

FLINT HILLS PRAIRIE WILDFLOWER AND PASTURE TOUR

The 24th Annual Flint Hills Prairie Wildflower and Pasture Tour will be held on

Thursday - June 7, 2018. There will be one tour at 6:00 p.m. Tour participants can meet at the Cassoday Grade School in Cassoday at 6:00 p.m. or on Hwy 177 in Matfield Green in front of the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe office (old Matfield Green Post Office) at 6:15 p.m. The school bus caravan will proceed off main roads with stops at pasture sites in Butler and Chase County.

This Wildflower Educational Tour is sponsored by the Butler County Extension Service, Flint Hills Extension District, Chase County Conservation District and Butler County

Conservation District. Registration is required as the tour numbers will be limited. Persons having reduced mobility needs may call for more information. Admission is free, but donations are accepted to help defray costs. To make reservations please call the Butler County Extension office at 316-321-9660 or the Flint Hills/Cottonwood Falls Extension office at 620-273-6491.

Trees Slow to Leaf Out

We have received reports of trees being slow to leaf out. In most cases this is likely just a cool spring delaying leaf emergence and we need to give them a bit more time. However, the very warm, dry winter coupled with cold snaps may also have caused some winter damage as evidenced by delayed leaf emergence or scorched leaves. Check that twigs are still supple. If they are brittle, that part of the tree is dead. There isn't much that can be done to speed up leaf emergence other than avoid any further stress. Try to water plants once a week for young or recently transplanted trees if you do not receive rainfall. Established trees should be watered every three weeks. Trees should be watered to a depth of 12 to 18 inches if possible. Water from the trunk to the outer edge of the branches. Though this will not reach all the roots of a tree, it will reach the majority of them. Trees normally have at least 80 percent of their roots in the top foot of soil. Shrubs should be watered to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. Check the depth of watering by pushing a wooden dowel or metal rod into the soil. It will stop when it hits dry soil.

Ladybird Beetles

Both the adults and the larvae of the ladybird beetle are beneficial and do not feed on plants but rather on other insects including aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, scale insects and the eggs of various other insects. So if you see these insects, do not spray. The larval form looks like a very small alligator-shaped insect. Larvae are covered with spines, about 3/8-inch long, and black with orange markings.

Asparagus Beetles

Asparagus is doing well, but be on the lookout for asparagus beetles. Both the adult and larvae of asparagus beetles feed on asparagus spears by chewing the tips and spear surfaces, leading to scarring and staining of the spear tips. Asparagus beetles overwinter as adults in trash near the garden. The adults are a blue/black beetle with a red prothorax with yellow spots. The larvae are a soft, greenish grub. Small, elongated, black eggs - sticking out long ways from the side of asparagus spears - are laid on developing spears. Early control of beetles is important to reduce feeding damage later. Sevin will provide control (a one-day wait before harvest is required). Some products with permethrin are also labeled including Bonide Eight Vegetable, Fruit & Flower Concentrate and Hi Yield Lawn, Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control but require a 3-day waiting period between spraying and harvest.

Cucumber Beetle

If you had cucumbers or muskmelons that suddenly turned brown and died last year, you may have had a disease known as bacterial wilt. The cucumber beetle carries this disease. Once a plant is infected, there is no cure, so prevention is the key. Because cucumber beetles overwinter as adults, early control measures are essential. There are two types of cucumber beetles: striped and spotted. The striped cucumber beetle is the most common. The 1/4-inch-long beetles are conspicuously colored: black head and antennae, straw-yellow thorax, and yellowish wing covers with three distinct parallel and longitudinal black stripes. Young plants can be protected with row covers, cones, or other types of mechanical barriers. Edges must be sealed to ensure that the beetles do not find a place to enter. Plants will eventually outgrow these barriers, or they will need to be removed to allow insect pollination of the flowers. Apply insecticides before beetles are noticed in the planting. Continue to spray weekly throughout the season. Homeowners can use permethrin (Bonide Eight Vegetable, Fruit & Flower Concentrate and Hi Yield Lawn, Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control) or Cyfluthrin (Bayer Vegetable Garden & Insect Sprayl). Once plants have started flowering, spray in the evening after bees return to the hive.

Straw Bale Gardening

(In the interest of full disclosure I want to tell you that I personally don't subscribe to this method of gardening. I don't like Lima Beans either, but I will still tell you how to grow them.)

There has been growing interest in straw bale gardening. What better place to try this than in Kansas where straw is so abundant. First, some pointers.

- * These are the "small" straw bales that are about 2 feet high and 3 feet long.
- * Place the bale on edge so the twine doesn't rot.
- * Bales can be placed anywhere including concrete or asphalt. Just make sure there is plenty of sun and watering is convenient.

BALE CONDITIONING

- * Water the bale and keep it wet for 3 days. It will start to heat up as it breaks down.

- * On days 4, 5 and 6, sprinkle fertilizer on the top of each bale with 1 cup of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) or ½ cup of urea (46-0-0). Water the fertilizer in. This speeds up the process.
- * On days 7, 8 and 9, continue to sprinkle fertilizer on each bale but cut the amount in half.
- * Stop fertilizing on day 10 but keep the bale moist.
- * Check for heat on the top of each bale for each day after day 10. When the temperature drops to below 100, the bale can be planted.

PLANTING

- * Pocket Method: Make a 6" hole for each plant and fill with growing medium.
- * Flat Bed Method: Cover the top of the bale with 3 to 4 inches of growing medium.
- * The growing medium can be well-aged manure, compost or potting soil.

NUMBER OF PLANTS PER BALE

- * Cucumber: 3-4
- * Peppers: 3-5
- * Squash (winter) 2
- * Squash (summer) 2-3
- * Tomatoes 2-3

WATERING

Watering will be the most challenging aspect of management. The straw will dry quickly. A drip irrigation system on a timer can work well but may take some time to set up. Gardeners may also use soda bottles or milk jugs to water by poking drip holes in the lid, filling with water and then turning upside down next to the target plant.

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