

# The Grapevine

## Mowing Safety only takes a Moment

Over the weekend I heard the lawn mowers singing me the song of their people around our neighborhood. With the beautiful weather and some time to myself I was able to spend most of the weekend out doors working on some yard and landscaping projects. As spring arrives and it's time to mow the lawn for the first time I think it's important to remind people that lawn mower accidents are all too common with 85,000 people going to the ER every year for lawn mower related accidents, approximately 800 children being run over by lawn mowers every year causing about 600 amputations and 75 people are killed every year (one in five of those are kids). Here are a few tips that can help keep you and your family safe this lawn mowing season:



- Wear proper clothing: While it can be tempting to work on your tan while mowing it's important to wear clothes that can protect you from any debris that could come flying out. Wear sturdy shoes with good soles and long pants along with ear and eye protection. Lawn mower blades spin at speeds of up to 200 miles per hour and any debris thrown can fly quickly.
- Keep safety guards in place: While it might be tempting to remove any weight restrictions, disable the seat belt on riding lawn mowers or remove guards it is important to keep them in place for your safety. The guards keep debris from flying out and hitting you while the seat belt keeps you from falling off.
- Beware of slopes: Roll overs on riding lawn mowers is the number one killer of people in accidents. Try to mow up and down the slope rather than across it.
- Clear yard of all debris: Clear the yard of all debris such as sticks, toys, rocks, etc before you start to mow. While it might be fun to send Osage orange fruit flying across the yard for the dog to chase it isn't very safe.
- Disconnect spark plug wire: Always disconnect the spark plug wire before changing the oil or doing any work on a lawn mower. This prevents any accidents from happening with the lawn mower starting accidentally.

Just a few minutes of time and care can prevent numerous accidents this mowing season. Stay safe out there.

## Pesticide Safety

Spring is the time when homeowners start waging a war on insects and weeds around their home. No matter if you are using organic or synthetic chemicals using them correctly is vital to your health and how well the chemical works. Pesticides can be an important tool in your gardening toolbox, but only if they are used properly. Here are some tips to use pesticides safely around your home this year.

- Correctly identify what you want to control: Before applying any chemical the first step is to figure out what you are trying to control in the first place whether it's a weed, an insect or a disease. If you apply the wrong product you won't solve your problem and you could make it worse. If you can't figure out what is going on contact me and I can help you figure out what is going on. In some cases, pesticides might not be needed at all.
- Choose the right pesticide: Once you know what you are trying to control, then you can figure out what product to use. There are thousands of products on the market so your first step when shopping for a product is to read the label to see if the pest, disease or issue you need to control is listed. You should also consider some other factors when picking a chemical including environmental



safety, ease of use, cost and application equipment needed. If possible choose the pesticide with the lowest environmental impact or danger rating possible.

- **Read the Label!!!** The label will give you all the information needed to safely apply that chemical including the clothes to wear, the rate to apply, the weather to apply in, how long till it's rain fast and how to clean up after the chemical is applied. Be sure to **read the label** before mixing or applying any chemical.
- **Clothing counts:** Most of the time exposure to chemicals can be prevented by wearing the proper clothing including closed toed rubber shoes, long pants, long sleeved shirts and the correct gloves. It's important to wear the right clothing. After you finish your application, wash your clothes using powder laundry detergent on the hottest and deepest water setting that the washing machine has. Be sure to wash those clothes separate from all other clothing to prevent chemicals from getting on your family's clothes. To clean the washer, run it one cycle after you wash the spray clothes.
- **Don't forget the Shoes:** Be sure to remove any shoes you used spraying outside the house and triple rinse them off to make sure the chemical has been removed. If possible, leave them in a garage and use them only outside.
- **Always use original container:** No matter what chemical you use always keep it in the original container. If a neighbor asks to borrow some chemical always send the main bottle, never give them some in a pop or other bottle. There have been too many cases where someone accidentally drinks chemicals because it wasn't stored properly. If you must transfer it to another container clearly label that product and include the label when possible.
- **Storage and Disposal:** Make sure to store all chemicals away from children, preferably in a locked cabinet. Chemicals also should not be allowed to freeze in the winter as this impacts how well effective they are. If you have extra chemical that you won't use be sure to dispose of it properly at a hazardous waste collection site. Never dump chemicals down the drain or pour them out on to the ground. Once a bottle is empty be sure to triple rinse the bottle before disposing of it.



