The Grapevine

Bees on Hummingbird Feeders
I love feeding the hummingbirds and watching them as they flit around my backyard in part because their attitude and spunk despite their small size along with their colors. While I love feeding the hummingbirds, I’m less thrilled about the wasps and bees that may frequent my feeders. While the insects usually are only a nuisance to me when I’m trying to fill the feeders or work in that area, occasionally some wasps might become territorial and chase the hummingbirds away from the feeders. I usually ignore the insects unless they become too big of an issue but there are some instances where I do feel the need to act. Bees and wasps are usually attracted to the feeders in late summer or into fall when other nectar sources are not as plentiful however in times of drought or hot weather they can also be attracted to the feeders. Bees can usually be discouraged from coming to the feeders by removing them for three to four days till they find new nectar sources but this method doesn’t always work on wasps. Another way to keep the insects from getting into the feeder is by using bee guards similar to the photo on the left. The cages allow hummingbirds with their longer beak and tongue to still feed while keeping the bees and wasps with their shorter mouth parts away from the feeder. Both of these methods involve excluding the bee from the feeder. Another way to keep bees and wasps from vising your feeder is to provide nectar sources for the insects in the form of flowering plants throughout your landscape so they have adequate amounts of food available. You could also feed the bees by making a homemade bee feeder similar to the photo on the right. Take a mason jar of any size then poke holes in the lid of the jar to allow for a wicking material to be pulled through. Any material will work for these wicks but a wider material to allow more space for the bees to land would work best. Fill the jar with the same sugar water that you put in your hummingbird feeder and set the jar in a location away from your hummingbird feeders or places where you like to sit and let the bees find it. This feeder is easier for the bees to access and is attractive to all types of bees. Hopefully one of these ideas will help you enjoy your hummingbird feeders all summer long without hurting any bees in the process.

Harvesting Onions and Garlic
If you planted onions or garlic in your garden the time is upon us to start harvesting those crops. Garlic typically matures starting sometime in early June and, depending on the species, can be harvested till mid-July. Your garlic is ready to harvest when you have approximately 5 green leaves left on the plant and the rest are turning brown. It’s best to stop watering garlic a couple weeks before you plan to harvest so it’s easier to pull. Onions are ready to pull when over half of the tops of your plants have fallen over. This happens when the bulbs have reached their mature full size. Both of these plants should be allowed to dry out of direct sunlight for several weeks before storing them for the year. You can braid the stalks of garlic together so you can hang them for storage or you can cut the stalks and roots off (1” for garlic, ½” for onions) above the bulb and store in a cool, dry location. Both should be stored at temperatures below 40 degrees for the longest shelf life in an area with low humidity to prevent sprouting. Garlic can store for 9 months or more depending on the variety while onions will last a shorter period of time depending on the variety.
Spider mites in the Garden
With the warmer temperatures last week and a lack of moisture in the area spider mite populations likely increased dramatically across the area as under the right condition’s spider mites can hatch and complete their larval stages in a week or two. Spider mites damage plants by feeding on the sap on the underside of the leaves. This injury produces tiny white and yellow spots giving leaves a mottled or stippled appearance. The webs as seen in the photo to the left are also a sign that you have spider mites on your plants. Severely infested plants can be damaged, less productive or even die if the infestation is severe enough. Since they are a mite and not an insect many common insecticides don’t work on them. To control the mites first reduce the population by spraying the plants down with a strong stream of water to dislodge the mites. There are several natural predators that feed on mites including lady beetles and predatory mites however if the population is too high, the natural enemies are less effective at controlling them since their reproductive cycle is slower than the spider mite. If you have an infestation of spider mites and the above recommendations aren’t working the most effective pesticides for spider mites are insecticidal soap, Neem oil or a summer horticultural oil (make sure it is the summer formulation not dormant oil, which is more common, otherwise it will burn the plants!!!). These products will only kill the spider mites that they come in direct contact with and have no residual control so be sure to spray the plant thoroughly and reapply several times according to the label instructions. One spray unfortunately will not be enough to control these mites. Pesticides with the active ingredient bifenthrin and permethrin can be used to kill spider mites however they also kill the natural predators which in some cases can make the infestations worse in the long run.

