The Grapevine

Pine Wilt

This issue is a major problem for a variety of mature pine trees across the state of Kansas. Pine Wilt is caused by the pinewood nematode (a microscopic worm) and affects Scotts, Austrian, white and mugo pines in the eastern 2/3 of the state of Kansas. The nematode is carried from one tree to another by the pine sawyer beetle. Female beetles lay their eggs under the bark of pine trees usually during the summer and the eggs hatch then the larvae tunnel deep into the wood. While the larvae are maturing, the nematodes are also maturing. Just after the adult sawyer beetle breaks out of its pupal shell, large numbers of pinewood nematode larvae move into the tracheae (breathing tubes) of the new adult beetle. These nematodes are then carried to new host plants by the beetles.

While we call this “Pine Wilt” it is truly not a disease because, the damage is caused by the nematode feeding and multiplying in the trees resin canals which ultimately blocks the movement of food and water throughout the tree leading to the wilting a death of the plant. In Kansas the wilt infestations are most apparent starting in August through December and infected trees can die over a period of weeks or months depending on the tree. In the first stages the needles turn gray-green then yellow then brown. The change can happen branch by branch or the damage may show up all at once over the entire plant. During the early stages Pine wilt can be confused with tip blight (a fungal disease of pines that causes damage to the new growth of the pine tree. Damage shows up in late May or early June) however tip blight has different symptoms and causes slow die back of the tree over years rather than months. If you are concerned you have pine wilt one way to check is cutting a live or recently turned brown branch off the tree. For pines impacted by Pine wilt there will be a decrease in amount of resin since the nematodes feed on the resin canals. Once a tree has died the needles will remain on the tree for up to a year.

The most important step to prevent the spread of Pine wilt is sanitation. If a tree is suspected of having Pine wilt or has died try to get it cut down and removed by May 1st at the latest, preferably April 1st, to prevent the beetles from emerging and flying away. Be sure to cut the tree all the way to the ground and do not leave a stump. The wood from the tree should be chipped or burned immediately. Don’t save the wood for firewood as the beetles will hatch from the wood. If possible, avoid stress on the tree as much as you can. During periods of drought be sure to water the tree periodically to keep it healthy as the beetles are attracted to trees that are stressed. If the tree hasn’t been infested by the nematodes there are injections that can be done to help prevent death from Pine wilt. I should note that none of the treatments are 100% effective and they must be done by a professional. There is research being done on possible cultivars of resistant pines at the John C. Pair center near Haysville so I hope that in the future we will have some new evergreen options for windbreaks and landscape trees. At this time I would not recommend planting Scotts or Austrian pines in the state of Kansas. Hopefully in the future we can plant pines again but for now other evergreens are our only option.
Tips for Picking Fruit
How do you know when to pick apples or pears? Several varieties of pears and apples are ripe and ready to pick but how do you know when they are ready to harvest? For apples there are a couple factors that play a role in determining when to pick the fruit:

- Days from bloom- many varieties list how many days from bloom time till the apple will be ripe. Weather can influence the number of days but as a rule of thumb you can get pretty close with this measure.
- Flesh color- As apples ripen the flesh turns from a light green to a white color. Pick an apple and cut it open, if it’s green it’s not ripe yet.
- Seed Color- As the apples ripen the seeds turn from green to brown signaling the fruit is ripe and ready to eat.
- Color change- As apples mature, the skin color around the stem and at the bottom turns from a green to a light yellow color. This isn’t always reliable in red apples which maybe red instead of yellow.
- Flavor- If you know what this variety is supposed to taste like you can use flavor as an indicator the fruit is ripe.

Pears are ripening now through October however unlike apples we don’t wait till pears are fully ripe in order to harvest them. Pears develop a gritty texture if left to ripen on the tree. Pears that are ready to harvest change to a darker green color and some varieties have brown spots on the skin. The fruit will separate easily from the stem when they are ready to be picked. Pears should be stored at refrigerator temperatures for two days to several weeks depending on the variety then left on the counter to ripen for several weeks.

Insect of the Week- Green June Bug
This week we are highlighting the Green June Beetle. These metallic green insects are nearly one inch long but they start their life cycle as a grub in the soil. Green June beetle larvae are actually edible (Lion King movie anyone?) and are often found in the ground but also on sidewalks and driveways around the home. Adult beetles feed on the foliage and fruit of trees in mid-summer, often causing damage to the foliage similar to that of Japanese beetles just not quite on the same scale. They are particularly fond of peaches, plums and grapes. Grubs feed on decaying organic matter as well as the underground portions of plants such as sweet potatoes and carrots. Unlike other grubs these insects do not cause damage to the turf other than the tunneling that they do. In an unique note, Green June beetle grubs have been known to feed on Japanese beetle grubs and cutworms so there is some thought they could have a beneficial impact. Usually control is not needed for these insects, however the grubs are susceptible to carbaryl sprinkled on the soil surface (don’t water it it as the grubs come to the surface) unlike other grubs in the soil. The adults can be easily caught or knocked into a bucket of soapy water if they are a nuisance. These insects are attracted to over ripe fruit so be sure to pick fruits as they ripen to reduce the chances the adults will visit your orchard.

