The Grapevine

After the Storm

What a wild Friday night for so many of the residents of Butler County. My heart goes out to all those impacted by the tornadoes on Friday night. As we start to pick up the pieces after severe weather caused so much damage this week I wanted to talk about how to handle storm damage to trees. Unfortunately, severe weather is going to continue to happen, we do live in Kansas after all, and while we can’t control the weather we can have the tools in place to handle the aftermath. Your first priority should be any dangling limbs or limbs that are barely connected to the tree. These limbs can easily fall, hurt people or property and should be removed ASAP before you do anything else with the tree. After you have removed the hazards it’s time to take a break and deal with other issues. The trees, for the most part, have stood for years and waiting a few days or weeks will not hurt them in the long run. Often our first thought is to immediately get the tree taken care of, and while that’s important to do if the tree or branches pose a danger to humans or property, general pruning can wait.

The second step is to assess the damage done and determine the best steps to handle it. Damage to trees can range from just a few small broken limbs to major structural damage. Once you have checked the area for any safety concerns (powerlines, dangling limbs, etc) look over the tree. Trees that are missing less than 50% of their canopy and have little damage to the main trunk or major limbs will survive and be just fine with some pruning. Once a tree has lost more than 50% of it’s canopy it becomes a bit trickier to determine if a tree can be salvaged or not. If the main structure of the tree is still intact (trunk and main limbs) then the tree could potentially be saved but that depends on the sentimental value of the tree, how much it would cost to replace it and the health of the tree before the storm. Trees like the one above will need removed with the main structure being broken.

Once you have assessed the damage done to the true and have determined what needs to be pruned out it’s time to clean up the tree. Before doing that first ask yourself if you feel comfortable doing the pruning, how high up in the tree you have to get and how big of limbs you need to prune. It maybe best to hire a professional arborist for pruning high in the tree and dealing with large limbs. When pruning branches that are over 3” in diameter I recommend using the three cut method to prevent tearing the bark. The first cut is on the bottom side of the limb about a foot or so from the trunk, this cut prevents the bark from tearing when the limb falls off. The second cut is from the top is 2-3 inches beyond the first cut and goes all the way through the limb. This cut removes most of the weight from the branch and makes it easier to handle. The last cut is just beyond the branch collar which is where a slight swelling is or wrinkle in the bark on the tree. This collar contains the cells to heal the branch after the cut. If bark was torn when limbs broke off during the storm prune off the loose bark back to where it is solidly attached to encourage growth and healing. Wound treatments are not needed when pruning branches and, in some cases, can slow the healing of the plant.

Commonly trees will be blown over in storms and while large trees that have fallen over cannot be saved, smaller trees with at least ½ of their roots still in the ground could be pulled back upright and staked. Before the tree is pulled upright, remove some soil from the hole so the roots are back below the ground level. Once the tree is pulled back up cover the roots with dirt as needed. Stake the tree using 2-3 lines.

After a disaster and a tree has been damaged it is very common for people to want to pamper their tree and give it extra attention while it is recovering. This can
actually cause more issues for our trees. If your tree is in your yard and you are fertilizing your lawn, your tree is getting all the nutrients it needs and extra fertilizer will not help it recover. Most trees will survive without extra water, however if we go into a dry spell it can be beneficial to water your tree once a week or so but if you are already watering your lawn, your tree will be just fine. Our trees are very resilient and very little care is needed after a storm to help them survive. It is important to keep an eye on damaged trees for several years after the storm as insects and diseases are more likely to infect trees that are stressed from the damage. While there are chemicals you could apply they likely would do more harm than good in the long run. If you do start seeing an issue first get it diagnosed so you are able to treat it properly, then treat.

Last week’s storms are unfortunately not going to be the last we encounter and even in the winter our trees can be damaged. The best treatment for your trees is to make sure they are as healthy as possible prior to the storm with proper care and periodic pruning as needed. While no amount of prior care can prevent all damage, a healthy tree is more likely to recover than one that was already struggling. Please contact our office if you have damage to trees and need advice on care and if the tree is salvageable. I would be happy to come and help you out. I’ve also included a link to the website to find certified arborists in our area. For a visual walk through of how to assess tree damage check out this [video by Oklahoma State Extension](#). Happy Growing everyone!!