Vegetable Fruit Set
Last week’s high temperatures might be nothing but a memory now but the impact they had on our vegetable gardens will probably start to show up on our vegetable plants in several weeks. If we have nighttime temperatures above 75 and daytime temperatures above 85, tomatoes are unlikely to set any fruit even though they are blooming like crazy. The temperature causes the tomato plant to become stressed. This also changes the flowers and makes it harder for them to become pollinated. But don’t worry, once temperatures cool down a little bit the tomatoes will be back to producing enough fruit to feed a small village. If your plants weren’t blooming even before the heat but were developing in to big bushy plants you might have over fertilized them this spring. Overfertilization leads to vigorous plant growth but fewer blooms or fruit set. On tomatoes try not to fertilize with nitrogen till the plant has already set its first round of fruit to avoid excessive vegetative growth. Green beans will also drop flowers if there are hot temperatures over 95 degrees especially if the soil is dry.

Vining crops such as squash, cucumbers, watermelon and pumpkins can have a different issue. They have male and female flowers on the same plant. Typically, the early blooms are all male flowers which means there won’t be any fruit from them however after a few weeks the plant finds a balance of male to female flowers. It’s easy to distinguish the male from the female flowers as the female flowers have a tiny fruit behind the blossom (in photo burgundy arrow (top) is the female flower, yellow arrow (bottom) is the male). The heat can also change which types of flowers that are created with higher temperatures (90 degrees during the day and 70 degrees or warmer at night) favoring having more male flowers instead of female flowers.

If you have both male and female flowers but still aren’t getting fruit set make sure you are seeing pollinators visiting the flowers. Tomatoes are pollinated by wind typically and don’t necessarily need pollinators but vining crops do. If you don’t see many pollinators visiting your garden try using a paint brush to transfer pollen from male to female flowers. If you are only getting fruit on the flowers you pollinated you need more pollinators. Much like the flowers, bees don’t like it really hot and will start to decrease their pollination when temperatures get above 90 degrees. Once temperatures start to cool down the bees and the flowers will go back to normal. Till then we just have to water as needed and wait for the temperatures drop again.
Squash Vine Borer
If you have noticed squash plants suddenly wilting, even in the cooler morning temperatures you need to check the stalk for squash vine borers. The adults of this insect are a clearwing moth that start to emerge in late June through early July and lay eggs on squash plants. These eggs will hatch in approximately a week and the larvae will begin feeding on the stems of the plants. Squash vine borers feed on summer and winter squash along with pumpkins causing yellowing leaves and wilting. Look for sawdust type material that is moist, green/orange in color and located near holes at the base of the stem. Treating the plant for the larvae is difficult so it is best to monitor the plants prior to the adults hatching and treat before the larvae can infect the plant. Treatment should begin when the squash plants begin to spread and be reapplied every seven to ten days through the end of June. Be sure to spray the crown of the plant and the base of the runners. Use products with the active ingredient’s permethrin or bifenthrin applied either as a spray or as a dust. Another option is to plant squash in early July so the plants will mature while the larvae are pupating rather than when they are active. You can also plant Hubbard squash as a perimeter around your field as a trap crop since squash vine borers prefer it to other varieties.

Video of the week: Drying Flowers- Long Lasting and Colorful
With all the beautiful flowers that are currently blooming around the area I always wish I could have those beautiful blooms all winter long. Drying flowers is an age-old process that's easy to do. Many types of flowers dry well, and some varieties keep their color for a long time -- which means you can enjoy colorful bouquets throughout the year. Watch the video here: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/drying-flowers-long-lasting-and-colorful

Reminders-
- Core aerate zoysia to prevent thatch build-up and aerate the soil.
- Side dress tomatoes when they are full sized but still green. Do not over fertilize or you will get less fruit.
- Spray for Bagworms.
- Sharpen your lawn mower blade.
Upcoming Events

- **July 5th at Noon - Solutions to Your Top Garden Insect and Disease Problems**
  Insects, diseases, and weather-related problems are always an issue in the landscape & garden. Judy O'Mara, Director of the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab, and Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Extension Specialist in Horticultural Entomology, are here to help! Learn to identify and solve the plant problems you should be on the lookout for, and bring your insect & disease questions for assistance from our experts. 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/

- **July 20-25th, 2022: Butler County Fair**
  Don’t forget to stop by the Fairgrounds and check out all the 4-H and other exhibits at the Butler County Fair. Check out the Open class list and bring some of your projects or produce to exhibit at the fair this year!!! For more information, including the schedule and a list of Open class exhibits check out the fair website: https://www.butler.k-state.edu/4hfair/

- **August 2nd at Noon - Integrating Native Plants into your Home Landscape**
  Native plants are growing in popularity in the home landscape. Dr. Sharon Ashworth, Douglas County Horticulture & Natural Resources Extension Agent, will discuss the ecological benefits of native plants and how to successfully integrate natives into your landscape. Learn about what defines a native plant, which native plants work best, and what maintenance is required to grow a beautiful landscape of natives. 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/