Pesticide safety is an important aspect of working in a lawn or garden. Even organic chemicals can be harmful if you are exposed to them. Chemicals themselves are not bad, they are simply a tool in a gardeners tool box when used correctly. The issues happen when you don't read the label and don't follow the instructions. Remember to be safe, read the label and have a wonderful gardening season.

### **Insect of the Week- Elm Leaf Beetle**



The insect question of the week is the Elm Leaf Beetle. This insect feeds on the leaves of all elms but is especially fond of Siberian and American Elm trees. While their feeding generally will not kill the tree, over time it can weaken the trees and leave them open for attack by the elm bark beetle which carries Dutch Elm Disease. These beetles also become a nuisance of households in the fall as they look for a place to overwinter which often can be inside a house and in the spring when they leave their overwintering site to find leaves to feed on. The larva of the beetle is the most destructive and they are about ½" long and dull yellow with two black stripes. When the larva emerge from the eggs they feed for two to three weeks before dropping or crawling to the base of the tree to pupate for 10 days. The

adult beetles are about ¼" long, yellowish to olive green with a black stripe along the side of each of the wing covers, black eyes and four black dots on the thorax. While these insects won't kill the tree they do weaken it and make it unsightly. To control the insects you have two options. The first is to spray the foliage and thoroughly cover all of it to kill any insects. The second option is to treat the larva when they are near the base of the tree and just prior to pupation. At this time only the trunk of the tree would need to be sprayed. Unfortunately, it's best to have a community wide approach to treating trees as the beetles will spread from one tree that wasn't treated to another. Be sure to read the label before application but some active ingredients that are recommended to spray on elm leaf beetles include Carbaryl (Ferti-lome liquid Carbaryl Garden Spray), Cyfluthrin (Bayer Advanced Multi-insect killer), Imidacloprid (Bayer advanced tree and shrub insect control), Neem (Ferti-lome Triple Action Plus), Pyrethrins (Spectracide Garden Insect Killer).



## Weed of the Week- Crabgrass

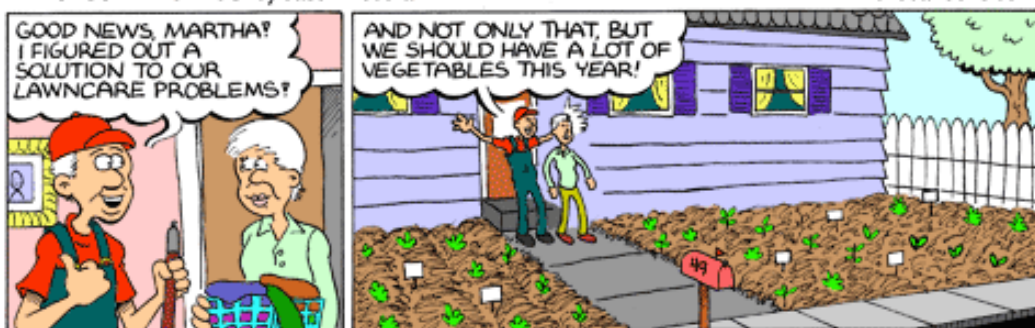
Crabgrass is one of the biggest weed issues that many homeowners face in their lawns. While many people have heard of crabgrass they might not actually be sure what it is and the best way to control it. Crabgrass is an annual grassy weed that can crowd out more desirable and aesthetically pleasing grasses. This weed typically grows in ungainly clumps, has a rolled stem and lime green coarse textured leaves. It typically has a prostrate form of growth and spreads out along the ground. You can see the difference in the grasses to the right. The Crabgrass is on the bottom. The best way to prevent crab grass and any weed is to have a healthy, thick stand of turfgrass that can out compete the less desirable plants. Fertilizing the lawn at the correct time, watering when necessary and mowing at the correct height with a sharp blade will reduce the number of weeds you have. If you do have crabgrass the best way to control it is to apply a pre-emergent herbicide that prevents the crabgrass from germinating. Timing of application is very important. If you apply it too early the pre-emergent could run out of efficacy before the crabgrass stops germinating later in the season, if you apply it too late the pre-emergent doesn't have any effect on the crabgrass that has already germinated. The ideal time to apply crabgrass preventer is when the red bud trees are in full bloom which typically is about April 15<sup>th</sup> as that gives the chemical time to disperse into the ground. Most pre-emergent herbicides will need a second application after they have worn off unless you buy a product such as Barricade or Dimension that provide season long control. Since crabgrass seeds are viable in the soil for several years this can be a long-term fight but you can eventually win the battle.



