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Research and Extension
Butler County

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In this Issue:

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The Grapevine

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

I often struggle to figure out what to write every week in this newsletter, but it never fails that a question provides inspiration. This week, that inspiration came as a stick with an unusual pattern of holes. As you can see below, those holes were in perfect rows up and down the bark of the viburnum stick. Holes that are in a horizontal (most common) or vertical row are caused by the feeding of the yellow-bellied sapsucker. This woodpecker makes shallow holes and then feeds on the sap released from the wounds or on insects attracted to the site. Typically, we don't see the culprit, just the damage left behind. This bird will feed upon 250 different tree or shrub species. The branch I was given this week was from a leatherleaf viburnum shrub the bird had chosen to feed upon. This bird often attacks other trees, including apples, maples, and Bradford pear, but any tree species is a potential target. Surprisingly, certain trees may become favorites to the exclusion of nearby trees of the same species. Damage to mature, established trees is usually slight and temporary, though small trees may be girdled and killed. These birds are migratory and are typically present from October to April in Kansas. Treatment options include treating the trunk with a product called Tanglefoot or wrapping the area with a fine mesh or burlap to keep the birds away. These birds are protected and cannot be killed. At this point in the year, nothing needs to be done till this fall. Happy Growing!!!

Old and new holes pecked by a yellow-bellied sapsucker.

Photo by Tim Tigner, Virginia Department of Forestry, Bugwood.org

Leaf Spots on Tomatoes

Early Blight & Septoria Leaf Spot of Tomato

This weekend's rain was a welcome relief, with all the rain chances we had missed in the previous weeks. While the rain was a welcome sight, the moisture, cooler temperatures, cloudy days, and higher humidity can lead to potential disease issues in our vegetable gardens. Early blight and Septoria leaf spot are the two most common leaf spot diseases on tomatoes. While they can occur at any time during the growing season, they usually start to appear and become more severe right after blooms begin to set fruit. Both of these diseases are commonly found in the ground and first infect the plants as the fungi splash onto the lower leaves through rain or watering. These diseases gradually work their way up the plant, slowly defoliating it. While these diseases are common, Septoria leaf spot tends to be the disease we see more in Kansas.

Septoria Leaf Spot

While both are leaf spot diseases, they are easily distinguished in the field. Septoria leaf spot will have circular, tan to gray lesions that develop on the plant's lower leaves. These lesions are typically small (less than 1/8"), but the entire leaf may become blighted as the lesions become more numerous. The lesions usually have a dark-brown perimeter and may have a yellow halo around the spots. This disease only impacts the leaves and will not infect the fruit. Septoria leaf spot usually has smaller and more numerous spots than Early Blight. Early blight causes irregular, brown leaf spots that range in size up to 1/2" in diameter. The spots for early blight also form dark, concentric rings within the lesion, giving the spots a target-like appearance. Often, these lesions coalesce into one big spot, causing the entire leaf to turn yellow, dry up, and fall off the plant. While early blight is typically a foliage disease, lesions may develop on both stems and fruit. The fruit lesions are tan to brown, leathery, and usually originate at the stem end of the fruit.

Early Blight

Remove any infected leaves as soon as possible to reduce the spread of the fungus to other leaves. When possible, try to water the plant from the bottom using soaker hoses rather than overhead sprinklers. Use mulch around the plants to reduce the chances that fungi can splash onto lower leaves from the ground. As the plants grow, I recommend removing the lower leaves up to about a foot above the ground. This also lessens the chances that the pathogen can come in contact with the plant. If you see any leaves with spots, try to remove them as soon as possible to prevent the disease from going further up the plant. Both fungal pathogens overwinter on plant debris, seeds, and surrounding weeds. To reduce the chances of disease next year, remove all plant debris at the end of the gardening year and dispose of it (don't compost it as a compost pile won't get hot enough to kill the pathogens), then remove weeds in and around the garden as much as possible. You should also rotate the tomatoes through your garden so you aren't planting them in the same spot yearly. You can spray your tomatoes with fungicides to reduce the spread of the disease; however, it won't get rid of the disease on leaves that have been infected. Use products with the active ingredients Chlorothalonil or Maneb to help control the disease.

Insect of the Week- Rose Sawfly

We have received numerous inquiries about insects feeding on the leaves of rose plants. The insects are sawflies, and there are at least two species that attack roses this time of year: the rose slug, *Endelomyia aethiops*, and the bristly rose slug, *Cladius difformis*. Rose slugs are the immature or larval stage that eventually becomes a black to yellow-colored adult, which resembles a wasp. Rose sawfly females create openings or slits along the edges of rose leaves with their saw-like egg laying device (ovipositor) and insert eggs. Larvae emerge from the eggs and resemble small slugs. Larvae are approximately 1/2 of an inch long when full-grown and yellow-green, with an orange head.

