

THE GRAPEVINE



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Weekly Reminders:

- * Mulch vegetable garden.
- * Pinch mums when they reach 6" tall to encourage bushier growth. <https://tinyurl.com/yb4cd4aa>
- * Make a vegetable garden "map" so that you remember what was planted in what spot.
- * We said 2 weeks ago that cedar-apple rust sprays would not be necessary after Memorial Day. Not true this year as galls on cedars are still active. Put on one more spray.

MULCHING TOMATOES



Soils are warm enough now that tomatoes can benefit from mulching as long as the soils are not saturated with water. Tomatoes prefer even levels of soil moisture and mulches provide such by preventing excessive evaporation. Other benefits of mulching include weed suppression, moderating soil temperatures and preventing the formation of a hard crust on the soil. Crusted soils restrict air movement into and out of the soil and slow the water infiltration rate. Hay and straw mulches are very popular for tomatoes but may contain weed or volunteer grain seeds. Grass clippings can also be used but should be applied as a relatively thin layer - only 2 to 3 inches thick. Clippings should also be dry as wet clipping can mold and become so hard that water can't pass through. Also, do not use clippings from lawns that have been treated with a weed killer until some time has passed. With most types of weed killers, clippings from the fourth mowing after treatment may be used. If the lawn was treated with a product containing quinclorac (Drive), the clippings should not be used as mulch.



Onions Developing

This is the time of year that onions grow and develop rapidly. Regular watering (if the soil ever dries out) and a light fertilization are helpful to maximize growth. If your soil tends to be alkaline, use ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at the rate of ½ cup per 10 feet of row. Or you can use a lawn fertilizer such as a 29-5-5, 27-3-3 or anything similar but only use 1/3 cup per 10 feet of row. Make sure the lawn fertilizer does not have a weed preventer or weed killer included. Sprinkle the fertilizer 2 to 3 inches alongside the row and water in. Do not fertilize after the onions start to bulb. Onions develop so that as much as 2/3 of the bulb remains out of the soil. There is normal and there is no need to cover the bulb with soil.

Plants Slow to Leaf Out

There have been a number of plants that have either died over winter or been slow to leaf out. In some cases, this is likely due to accumulated stress. We often think of plants reacting to stress that happened during the current season or possibly the previous year but it may not be that simple. I think this all started during the winter of 2017 - 2018. Many areas of Kansas had virtually no rain or snow from November through most of April during that winter. This put plants under a tremendous amount of stress. Plants under stress often react by setting an abnormal number of fruit buds. This helps insure the survival of the species even if the parent plant dies. So lots of fruit buds were set during 2018. Those buds matured into flower and then fruit (seeds) during 2019. Think back to last year. I have never seen certain plants bloom as well as they did last year. Maturing this much fruit takes a great deal of energy. I think this resulted in such low energy levels in the fall that the plants just didn't have enough energy to make it through the winter or may have delayed leaf out. Areas with too much rain last summer had that additional stress added to the mix. Roots need oxygen as well as water and too much rain can damage root systems. So what do we do? The only thing we can do now is try to avoid any further stress. Basically that means watering during dry weather. Don't overdo it as too much moisture can





damage root systems. The goal is to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged while allowing the top of the soil surface to dry between waterings.

Spring-Flowering Bulb Foliage can be Removed

It is important to leave spring-flowering bulb foliage in place until it "ripens" or becomes brown. The energy produced by the leaves after flowering is transferred to the bulb so that it can flower the following year. The ripening process should be near completion now for tulips, daffodils and various other spring-flowering bulbs. Use clippers, scissors or even a mower to remove dead foliage. Also, try to map out where the bulbs are planted as there will be no foliage to make the location next fall when it is time to fertilize.



Anthracnose on Sycamore, Maple and other Shade Trees

We are starting to see anthracnose on sycamore. Sycamore anthracnose is a fungal disease favored by cool, wet weather. Young leaves may wither and turn black. On older leaves, look for brown areas that follow the major veins of the leaves. In some cases, the petiole (leaf stem) is infected, which causes leaf drop. The leaf may look perfectly fine, so look for browned areas on the petiole. In severe cases, the tree drops heavily infected leaves and may be completely defoliated. We have had people cut down sycamore trees that have lost all their leaves. **DO NOT DO THIS.** Healthy trees will releaf in a few weeks. Defoliation this early in the year does not affect overall tree health. Trees have plenty of time to produce new leaves and make the energy reserves needed to survive the winter. Other types of trees that are affected by anthracnose include birch, elm, walnut, oak and especially ash. Anthracnose seldom causes significant damage to trees in Kansas, so chemical controls are usually unnecessary. Also, fungicides do not cure infected leaves. Applying fungicides after symptoms are seen will not help.

Little Barley in Lawns

Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in late September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer. So, why are we talking about little barley now? Because now is NOT the time to control it unless it is in an area where a non-selective herbicide that kills everything such as glyphosate (Roundup) can be used. The best control for little barley in turf is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions. Overseeding in late August to early September can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and help prevent a little barley infestation. However, early germinating little barley may not be controlled. So, if you do not plan to overseed even though the lawn is a bit thin, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden and as Amaze by Greenlight. Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Horodium* spp.) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide in mid-September and water in to activate. However, you may have to apply at least a couple of weeks earlier if you are in southern Kansas. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue.

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