Plant of the Week- Surprise Lilies
This week we are going to highlight one of the beauties blooming right now in many people’s gardens, the surprise lily or also commonly called the naked lady. These plants are in the Amaryllis family and are a type of perennial bulb. The bulbs are about three inches in diameter and can persist for many years once established. The plant gets it’s name because the blooms randomly pop up in the summer where no foliage is currently growing. These bulbs have silvery gray or greenish strap-like foliage measuring 12” long and approximately one inch wide that emerges from late winter to early spring. This foliage then dies away in late spring and the flowers emerge in later summer with pale pink trumpet like flowers on two-foot-tall stalks. This bulb is native to southeast China, Japan and Korean in disturbed areas in valleys and along streams. These flowers are easy to grow in full sun to partial shade. Plant the bulbs at a depth of 8 to 12 inches and space them about 6 inches apart. These plants should be watered moderately during the growing season and sparingly during their rest times.
Video of the week: Dividing Peonies
There are three perennial flowers that are found on most farms in the state of Kansas. This includes peonies, iris, and daylilies. Peonies grow well in Kansas, and will flourish with very little care. And, fall is the best time to divide or transplant peonies to share with other family members and neighbors. Watch the video here: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/dividing-peonies-to-share

Roasted Vegetable Tacos

Ingredients
- 1 medium onion
- 1 zucchini
- 1 yellow squash
- 1 large carrot
- 8-ounce container of white mushrooms or baby bellas
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons taco seasoning
- ½ teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS
1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Cut the vegetables into a ¼ inch dice. This takes a few minutes, but your work will be well worth it in the end. It is a good time to practice your knife skills.
3. Toss the cut vegetables with the olive oil, taco seasoning, and salt. You can do this in a large bowl or plastic bag.
4. Place the vegetable mixture on a sheet pan lined with parchment or foil (this makes clean up easy).
5. Cook the vegetable mixture 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring the mixture half-way through.
6. Assemble the tacos on warmed tortillas.

(Source: https://medinsteadofmeds.com/roasted-vegetable-tacos/)
Reminders-
- Never fertilize warm season grasses after August 15th.
- Divide Iris and daylilies if needed.
- Fertilize strawberry plants

Upcoming Events

- **September 6th at Noon- Seed Saving from your Garden**
  Seed saving is a fun way to enjoy gardening without breaking the bank. Most plants produce seeds that can be saved from one year to the next, however, not all seeds are equally suited for saving. Jesse Gilmore, Wildcat Extension District Horticulture Extension Agent, will discuss the merits of seed saving, the different types of flowers and seeds, and which plants are most suited to seed saving. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: [https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/)

- **September 14th at 6 pm- Winter Care of Houseplants- Bradford Memorial Library in El Dorado**
  Over 66% of U.S. households have at least one houseplant, but often the terms used to describe their care can be confusing. Decode common houseplant terms related to light, water, and other plant needs. Learn about some unique houseplants and the best practices to keep them thriving. Join us at the Bradford Memorial Library (611 S. Washington St. El Dorado, KS) at 6 pm for this free webinar. There will be free cuttings of some houseplants given away!

- **October 4th at Noon- Putting your Garden to Bed: Winter Garden Prep**
  The growing season is nearly over, but your garden work may not be done just yet. Join Anthony Reardon, West Plains District Horticulture Extension Agent, as you learn about all of the various gardening tasks that can help your landscape throughout the winter and prepare your garden for the growing season to come. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: [https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/)

- **October 15th from Noon to 4 pm- Houseplant and Perennial Plant Swap- Date Change!!!!!**
  Have your houseplants grown like crazy this year and need a trim or did you divide some perennials and have extras? Bring your plants to the Plant Swap hosted by the Butler County Master Gardeners. The rules are simple: 1) Bring at least one plant, cutting or seeds to trade or sell, 2) All swaps must be labeled with plant name, 3) All plants must be pest and disease free. This event is free to attend, just bring your favorite plants to share with plant lovers in your community!!! Register so we can have enough tables: [https://forms.gle/ddB6As2f53Cf9PZa9](https://forms.gle/ddB6As2f53Cf9PZa9)