

Horticulture 2019 Newsletter

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1712 Claflin, 2021 Throckmorton Plant Science Cntr.
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Video of the Week: [How to Grow Big, Bushy Mums](#)

FLOWERS

Pinching Mums



Though some garden mums do not require pinching back, most varieties will benefit. Pinching is done by removing the top inch of growth by pinching it between your thumbnail and forefinger. You can also use a scissors or even a pair of hedge shears.

Pinching encourages lateral buds to break and grow resulting in a shorter, sturdier and fuller plant. The first pinching is usually done when the mums reach six inches in height.

Remove about the top inch of growth. A second pinching should be done when the new growth from the previous pinch reaches about 4 inches. Cut the new growth down by about half. We may have time for one more pinch but maybe not as the last pinch should take place around July 4. Pinching later than July 4 can delay flowering resulting in a shorter time of flowering before frost kills the blooms. You may find a [video on pinching mums](#) helpful. It is found on our [Kansas Healthy Yards website](#). (Ward Upham)

Sidedressing Annual Flowers



We mentioned sidedressing last week but I wanted to emphasize its importance for annual flowers. Modern annual flowers have been bred to flower early and over a long period of time. They are not as easily thrown off flowering by high nitrogen levels as vegetables are. As a matter of fact, providing nitrogen through the growing season (sidedressing) can help maintain an effective flower display for warm-season flowers.

Apply a high nitrogen sidedressing four to six weeks after flowers have been set out. Additional fertilizations every three to four weeks can be helpful during a rainy summer, or if flower beds are irrigated. Common sources of nitrogen-only fertilizers include nitrate of soda, urea, and ammonium sulfate. Blood meal is an organic fertilizer that contains primarily, but not exclusively, nitrogen. Use only one of the listed fertilizers and apply at the rate given below.

Nitrate of soda (16-0-0): Apply 1/3 pound (.75 cup) fertilizer per 100 square feet.
Blood Meal (12-1.5-.6): Apply 7 ounces (7/8 cup) fertilizer per 100 square feet.
Urea (46-0-0): Apply 2 ounces (1/4 cup) fertilizer per 100 square feet.
Ammonium Sulfate (21-0-0): Apply 4 ounces (1/2 cup) fertilizer per 100 square feet.

If you cannot find the above materials, you can use a lawn fertilizer that is about 30 percent nitrogen (nitrogen is the first number in the set of three) and apply it at the rate of 3 ounces (3/8 cup) per 100 square feet. Do not use a fertilizer that contains a weed killer or weed preventer. (Ward Upham)

Deadheading Flowers



Some plants will bloom more profusely if the old, spent flowers are removed, a process called deadheading. Annuals especially, focus their energy on seed production to insure that the species survives. If you remove old flowers, the energy normally used to produce seed is now available to produce more flowers. Perennials can also benefit by lengthening the blooming season. However, some gardeners enjoy the look of spent flowers of perennials such as sedum or purple coneflower. Also, the seed produced can be a good food source for birds.

Not all plants need to be deadheaded, including sedum 'Autumn Joy', melampodium, impatiens, most flowering vines, Lythrum, periwinkle (Catharanthus), and wishbone flower (Torenia). Those that do increase bloom in response to deadheading include hardy geraniums, coreopsis, petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, begonias, roses, campanulas, blanket flowers, delphiniums, zinnias, sweet peas, salvia, scabiosa, annual heliotrope, geraniums (Pelargonium), and yarrow.

Deadheading is easily accomplished by removing spent flowers. With some plants, pinching between a thumb and finger can do this, but tough, wiry stems will require a scissors or pruning shears. (Ward Upham)

Rust on Hollyhock



Watch for rust on hollyhock. This is the most common disease on hollyhock and can cause serious injury as leaves are progressively killed through the summer. Look for yellow spots on the surface of the leaves and orangish to brown pustules on the underside. Infections can also take place on stems and green flower parts.

The first line of defense is to remove all hollyhock stalks, leaves and other debris in the fall and destroy them. Remove any infected foliage you see now. Just be sure the foliage is dry so you don't spread the disease. Continue to remove diseased leaves as soon as they show spots. Try using a fungicide such as sulfur or myclobutanil (Spectracide Immunox or Fertilome F-Stop Lawn and Garden Fungicide) to protect healthy foliage. Note that sulfur may burn leaves if the air temperature is over 85 degrees within 24 hours of application. Follow label directions for timing and rate. (Ward Upham)

FRUIT

Brown Rot of Stone Fruits



The wet weather we have seen in some areas has caused perfect conditions for the formation of brown rot on stone fruits such as peaches and plums. Affected fruit develop a gray to brown, fuzzy growth on the fruit, itself, which may rot in as little as a day or two. It is best to start treating fruit about a month before harvest. My peach varieties often ripen in early August but other varieties may be ready for harvest earlier. Fruit that shows symptoms cannot be saved but should be destroyed to prevent further spread.

Use Captan or myclobutanil (Immunox or F-Stop Lawn & Garden Fungicide) for control. Many fruit tree sprays contain Captan but check the label to be certain. Apply Captan or myclobutanil every 7 to 14 days. Both products can be applied up to the day of harvest. (Ward Upham)

TURF

Thatch Control in Warm-Season Lawns



Thatch control for cool-season lawn grasses such as bluegrass and tall fescue is usually done in the fall but now is the time we should perform this operation for warm-season turfgrasses such as bermudagrass and zoysiagrass. Because these operations thin the lawn, they should be performed when the lawn is in the best position to recover. For warm-season grasses that time is June through July. Buffalograss, our other common warm-season grass, normally does not need to be dethatched.

When thatch is less than one-half inch thick, there is little cause for concern; on the contrary, it may provide some protection to the crown (growing point) of the turfgrass. However, when thatch exceeds one-half inch in thickness, the lawn may start to deteriorate. Thatch is best kept in check by power-raking and/or core-aerating. If thatch is more than 3/4 inch thick, the lawn should be power-raked. Set the blades just deep enough to pull out the thatch. The lawn can be severely damaged by power-raking too deeply. In some cases, it may be easier to use a sod cutter to remove the existing sod and start over with seed, sprigs or plugs.

If thatch is between one-half and a 3/4- inch, thick, core-aeration is a better choice. The soil-moisture level is important to do a good job of core-aerating. It should be neither too wet nor too dry, and the soil should crumble fairly easily when worked between your fingers. Go over the lawn enough times so that the aeration holes are about 2 inches apart.

Excessive thatch accumulation can be prevented by not over-fertilizing with nitrogen. Frequent, light watering also encourages thatch. Water only when needed, and attempt to wet the entire root zone of the turf with each irrigation.

Finally, where thatch is excessive, control should be viewed as a long-term, integrated process (i.e., to include proper mowing, watering, and fertilizing) rather than a one-shot cure. One power-raking or core-aeration will seldom solve the problem. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Ticks



Ticks are becoming more active this spring, especially wood ticks, also called American dog ticks, *Dermacentor variabilis*. These are probably the most common tick encountered in Kansas and they are more common in grasses around field borders and areas with more trees. They can transmit several diseases and thus should be carefully and safely removed, head intact, before feeding occurs for more than a few minutes, if possible. For more information on the species of ticks found in Kansas, please see Household Pests of

Kansas (pg. 97): <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3291.pdf> (Jeff Whitworth & Holly Davis)

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