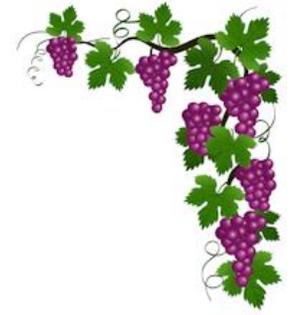


# THE GRAPEVINE



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## ***Weekly Reminders: Fruit chores...***

Fruit gardens have certain chores that need to be done through the growing season such as the following.

- \* Remove some fruit from heavily loaded apples and peaches (if the flower buds weren't killed by frost) to improve fruit size and prevent limbs from breaking. Apples and peaches should be spaced about every 6 to 8 inches. Note that is an average spacing. Two fruit can be closer together if the average is correct.
- \* Remove sucker growth from the base of fruit trees and grape vines.
- \* Remove water sprout growth from fruit trees. Water sprouts grow straight up from existing branches.
- \* Water as needed. About 1 inch of water per week is about right though more may be needed during hot spells.
- \* "Comb" new growth on grape vines so these new shoots hang down for greater exposure to sunlight.
- \* Continue disease and insect control to prevent fruit damage.

## **HOW HEALTHY IS MY TREE?**

One of the most important clues in determining the health of your trees is the amount of new growth that tree produces. A healthy tree should have a minimum of 4 to 6 inches of new growth each year. Check branches with the tips in the open and not shaded by the tree itself. Anything less than 4 inches on the majority of branches suggests the tree is under stress. So how do you tell where the new growth stops? Look for a color change in the stem. New growth is often greener than that from the previous year. There is also often an area of what looks like compressed growth where growth transitions from one year to the next. Lastly, look at leaf attachment. Leaves are only produced on current season's growth. Therefore, new growth stops where leaves are no longer attached directly to the twig but to side branches. However, pay attention as leaves may appear to be attached directly to last year's growth but are actually borne on short spurs. If you look closely, you can tell the difference. All this clue tells you is whether a tree is under stress or not. It does not tell you what is causing poor growth. This year, the most common cause is stress from the last several years. Stress is cumulative. In other words, trees may not have completely recovered from stressful conditions (such as drought) that occurred within the last several years. The accumulating stress may have damaged root systems with further damage occurring due to saturated soils or dry soils this spring. These trees may struggle as we enter summer. Though the roots were able to keep up with moisture demands during the cooler spring weather, they may not be able to as temperatures rise. Such trees may suddenly collapse and die or slough off branches they can no longer support. If possible, water to a depth of 12 inches every couple of weeks we do not receive rain in order to avoid further stress.

## ***Aphids on Daylilies***

Aphid infestations can cause completely browning of some of the plants. Daylilies with browning foliage should be checked for aphids. If aphids are present, look for ladybugs. The presence of ladybugs means there is no need to try to control the aphids. The ladybugs will do that for you.

However, if there are no ladybugs, control measures may be called for. A strong jet of water from a garden hose may be all that is needed. Repeat as necessary. If this is not possible, insecticides can be used such as horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, acephate (Acephate, Orthene), malathion, cyfluthrin (Baythroid, BioAdvanced Vegetable and Garden Insect Spray) or permethrin (38 Plus Turf, Termite & Ornamental Insect Spray; Eight Vegetable, Fruit &





Flower Concentrate; Garden and Farm Insect Control). Reapplication may be needed. Remember that drought can also cause daylily foliage to brown.

## ***Do Not Over-Fertilize Tomatoes***

Though tomatoes need to be fertilized to yield well, too much nitrogen can result in large plants with little to no fruit. Tomatoes should be fertilized before planting and sidedressed with a nitrogen fertilizer three times during the season. The first sidedressing should go down one to two weeks before the first tomato ripens. The second should be applied two weeks after the first tomato ripens and the third one month after the second. Common sources of nitrogen-only fertilizers include nitrate of soda, urea, and ammonium sulfate. Blood meal is an organic fertilizer that contains primarily, but not exclusively, nitrogen. Use only one of the listed fertilizers and apply at the rate given below.

Nitrate of soda (16-0-0): Apply 2/3 pound (1.5 cups) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Blood Meal (12-1.5-6): Apply 14 ounces (1.75 cups) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Urea (46-0-0): Apply 4 ounces (½ cup) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

Ammonium Sulfate (21-0-0): Apply 0.5 pounds (1 cup) fertilizer per 30 feet of row.

If you cannot find the above materials, you can use a lawn fertilizer that is about 30 percent nitrogen (nitrogen is the first number in the set of three) and apply it at the rate of 1/3 pound (¾ cup) per 30 feet of row. Do not use a fertilizer that contains a weed killer or weed preventer.

## ***New Potatoes***

Many gardeners look forward to harvesting new potatoes at this time of year. New potatoes are immature and should be about the size of walnuts. Pull soil away from the base of the plants to see if the tubers are the desired size. If they are, dig entire plants and allow the skins of the exposed tubers to dry for several hours before gathering. These young potatoes are very tender and prone to the skin "slipping" unless they are given a few hours to dry. Even then these immature potatoes will not store well. Red-skinned varieties are often preferred as they are the earliest to produce.

## ***Slime Molds***

Slime molds are primitive organisms that are common on turf and mulch and sometimes on tree trunks. Slime molds are not fungi and are no longer classified as such. They belong to the Kingdom Protista rather than Kingdom Fungi. On turf, you might often see large numbers of small gray, white or purple fruiting structures, called sporangia on leaf blades during cool and humid weather throughout spring, summer, and fall. Affected areas are often several inches to 1 foot in diameter. During wet weather, the fruiting structures may appear slimy. As the structures dry out in hot weather, they become ash gray and break up easily when touched. Homeowners often are concerned that this is a disease organism that will kill the grass, but slime mold feeds on bacteria, other fungi, and dead organic matter. It simply uses the turf as a structure on which to grow. However, slime mold can damage turf by covering leaf blades and interfering with photosynthesis. Chemical control of slime molds is not necessary. Use a broom or a heavy spray of water to dislodge the mold. Slime molds on mulch often attract attention because of their bright colors and disgusting appearance. Common names are often quite descriptive. For example, the "dog vomit" slime mold is a bright, whitish color that resembles its namesake. It eventually turns brown and then into a hard, white mass. There is also the "scrambled egg" slime mold, "the yellow blob" slime mold and the "regurgitated cat breakfast" slime mold. Slime molds do not hurt anything, but most people do not find them attractive and want to get rid of them. Simply use a shovel to discard the offensive organism and then stir up the mulch for aeration.

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