

PEONIES WITH THE "MEASLES" AND POWDERY MILDEW

The weather this summer has resulted in many peonies catching the "measles" and others getting powdery mildew. Measles is a disease, also known as red spot, that causes distinct, reddish-purple spots on the upper leaf surfaces. These spots often coalesce and become large, reddish purple blotches on the upper leaf surfaces but are a light brown color when viewed from the underside of the leaves. The spots on stems will merge and form streaks that are reddish brown.

Plants infected with powdery mildew look like they have been dusted with flour. This disease is more rare in Kansas than Measles but does show up in wet, humid summers. Sanitation is the best control for both these diseases. Remove all diseased tissue, including stems, at the end of the growing season. Actually, the foliage can be removed now with no harm to the plants as they are already essentially dormant. Mulch that contains plant debris should also be discarded and then replaced with fresh mulch. Reducing the source of the inoculum will reduce the chances of another severe outbreak next year.

Garden Spiders

People may become concerned when they see a large, noticeable spider setting up shop in or near the garden. These garden spiders feed on insects and are considered beneficial. There are actually two common species of garden spiders in Kansas that are active during the day. The yellow garden spider has a black abdomen with yellow to yellow-orange markings. The black legs have a yellow or reddish band. The banded garden spider has numerous bands on both the abdomen and legs. Those on the abdomen are alternating white and dark bands. The legs have alternating black and orange bands. Both of these spiders are orb weavers that spin large webs with the typical spider web shape. Though these garden spiders have poor eyesight, they are extremely sensitive to vibrations that pass through the web and use this sensitivity to capture their prey. Since these spiders are beneficial and harmless to humans, it is recommended that they be left alone.

Harvesting and Roasting Sunflower Seed

Sunflowers are usually ready to be harvested beginning in mid-September and into October. Seed heads can ripen on the plant, but they will need protection from birds. Try covering the heads with a paper sack or cheesecloth once the petals start turning brown. Use a twist tie or rubber band to secure the covering. This will not only help keep birds out but will prevent ripened seeds from dropping out of the head. Check for maturity by looking for the following signs:

- Florets in the brown center of the flower disk should be shriveled.
- Heads should have turned down.
- The backside of the head should be lemon yellow.

The ultimate check, of course, is to pull a few seeds to see if they have turned black with white stripes, the typical color. Empty shells usually indicate a lack of pollination earlier in the year. If heads are to remain uncovered, harvest when a few seeds start turning black and white. The flavor will not be good as when seeds are allowed to ripen on the plants, but fewer seeds will be lost.

Cut the heads and place in a paper sack. Some people prefer to cut the heads with about a foot of stem attached and hang them upside down in a dry, well-ventilated area. A paper bag or cheesecloth can be placed over the heads to prevent seeds from dropping as they dry. Seeds can be easily removed from dry heads by rubbing gently.

Roasting Seeds

Raw, mature seeds may be prepared at home by covering unshelled seeds with salted water (2quarts of water to 1/4 to 2 cup salt). Bring to a boil and simmer 2 hours, or soak in the salt solution overnight. Drain and dry on absorbent paper.

Put sunflower seeds in a shallow pan in a 300-degree F oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown, stirring occasionally. Take seeds out of the oven and add 1 teaspoon of melted butter or margarine, or cooking oil per 1 cup of seeds if they are to be eaten immediately. Stir to coat. Put on an absorbent towel. Salt to taste.

Little Barley in Lawns

Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in late September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer. So, why are we talking about little barley now? Because now is the time to control it for next year. The best control for little barley is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions. Overseeding now can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation.

However, if you do not plan to overseed, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden, and Amaze by Greenlight. Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Herodium* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide now and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.

Storing Apples

You can enjoy apples from January to June – with the right conditions. Some apple cultivars can be stored for longer periods than others. Some cultivars will stay in firm, crisp condition for about 6 to 8 months with good storage conditions. The approximate length of time cultivars will keep well under refrigerated conditions are as follows:

Wealthy: 60 days, Paulared: 90 days, Gala: 120 days, Jonathan: 120 days, Grimes Golden: 120 days, Golden Delicious: 150 days, Empire: 150 days, Delicious: 160 days, Braeburn: 180 days
Idared: 200 days, Rome Beauty: 220 days, Winesap: 220 days, Fuji: 240 days, Granny Smith: 240 days, Arkansas Black: 240 days

The condition of the apples and how they are stored will strongly influence the storage period. Some guidelines to help assure good quality and maximum storage life of apples include:

- * Store only the best quality.
- * Pick as they are first maturing.
- * Avoid skin breaks, disease or insect damage, and bruises on individual fruit
- * Store in a plastic bag to help retain moisture in the apples. The bag should have a few small holes for air exchange. The bags of apples may be stored in boxes to prevent bruising if they must be stacked or moved from time to time.
- * Refrigerate at about 35 degrees F. An extra refrigerator works well.
- * Sort about every 30 to 40 days to remove fruit that may be beginning to rot.