**Weed of the Week**

This week’s weed of the week are wild violets. These plants are a perennial member of the violet family. There are several different types of wild violets but all are characterized by the heart shaped leaves and purple to bluish flowers in the spring. This plant does make a great naturalizer under trees or in areas where growing grass or other ground covers is not an option. They form a decent ground cover by spreading via rhizomes or underground stems. The flowers are edible and can be used in salads or to flavor vinegars and syrups. The leaves are also edible and can be eaten in salads, soups or as cooked greens. When eating any plant make sure you are confident in your identification. For some wild violets are an invasive weed that can quickly take over flower beds and spread to the lawn through their extensive root system. Removal by hand is not effective unless you can dig down and remove the entire root system since the plants will resprout from any rhizomes left over. In the yard, improving turf density can help keep future infestations from getting established. Chemical applications involving the active ingredients triclopyr, 2,4-D or similar products will most likely be required to remove the violets. Repeat applications throughout the growing season and potentially over a period of years may be necessary to fully remove this weed.

**Insect of the Week**

This week’s insect of the week is the tick. Unfortunately, due to the warmer winter we had it appears that this year will be a bad year for ticks. The most common tick found in Kansas is the American Dog Tick with the Lone Star Tick and Blacklegged tick also being found in our area. Ticks are wingless parasites that typically “ambush” their hosts by crawling on to grass or bushes and attaching to animals who brush by. They then look for a place to attach. The female ticks are the only ones who will engorge themselves prior to dropping off and laying eggs. To prevent ticks in your yard, keep the grass mowed short and keep weeds down in your area. If you have an area that has a chronic tick issue there are treatments available. When you are walking in the woods wear light colored clothes to make it easier to see the ticks and wear repellant. If a tick has already attached itself, remove it manually by grasping as close to the skin as possible with forceps or tweezers, and pull straight away from the skin, using slow, steady pressure. The tick should not be twisted or jerked out, as that increases the chance for its head to be left in the skin. Do not use a lighted match or cover the tick in petroleum jelly or nail polish.
Reminders-

- Tomatoes can be transplanted when the soil temperature is 55 degrees. Wait to transplant peppers and seed cucumbers and melons until the soil temperature is at least 60 degrees. Maybe wait a bit longer for sweet potatoes as we have plenty of time and want to make sure the soil is warm enough. See [http://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soiltemp/](http://mesonet.k-state.edu/agriculture/soiltemp/) for current soil temps.
- Wait until about mid-June to plant winter squash and pumpkins so they mature in cooler fall weather.
- Transplant annual flowers when soil temperature reaches 65 degrees.

Upcoming Events

- **May 4, 2022: New and Improved Annual Flower Varieties**
  New and improved varieties of annual flowers hit the garden center shelves every year. Which varieties will provide you outstanding summer performance? Join Matthew McKernan, Sedgwick County Horticulture Extension Agent as he highlights new varieties of annual flowers with outstanding performance, along with tips for growing annual flowers more successfully this summer! For more information on KSRE Garden Hour click here.

- **May 5, 2022: Herb Day Butler Community Building 6:30 PM**
  Kay Neff, owner of Neff Family Farms, will share her vast knowledge of all things herbal. Kay will not only be giving tips on what herbs grow here and how to grow them, she will also be sharing recipes and have a good selection of herbs for sale for those in attendance. We will offer tips to add flavor to foods and easy ways to use both fresh and dried herbs. Come enjoy the food demonstrations and tasty food samples!

- **May 12, 2022: Gardening Basics- Augusta Community Garden (1301 Ohio Street) 6:30 pm**
  Are you a new gardener who is not sure how to get started or are you struggling with your garden? Join us at the Augusta Community Garden for a demonstration of the basics of gardening, how to get started with raised bed gardening, composting and get some of your questions or issues answered. Registration isn’t necessary. Parking is available on 14th Ave.