## Plant of the Week- Prairie Smoke



Prairie smoke or *Geum triflorum* is a North America native perennial that is one of the earliest blooming plants on the native prairie. It is widely distributed across the northern part of the United States but is hardy from zones 3-7 and is commonly found growing in the prairie or open woodlands. Unfortunately, this flower is becoming rarer as it is being out competed by naturalized invaders or eliminated by development. Prairie smoke forms a mound of foliage 6-10" tall and very slowly spreads via rhizomes. Leaves are pinnately compound with rather crowded, narrow toothed leaflets and the plant is semi-evergreen with foliage turning purple, red and orange from late fall into winter. When the plant is dry or during winter the leaves will flatten to the ground but perk up quickly when conditions improve. Prairie smoke has clusters of nodding reddish-pink, maroon or purple flowers on 12-18" stems. There typically are three flowers per stem, hence the species name. If the flowers are fertilized they form distinctive, silvery pink fluffy fruits that give the plant it's common name as they look like smoke wafting away from the plant. The seed heads will remain on the plant for weeks. This plant is a great companion to spring blooming bulbs to fill in areas where the bulbs will die back in the summer. Prairie smoke prefers dry conditions but tolerates a wide range of soil types, especially in full sun. Keep away from plants that tend to be aggressive growers as it will be crowded out.



## Reminders-

- Check your houseplants for unwanted visitors.
- Plant new roses and remove mulch from existing roses.
- Water trees and shrubs that were planted in the last year or two if conditions are dry.
- It's still too early to apply most crabgrass preventers except Dimension and Barricade. Wait till April 15<sup>th</sup> or when the Redbud trees are blooming before applying most preventers.
- Wait to prune spring blooming bushes till after they bloom.

## Video of the week: Weed Control in Lawns

The best defense against weeds in your lawn is a dense, healthy, vigorous lawn. Weeds take advantage of open spaces in thin, weak stands of turf. This segment promotes the safe, effective use of herbicides for controlling lawn weeds.

Watch the video here: <https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/crabgrass-prevention-in-lawns>

## Upcoming Events

- *April 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm- Gardening for Beginners and Beyond*  
Gardening has become an extremely popular activity in the United States. Unfortunately for beginning gardeners there is quite a bit of conflicting information or unhelpful information available and it can be hard to sort through it. In this class not only will we talk about how to garden but I will also highlight some valuable resources. Join us to learn the basics of planning the garden, general care and to cover some basic problem solving for the issues that gardeners face. This class will be located at the Butler County Community/4-H Building at 206 N Griffith St. in El Dorado. Registration isn't required but is encouraged. Register here: <https://forms.gle/Qhwn8wpvPCvoh7Yy9> or call the office at (316) 321-9660.
- *April 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9-5 and April 23<sup>rd</sup> from noon to 5- Grow and Bloom in Butler Lawn and Garden show*  
The Butler County Master Gardeners in an effort to promote horticultural activities and to provide educational opportunities are hosting our first Lawn and Garden Show in Butler County. The show will be held at the Butler County Community/4-H Building located at 206 N Griffith St, El Dorado, KS. This event will feature businesses from around the area in our vendor show along with expert speakers both from the area and across the state. Check out our website for more information: <https://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/show/Butlerlawnandgardenshow.html>
- *May 3<sup>rd</sup> at Noon- Drought Tolerant Plants for a Challenging Kansas Landscape*  
The Kansas climate throws numerous extremes at our landscape plants. The most common climate extreme is periods of drought, which are difficult for both plants and gardeners. Join Jason Graves, Central Kansas District Horticulture Extension Agent, and Matthew McKernan, Sedgwick County Horticulture Extension Agent, as they address our climate challenges and provide suggestions for drought tolerant plants that will make gardening easier. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/>