Do not water again until the roots are well developed because bulb rot is a concern. Amaryllis needs temperatures between 50 and 60 degrees during the period before flowering. Higher temperatures can weaken leaves. The flower bud may start to appear right away or the plant may remain dormant for a period of time, but eventually all mature bulbs do bloom if they have been given proper care during the growing season. Keep the plant in a cool location and out of direct sunlight when the flower buds begin to show color so that the flowers last longer. Amaryllis can remain in bloom for about a month. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Garlic Planting Time**

October is a good time to plant garlic (*Allium sativum*) if you want large quality cloves next summer. Apply 3 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet and mix into the soil before planting or fertilize according to soil test. Plant individual cloves point up and spaced 6 inches apart and 1 to 2 inches deep. The larger the clove planted, the larger the bulb at harvest. Water in well and mulch with straw to conserve soil warmth and encourage good establishment.
Harvest will not occur until next summer. Test dig when the lower 1/3 of the foliage is yellow. If the cloves have segmented, it is time to harvest. If they haven't segmented, wait another week or two. Elephant garlic (*Allium ampeloprasum*) should also be planted now. It is a plant with a milder garlic flavor and is actually a closer relative to the leek than to true garlic. (Ward Upham)

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http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html

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