

The Grapevine

Mushrooms

All the moisture we have had over the last month plus the warm temperatures we added to it have brought the mushrooms out in full force this spring. There have been some unique and unusual ones spotted over the last couple weeks including the one to the right and while they can be unsightly there really isn't anything you can do to prevent them from coming up. Mushrooms are the fruiting body of a wood decay organism. The actual fungal organism is usually below ground and can be large roots, grass or even a buried stump of a tree. Sometimes the tree is long gone, other times it's still present and that's an indicator of concern for the health of a tree. Mushrooms growing at the base of a tree are not a good sign by the way. Regardless, you can't stop them. You can remove them as soon as you see them so they are less noticeable and that's about it. There are some edible mushrooms in the state of Kansas however I would only eat mushrooms if you have had them positively identified by a specialist.



Pinching Mums



Garden mums are some of my favorite fall blooming plants. I love the variety of colors they come in and how they add a beautiful pop of color to any garden in the fall. There is one problem with mums, if left to their own devices, they would bloom far earlier than we might like them to and in fact, they are already setting bloom buds as we speak. In order to get them to bloom in the fall, we need to pinch them back at least once during the summer. One pinch is helpful but if you start early enough you can even get two pinches in. Pinching is done with a thumbnail, scissors or pruning shears. We normally remove about an inch of growth from the stems. This makes the mum respond by bushing out which then produces more flower buds. Now, if you get them pinched soon and you get about 4 inches of new growth, pinch them again. But, you don't want to pinch mums after about the 4th of July. Pinching later than this can delay bud development and blooming so that it happens so late in the year they risk being nipped by frost.

Fast Transition

Summer sure showed up quickly and with a vengeance which hasn't give us much time to get used to the new temperatures. We've also gone from frequent and heavy rains to not hardly a chance of rain for a while. This can cause a rough transition for our vegetables, annuals flowers and any newly planted trees, shrubs or perennials. When the temperatures are cool and damp plants don't develop a deep or vigorous root system because they haven't needed one and often the soil was so saturated with water they couldn't develop a good root system. When the temperatures switch the plants will need a little bit of extra pampering for a couple weeks with extra water as the plants start to grow a deeper root system. Check plants several times a day especially in the morning. A plant that is wilted in the morning needs watered because they are dry, but if the plant fine in the morning but is wilting in the afternoon it's likely wilting in response to the mid-day heat. Be sure to check the soil around the wilting plant and water only if it is dry. With just a little pampering over the next couple weeks our vegetables and flowers will thrive even in the Kansas heat and humidity.





Pollinator Plant of the Week-

This week I wanted to highlight a beautiful native pollinator plant in the Baptisia, Blue Wild Indigo or Blue False Indigo. Baptisia is a large perennial plant that can reach up to four feet tall, has compound leaves with three leaflets that are deep green to green gray in color. The flowers are truly gorgeous in the spring with pea shaped flowers on an upright stalk 1-2 feet tall. The most common bloom color is a deep bluish purple as seen in the photo, but occasionally white or yellow flowers can be found. This native is a member of the bean family and is commonly found in prairies, along hillsides and in open woods. The seed pods of Baptisia are unique as they turn a dark brownish-black after they ripen and the seeds will rattle when shaken or when the wind blows. In the late fall the plant will turn silvery in color, break off at the base and tumble through the prairie to shed the seeds in new locations. Historically this plant was used by Native American tribes and settlers as a blue dye since the sap turns purple or slate colored when exposed to the air. There are several different cultivars of this native available for sale in the garden industry including dwarf varieties that are half the size of the true native, some with brown blooms and still others with red and white mixed blooms.

This native does not transplant well once it has gotten established as it has

an extensive tap root system but they can be moved when they are little. Baptisia prefers full sun to partial shade and is supposed to be deer resistant along with having relatively few disease or pest issues.

Insect of the Week-

I'm sure everyone recognizes this week's insect, the mosquito. With the rains we have had over the last few weeks the mosquitoes are about as common as backyard barbecues right now. While normally a mosquito bite is a temporary irritation they do have the ability to transmit a variety of human and animal diseases which we should avoid. Mosquitoes are small primitive flies the breed near standing water. The first few stages of their life they are completely dependent on water as they grow. The entire process from egg to adult can take as little as 7 to 10 days depending on the species. Female mosquitoes are the only mosquitoes that feed on blood and usually they must have a meal prior to being able to lay eggs. Many mosquito breeding sites can be traced to backyard containers filled with water along with ponds and other standing water. One of the easiest ways to reduce your mosquito population is to make sure to dump out toys, pots, bird feeders, etc every couple days in order to prevent mosquitoes from using it as a breeding ground. Unfortunately, this will have to be a community effort as mosquitoes can travel up to a half a mile looking for a meal. If you can't get rid of all the standing water in your backyard, treatment of the water can prevent mosquito larvae from growing. There are a variety of products that are available to reduce the mosquito population. Mosquito foggers can be used to temporarily provide relief of mosquitos for an evening, there are also bug zappers and other mosquito trapping devices that can work to reduce the population. Use sprays with caution because they can harm beneficial insects as well. When outside try to wear long sleeves, especially early in the morning or at night and use a repellent of some kind.



Reminders-

- Stop harvesting asparagus now so it can store up energy for the next year.
- Turn your compost pile periodically throughout the growing season.
- Watch for rust on hollyhock leaves. If you see some spots remove those leaves, when they are dry, as soon as possible and throw away to reduce the spread. You can spray the healthy foliage with a sulfur product to protect it, just be aware sulfur can burn foliage if the temperatures are above 85 degrees within the next 24 hours.

Upcoming Events

- *June 18, 2022: Victory Garden Tour*
Experience a by-gone era in today's world by traveling to two unique locations in our area. This is a benefit for the Preservation Fund for the Historic Buildings of the Kansas Oil Museum/Butler County Historical Society. Stroll down the boardwalk of Boomtown, reminiscing of days gone past of the 1920s. Spend time at our very own Victory garden, planted as those patriotic families would have done in honor of the war efforts on the home front. Dine al Fresco at the Museum in Boomtown under the canopy of trees with the gentle spring breezes. Enjoy a meal prepared special for the occasion, with recipes based on the era, by the Redler culinary institute. Enjoy special events and explore the Kansas Oil Museum and Butler County Historical Society. Purchase tickets at: <https://bit.ly/3NtRnK2>
- *July 6, 2022: Growing Culinary Mushrooms at Home*
Mushrooms can be a fun and tasty addition to your garden and dinner table. Pam Paulsen, Reno County Horticulture Extension Agent, will cover some of the most commonly cultivated mushroom species and walk through the steps of how to grow them successfully at home. The KSRE Garden hour sessions are held via Zoom starting at noon. For more information or to register [click here](#).