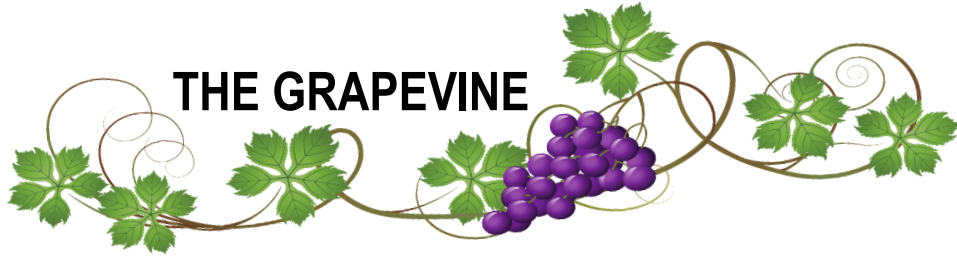


THE GRAPEVINE



April 25th, 2019

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Extension Horticulture Agent

GETTING HEALTHY WITH HERBS

Learn how to grow and use them!!!

On Tuesday, April 30th, at 6:30 PM in the Andover Central Park Lodge at Andover Central Park in Andover, KS we will be presenting our annual Herb Program. 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. Barb Roths, Butler County Family and Consumer Science Agent, and her volunteers will be preparing different items that are relatively easy to make. So before, during and after the program people will be able to taste the different offerings to see what might interest them.

We are asking that you please pre-register for this event, this will help insure that we have enough materials for all attending. The cost to attend is **\$5.00 per person**, and the **registration deadline is Friday, April 26th**. To register, come by or call the **Butler County Extension office at (316) 321-9660**. Or you can e-mail the Butler County Extension office using aperry1@ksu.edu. Put "Herbs" in the subject line and include your name and phone number in the body of the e-mail. So come and join us for information on buying, growing, preserving, using and cooking with herbs!

Keep Mower Blades Sharp

Lawn-mowing season is here. Remember that dull blades give the lawn a whitish cast. A dull blade does not cut cleanly but rather shreds the ends of the leaf blades. The shredded ends dry out, giving the lawn that whitish look. A sharp mower blade is even more important when the turf starts putting up seed heads next month. The seed head stems are much tougher than the grass blades and more likely to shred. Under normal use, mower blades should be sharpened about every 10 hours of use.

Fertilizing Cole Crops

If you planted cole crops such as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower earlier this spring and made it through our earlier cold snaps, they will need a little fertilizer boost. These plants need to mature before summer heat arrives, so they must grow quickly while the weather is cool. A sidedressing of fertilizer about 3 weeks after transplanting helps plants continue to grow rapidly. Use fertilizers high in nitrogen for sidedressing such as nitrate of soda or blood meal at the rate of 1/3 cup per 10 feet of row. You may also use lawn fertilizers that have close to 30 percent nitrogen such as a 30-3-4 or 29-5-4 but the rate should be cut in half to 3 tablespoons per 10 feet of row. Do not use lawn fertilizers that have weed killers or preventers. Fertilizer must be watered in if timely rains don't do that job for you.

Rhubarb Harvest and Seedstalks

Rhubarb, like asparagus, is a perennial vegetable. It is harvested for the leaf stem, which is also called a petiole. Some years rhubarb will produce large, hollow-stemmed seedstalks that arise from the center of the plant. These should be broken or cut out as they appear so that energy will go into plant vigor rather than seed production. It will take several weeks for all the seedstalks to appear so be vigilant in removing them. Newer varieties of rhubarb are selected for vigor, bright red-colored stalks and less of a tendency to produce seedstalks than the older types.

Will I Have Peaches This Year?

If your peach trees were in bloom during one of our earlier cold snaps, then likely not. Actually 28 degrees is the temperature at which we start losing peach buds if they are in full bloom. Unopened buds are more cold tolerant. So how can you tell if your peach buds are still alive? To check for low temperature injury to fruit buds or blossoms, use a sharp knife or razor blade and cut the bud in half longitudinally. If the area in the center is white to cream color and the style of the pistil is has not darkened, then no damage has been done. But if the center in several buds or blossoms is dark brown or black, it has been killed.

Termites or Ants

Both termites and ants are able to swarm and may have wings during part of their lives. Since these insects are close to the same size, people often misidentify flying ants as termites. Since flying ants do not attack wooden structures like termites, it is helpful to be able to tell the difference. Fortunately, there are several differences that can easily distinguish the two. For example, ants have a thin waist; the waist of a termite is thick. Also, ants' antennae are elbowed, while termites' are curved. Thirdly, termites have two pairs of wings that are of equal length. Ants also have two pairs of wings, but theirs are of unequal length. Homeowners who find signs of termite activity should shop for a reputable pest control firm.

Common Asparagus Beetle

If you are growing asparagus, then it is that time of year to be aware of the only insect pest of asparagus; the common asparagus beetle, *Crioceris asparagi*. Adult beetles are 1/4-inch long. The body is metallic blue to black with red margins and six cream-colored markings (Figure 1). Adults emerge from the soil in early spring and fly to new asparagus shoots where they mate and feed. Females lay up to 30 eggs on the end of spear tips as they emerge from the soil. Larvae hatch from eggs after about a week, migrate onto the ferns, and commence feeding. The larvae look like a small slug. They are wrinkled, 1/3 inch in length, and olive-green to gray with black heads and legs. Larvae feed for approximately two-weeks and then drop to the ground, burrow into the soil, and form a yellow pupa. After several weeks, adults emerge and start feeding. Common asparagus beetles overwinter underneath plant debris, loose bark, or hollow stems of old asparagus plants. The life cycle can be completed in eight-weeks. There are two generations in Kansas.

The adults and larvae feed on asparagus spears and can defoliate ferns if populations are extensive. Larvae consume leaves and tender buds near the tips, which leaves scars that eventually turn brown. Damage caused by larvae interferes with the plant's ability to photosynthesize (manufacture food); thus, depleting food reserves for next year's crop. The plant protection strategies that can be implemented to reduce problems with common asparagus beetle populations include: applying insecticides; handpicking eggs, adults, and larvae and placing into a container with soapy water; and/or removing any plant debris after the growing season to eliminate overwintering sites for adults. Insecticides should be applied as soon as common asparagus beetles are present, and again in late summer through early fall to kill adults before they overwinter. Thorough coverage of all plant parts is important in suppressing populations.

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