FOR RELEASE: May 26th, 2016

FIREBLIGHT ON APPLE AND PEAR

Fireblight is most common on ornamental pears, fruiting pears and apples. Symptoms of fireblight include blackened, blighted shoots scattered throughout the tree crown. The shoots may have the classic Shepherd's crook where the blighted tips bend downward. There may be small amber droplets of bacteria on the stem. This late in the season, antibiotic applications are not effective in controlling the disease. It is important, however, to control insects that may become contaminated with the bacterium and/or create wounds for infection. During the summer, prune out the blighted tips during dry weather. Make your pruning cut 10 to 12 inches below the discolored area of the branch. Disinfect pruning equipment between cuts with rubbing alcohol or some other disinfecting agent. Some people prefer the ugly stub method and snap the branch off below the blighted area. This helps someone see at a glance where fireblight occurred in the tree and will facilitate follow-up pruning during the winter.

Fuzz on Pin Oak Leaves

With all the concern with vein pocket gall, people will often become concerned with anything on a leaf that does not look natural. However, many pin oak trees have a fuzz that is found between the mid-vein and side-veins on the bottom side of a pin oak leaf. This fuzz is natural and is not a cause for concern. Note that there are fuzzy galls that can infect a pin oak leaf but they are not limited to the “V” between the mid-vein and side-vein. Though these galls also do not cause significant harm, they are not natural to the leaf but are caused by an insect or mite.

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 (Immunox or Immunox Plus) to protect healthy foliage. Note that sulfur may burn leaves if the temperature is over 85 degrees within 24 hours of application. Follow label directions.

Cucumber Beetles and Bacterial Wilt

If you had cucumbers or muskmelons that suddenly turned brown and died last year, you may have had a disease known as bacterial wilt. The cucumber beetle carries this disease. Once a plant is infected, there is no cure, so prevention is the key. Because cucumber beetles overwinter as adults, early control measures are essential. There are two types of cucumber beetles: striped and spotted. The striped cucumber beetle is the most common. The 1/4-inch-long beetles are conspicuously colored: black head and antennae, straw-yellow thorax, and yellowish wing covers with three distinct parallel and longitudinal black stripes. Young plants can be protected with row covers, cones, or other types of mechanical barriers. Edges must be sealed to ensure that the beetles do not find a place to enter. Plants will eventually outgrow these barriers, or they will need to be removed to allow insect pollination of the flowers. Apply insecticides before beetles are noticed in the planting. Continue to spray weekly throughout the season. Homeowners can use permethrin or cyfluthrin (numerous trade names). Once plants have started flowering, spray in the evening after bees have returned to the hive. Check labels for waiting periods between when you spray and when the fruit can be picked

Too Wet to Mow the Lawn

What do you do when the lawn can't be cut because of constant rain? The best thing to do is to set your mower as high as possible and bring it down in steps. It is always best never to take more than one third of the grass blade off at one time. If more is taken, the plant reacts by using stored energy reserves to quickly send up new growth. This reduces the amount of energy available for the plant to deal with stress or damage done by insects or disease. However, sometimes it is just not possible to keep the "one-third rule." In such cases, cut as high as possible even though it may mean you are cutting off more than one third of the blade. Bring the height down gradually by cutting at progressively lower heights until you reach the target height.

Time to Fertilize Warm-Season Grasses

June is the time to fertilize warm-season lawn grasses such as bermudagrass, buffalograss, and zoysiagrass. These species all thrive in warmer summer weather, so this is the time they respond best to fertilization. The most important nutrient is nitrogen (N), and these three species need it in varying amounts. Bermudagrass requires the most nitrogen. High-quality bermuda stands need about 4 lbs. nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. during the season (low maintenance areas can get by on 2 lbs.). Apply this as four separate applications, about 4 weeks apart, of 1 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. starting in early May. It is already too late for the May application, but the June application is just around the corner. The nitrogen can come from either a quick- or slow-release source. So any lawn fertilizer will work. Plan the last application for no later than August 15. This helps ensure the bermudagrass is not overstimulated, making it susceptible to winter-kill. Zoysiagrass grows more slowly than bermudagrass and is prone to develop thatch. Consequently, it does not need as much nitrogen. In fact, too much is worse than too little. One and one-half to 2 pounds N per 1,000 sq. ft. during the season is sufficient. Split the total in two and apply once in early June and again around mid-July. Slow-release nitrogen is preferable but quick-release is acceptable. Slow-release nitrogen is sometimes listed as “slowly available” or “water insoluble.” Buffalograss requires the least nitrogen of all lawn species commonly grown in Kansas. It will survive and persist with no supplemental nitrogen, but giving it ½ to 1 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. will improve color and density. This application should be made in early June. Buffalograss tends to get weedy when given too much nitrogen. As with zoysia, slow-release nitrogen is preferable, but fast-release is also OK. As for all turfgrasses, phosphorus and potassium are best applied according to soil test results because many soils already have adequate amounts of these nutrients for turfgrass growth. If you need to apply phosphorus or potassium, it is best to core aerate beforehand to ensure the nutrients reach the roots.