Rose slug larvae feed on the underside of rose leaves, causing the leaves to appear skeletonized (Figures 3 and 4). The larvae create notches or holes on the leaf margins. Bristly rose slug larvae feed on the underside of rose leaves, causing leaves to appear skeletonized. However, the larvae create larger holes than the rose slug. Small infestations of either the rose sawfly or bristly rose slug can be dealt with by removing the larvae by hand and placing them into a container of soapy water. A high-pressure water spray will quickly dislodge sawfly larvae from rose plants, and they will not crawl back onto rose plants. There are several contact insecticides containing various active ingredients that are effective in managing populations of both sawflies. Sawflies are not caterpillars. Consequently, the bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki*, which is the active ingredient in various products (e.g. Dipel®), has no activity on sawflies because the insecticide is only effective against caterpillars.

Question of the Week- Powdery Mildew

Our question for the week is about powdery mildew. The weather conditions over the last week have been ideal for disease growth, including this fungal disease. Powdery mildew produces a white powdery substance that grows on the upper leaf surfaces of the lower leaves. These leaves and others may become twisted, distorted, and then wilt and die due to having been infected with this fungus. Powdery mildew is favored by high relative humidity at night (which favors fungal spore formation), low relative humidity during the day (which favors spore dispersal), and temperatures of 70 to 80 degrees. Powdery mildews are parasitic fungi that can only utilize the nutrients of a live host plant. Although the powdery mildew seldom kills its hosts, the fungi reduce the amount of photosynthesis taking place, increase respiration and transpiration, and cause slower growth.

If powdery mildew occurs in the late summer or fall, it is usually not necessary to apply a fungicide, since the plant will have stored sufficient energy to flower and put on foliage the following spring. However, when powdery mildew attacks in the spring or early summer, it may be necessary to spray an appropriate fungicide to control the disease. A fungicide can be applied as soon as the first symptoms appear, with follow-up sprays every 7 to 14 days while conditions are favorable for the growth and spread of this disease. Labeled products include chlorothalonil, myclobutanil, propiconazole, and copper-containing fungicides. Powdery mildew is common on squash and cucumber plants in the garden, along with several plants in the flower bed. If possible, in the vegetable garden, plant resistant varieties and space the plants to provide adequate airflow around the leaves.

Video of the Week

Heat-Loving Perennials for Kansas

Discover the beauty and resilience of heat-loving perennials that thrive in Kansas' climate. Learn tips on selecting and caring for low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants that add color and texture to your landscape. This session will provide practical advice for creating a thriving garden in even the harshest Kansas environments. Watch the video on the Kansas Garden Hour website.

Start Scouting for Bagworms! They should start hatching over the next few weeks. Wait to treat till early June when most of them have hatched!

Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:
June 4th- Native and Ornamental Grasses for Kansas

July 2nd- Cutting Edge Efforts in Kansas Demo Gardens

August 6th- Innovations in Horticultural Research at Kansas State University

Upcoming Events:

June 18th at 5:30 pm
Troubleshooting Issues in the Garden at Benton Community Building

June Garden Calendar

Vegetables and Fruits

- Renovate June bearing strawberry beds
- Fertilize strawberries and water regularly to promote new growth
- Plant another crop of sweet corn and green beans
- Watch tomatoes for foliar leaf disease development and treat
- Mulch crops for moisture conservation and weed control
- Continue a regular fruit tree disease and insect control program
- Treat peach trees for trunk borers
- Remove sucker growth from the base of trees and along branches
- Pinch herbs to keep them bushy and fresh with new growth
- Turn the compost pile and keep it moist for quicker breakdown

Flowers

- Pinch chrysanthemums for the development of a bushy plant
- Deadhead spent flower blossoms to keep the plant flowering
- Remove flower stalks from peonies and Iris
- Mulch flower gardens to conserve moisture, control weeds, and cool the soil
- Fertilize roses with about 1 cup of low-analysis fertilizer per plant
- Trim spent rose blossoms and check plants for insects
- Water and fertilize container plantings regularly to encourage flowering

Lawns

- Raise mowing height on tall fescue to 3” or 3 ½” for summer heat
- Fertilize zoysia lawns with a high-nitrogen fertilizer
- Sod or plug bare areas in zoysia lawns
- Spot treat for broadleaf weeds
- Core aerate zoysia lawns for the removal of thatch and overall vigor
- Water turf sparingly to increase drought tolerance
- Let grass clippings fall for nutrient recycling
- Check mower blades for sharpness and sharpen as needed

Trees and Shrubs

- Check for bagworms and control as needed
- Mulch around the base of trees and shrubs
- Prune pines and spruce trees to shape and control size
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs
- Water newly planted trees and shrubs as needed
- Check for spider mite damage on various shrubs

Houseplants

- Fertilize throughout the summer months to encourage growth
- Take cuttings to start new plants
- Repot plants as needed in 1” larger containers
- Check for insect problems

Native & Ornamental Grasses of Kansas

Wednesday, June 4th 12:00PM -1:00PM CST

Join Markis Hill, Johnson County Horticulture Extension Agent, as he explores Kansas's native and ornamental grasses. Learn about grasses that thrive in the state's climate, including drought-tolerant, low-maintenance species. Gain tips on selecting, planting, and caring for these grasses, highlighting their aesthetic, environmental, and wildlife benefits. Gain valuable knowledge for creating sustainable, beautiful landscapes with grasses suited to Kansas's conditions.

Register Here!

Please register for this free Zoom Webinar at:
ksre-learn.com/KStateGardenHour

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