

D's Notes
04/25/22

Video of the Week: How to Sharpen a Mower Blade

<https://kansashealthyyards.org/component/allvideoshare/video/how-to-sharpen-a-mower-blade?Itemid=101>

New or Revised Publications

We have several publications that are now available. These include the following:

Raised Bed Gardening at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2134.pdf>

Weed Control in Home Lawns at <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf2385.pdf>

Fall Armyworm: Insect Pest of Turfgrass at
<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3595.pdf>

Green June Beetle: Insect Pest of Turfgrass at
<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3600.pdf>

REMINDERS

Do not remove foliage from spring-flowering bulbs until the foliage dies. You need to give time for the foliage to transfer energy to the bulbs.

Repot houseplants as needed. Go up 1 inch to 2 inches in size of pot.

Keep newly planted trees & shrubs watered as needed. Keep soil moist but not waterlogged.

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. (Ward Upham)

Orchardgrass in Tall Fescue Lawns

Orchardgrass often infests tall fescue lawns. Unfortunately, orchardgrass is lighter green and faster growing than tall fescue, so it is very visible. Homeowners complain of the light green tufts of grass wherever this weed has become established. Even worse, there are no herbicides that will kill the orchard grass without also killing the turf. About the only good thing about orchardgrass is that it is a bunch grass and does not spread.

Orchardgrass often comes in as a contaminant in grass seed, especially K-31 tall fescue. Buying good grass seed is the first line of defense against this weed. Orchardgrass is a pasture grass and therefore is not found in the "weed seed" portion of the seed label. Rather, orchardgrass will be listed as "other crop seed." Try to buy grass seed that has 0.0% "other crop seed."

Control options are few and painful. Use glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall Weed and Grass Killer, Kleeraway Systemic Weed and Grass Killer and others) to spot spray orchardgrass clumps. Any lawn grasses you hit will be killed, so keep the spots sprayed as small as possible. Wait until the spots have turned brown and then cut out the clumps and replace with a small piece of sod. Large numbers of orchardgrass clumps may mean it is more practical to kill the entire lawn and start over. This should be done in the fall rather than now.

For information on identification of orchardgrass, including images, go to: http://kswildflower.org/grass_details.php?grassID=15 (Ward Upham)

Fertilizing Strawberries and Brambles

Most garden soils in Kansas have adequate levels of all nutrients other than nitrogen IF the area has been fertilized in the past. However, it is recommended that a soil test be done to be sure of the nutrient needs of your fruit planting. If the soil test recommends phosphorus and potassium, use a 10-10-10 fertilizer or 12-12-12 instead of what we recommend below but triple the rate. For example, instead of ½ cup per 10 feet of row, use 1.5 cups per 10 feet of row.

Strawberries (June-Bearing): June-bearing strawberries are not fertilized in early spring as this can make the berries soft and more prone to rot. Fertilize at renovation and again in late August to early September. In most cases, strawberries need primarily nitrogen, so the recommendations are for a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well for strawberries as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Apply ½ cup for every 10 feet of row. Note: For more information on renovating strawberries, see page two at <http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf598.pdf>

Strawberries (Everbearing or Day-Neutral): Fertilize in the spring as growth starts and again in early August. Use the rates recommended for June-bearing strawberries. Everbearing (dayneutral) strawberries are not renovated.

Brambles (Blackberries and Raspberries): In most cases, brambles need primarily nitrogen, so use a high nitrogen fertilizer such as a 27-3-3, 29-5-4, 30-3-3 or something similar unless a soil test directs otherwise. Though recommended for lawns, these fertilizers will also work well as long as they do not contain weed killers or crabgrass preventers. Apply ½ cup for every 10 feet of row. Fertilize in spring as growth begins. (Ward Upham)

Asparagus Beetles

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. Permethrin will provide control but requires a 3-day waiting period between spraying and harvest.

Permethrin is found in Garden and Farm Insect Control and Eight Vegetable, Fruit & Flower Concentrate. (Ward Upham)

Bug Joke of the Week

Q: What goes 99 thump, 99 thump, 99 thump?

A: A centipede with a wooden leg.

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. (Ward Upham)

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.

We have a sheet available that gives recommendations on how to sidedress specific vegetable crops. It can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/j2ggaa6> (Ward Upham)

Red Plastic Mulch and Tomatoes

Plastic mulches have long been known to provide advantages for the vegetable grower including earlier fruiting, increased yields and weed control. More recently advantages have been noted for colored mulches over the more traditional black plastic mulch. With tomatoes, the color of choice has been red. Though normally there is an increase in production of marketable fruit with red mulch over black mulch, the amount of the increase varies with the type of year we have. There may be no increase during years of near-perfect weather or up to a 20% increase with less favorable growing conditions. A good average expected increase is about 12%.

So, how do you apply plastic mulch? Commercial growers have a mulch-laying machine that applies the trickle (drip) irrigation line and the mulch in one operation. Home gardeners must do this by hand. The first step after soil preparation is to place a trickle line near the center of where the mulch will lay as the plastic will prevent rainwater or overhead

irrigation from reaching the plants. Then construct trenches for the outer 6 inches of the plastic mulch. This allows the center of the bed to be undisturbed with the edges of the mulch draping down into the trench. Fill the trenches to cover the edges of the mulch. This will prevent wind from catching and blowing the mulch. If the soil has been tilled, a hoe is all that is needed to prepare the trenches. (Ward Upham)

First Generation Nantucket Pine Tip Moth

Peak flight of the first generation of Nantucket Pine Tip Moth was on April 12 in the Wichita area. This coincides with full bloom of Snowdrift Crabapple. Peak catch of this insect usually coincides with full bloom on Snowdrift Crabapple, thus we recommend that Christmas tree growers plant a Snowdrift to help with monitoring purposes.

The best time for control of the first generation larvae is a spray 10 days following peak flight of the insect. For those of you that treat for this insect, the OPTIMUM day for control will be on April 22, 2022 for the Wichita area. Note that growers further north will spray later. Watch the Snowdrift crabs for timing.

This is a pest primarily of scotch, ponderosa and mugo pines. Thanks to Windy Knoll Tree Farm for monitoring of this pest. We realize that not every susceptible tree cannot be sprayed on the same day, but for Christmas tree growers it is best to treat the scotch pines on that day if possible. (Ward Upham)

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. (Ward Upham)

Control of later-emerging kochia in wheat or wheat stubble

Getting kochia under control in any cropping system that includes wheat begins with the wheat crop during the spring, and shortly after wheat harvest. This is not always easy, even if early spring herbicide applications for kochia control were made.



Figure 1. Kochia in wheat stubble. Photo by Dallas Peterson, retired K-State Research and Extension.

Later-emerging kochia in wheat

While a majority of kochia emerges early in the spring, emergence can extend over a period of weeks or months. A herbicide applied early in the spring will need to have residual activity to be effective on later-emerging kochia. Group 2 herbicides that contain thifensulfuron (Harmony, others) or tribenuron (Express, others) have good residual activity on kochia, but are ineffective on ALS-resistant kochia. Most kochia populations in Kansas are now ALS-resistant.

Similarly, some kochia populations are resistant to Group 4 herbicides, specifically dicamba and fluroxypyr (Starane, others). If sensitive populations are targeted for control, dicamba must be applied before the jointing stage of wheat and fluroxypyr can be applied through flag leaf emergence. Pixxaro (halauxifen + fluroxypyr) is a combination of two Group 4 herbicides and can be applied up to flag leaf emergence. No kochia populations resistant to halauxifen (Elevore) have been reported in Kansas, however halauxifen is generally less effective on kochia than fluroxypyr.

Huskie is a combination of a Group 27 herbicide (pyrasfulotole) with a Group 6 herbicide (bromoxynil). It is effective on emerged kochia and can be applied up to flag leaf emergence in wheat. Talinor (bicyclopyrone + bromoxynil) is a similar product that can be used to control kochia. Both of these products should be applied with adjuvants as directed on the labels.

Control in wheat stubble after harvest

If kochia has not been completely controlled in the wheat crop, then it may be present at the time wheat is harvested. In most cases, the kochia plants will get “topped” by the combine as the wheat is harvested. If kochia has been topped, producers should wait until some regrowth has occurred before applying herbicides in the wheat stubble to control it.

A combination of glyphosate plus either dicamba or fluroxypyr may be the most effective treatments to control kochia in wheat stubble. Even if kochia populations are resistant to glyphosate, the tank-mix combinations with dicamba or fluroxypyr will probably provide good control, as long as the kochia aren't too big, too stressed, or resistant to dicamba and/or fluroxypyr. Some 2,4-D can be added to the mixture to help with control of other broadleaf weeds, although 2,4-D generally will not help much in controlling kochia. Dicamba or fluroxypyr tanked mixed with a pound of atrazine and 2 oz of saflufenacil (Sharpen) have provided excellent control of kochia following harvest. However, only corn or sorghum may be planted the following spring if atrazine is used.

Paraquat (Gramoxone, others) can also be used to control kochia after wheat harvest. Paraquat activity will be increased if applied with a Group 5 herbicide like atrazine. Metribuzin (Dimetric, others) can be used instead of atrazine if soybeans will be planted the following spring. Wheat can be planted 4 months after a metribuzin application. Paraquat is a contact herbicide that requires thorough coverage, which can be achieved by selecting nozzles to apply medium- to coarse-sized droplets and using spray volumes of 15 to 20 gallons per acre.

To improve kochia control after wheat harvest, apply the postharvest treatments in the morning hours or after the field has received some moisture, not when the kochia plants are under maximum stress. If kochia has been severely drought stressed before treatment, waiting a couple days following a good rain may increase control.

For more detailed information, see the "2022 Chemical Weed Control for Field Crops, Pastures, and Noncropland" guide available online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/CHEMWEEDGUIDE.pdf> or check with your local K-State Research and Extension office for a paper copy.

The use of trade names is for clarity to readers and does not imply endorsement of a particular product, nor does exclusion imply non-approval. Always consult the herbicide label for the most current use requirements. Sarah Lancaster, Extension Weed Science Specialist