



Ag & Hort Update

August 2009

This summer continues to be cooler than average, making it a bit more tolerable to be outdoors enjoying family time and gardening pursuits. The continued rainfall has kept the crops going strong, for the most part, while creating some frustration about getting in the fields and some scattered damage from strong storms. Cooler weather has meant slightly slower growth for some crops, but overall the fields around Shelby County are looking good this summer. Indeed, the trend across the state sees most crops looking “good” to “excellent” according to the latest crop reports. As we start enjoying the fruits of our garden labors, and look toward harvest on the horizon, enjoy the rest of your cool Iowa summer!

-Kate Olson

Upcoming Dates:

August 11th - Home Demonstration Garden Field Day at
Armstrong Research Farm in Lewis, 6:30 pm

August 13th-23rd - Iowa State Fair

Ask the ISU Garden Expert

The leaves on my cherry tree have small holes in them and are turning yellow. What is the problem?

Cherry leaf spot is probably responsible for the symptoms on your cherry tree. Cherry leaf spot is caused by the fungus *Blumeriella jaapii*. The fungus produces small purple spots on the upper surface of the leaves. Eventually the spots turn reddish brown. After several weeks, the centers of the spots may drop out, producing a “shot-hole” appearance. Affected leaves often turn yellow and drop prematurely.

Cherry leaf spot occurs on both sour and sweet cherries in Iowa. Mild wet weather in spring creates a favorable environment for cherry leaf spot. The cherry leaf spot fungus survives the winter on dead leaves on the ground. Spores that are released from these leaves during rainy periods in spring may infect newly emerging leaves. Raking and removing fallen leaves helps to break the disease cycle. The risk of infection can also be reduced by improving air circulation within the tree canopy with some light pruning. The application of fungicides, beginning at petal fall, is another way to control cherry leaf spot.

How frequently should I water a perennial flower bed?

Many perennials perform best when they receive 1 to 1½ inches of water per week, either from rain or irrigation. When watering, soak the soil to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. Watering frequency is largely determined by soil characteristics, weather conditions, and plant species. A thorough soaking once a week is adequate for most perennials.

Perennials, such as sedum, coreopsis, blazing star, and most ornamental grasses, possess excellent drought tolerance. Once established, these drought tolerant perennials require little or no watering.

Are there ways to reduce water use in the garden?

Apply a mulch around landscape plantings and garden areas to conserve soil moisture. Mulching reduces the rate of evaporation from the soil surface and also limits weed competition. Organic materials, such as grass clippings, straw, and shredded leaves, are excellent mulches for the vegetable garden. Wood chips and shredded bark are good choices for trees, shrubs, and perennials.

The depth of the mulch depends on the type of material used and the area. Apply wood chips and shredded bark to a depth of 3 to 4 inches around trees and shrubs. The optimum depth in the vegetable garden ranges from 2 to 3 inches for fine materials, such as grass clippings, to 6 to 8 inches for straw.

There are round holes in the foliage of my roses. What is responsible for the damage?

Leafcutting bees are probably responsible for the holes in the rose foliage. Leafcutting bees resemble honey bees, but are often darker in color. Female leafcutting bees make nests in rotted wood or the stems of plants. The sides of the nesting cavities are lined with round pieces of foliage. After lining the cavities with leaf discs, pollen and nectar are placed in the nest cells to serve as food for the immature bees.

Leafcutting bees may remove discs of foliage from many plants. However, they prefer rose, green ash, redbud, lilac, and Virginia creeper. Holes in the leaves are typically one-half inch or less in diameter. The cuts are clean, as if they were “punched out” with a paper punch. Leafcutting bees are beneficial pollinators. Damage to roses and other plants is usually minor. Control efforts are rarely justified or necessary.

There are large, brown spots on my peony leaves. What should I do?

Peony leaf blotch is probably responsible for the large, brown spots. Peony leaf blotch is caused by the fungus *Cladosporium paeoniae*. The disease is also known as red spot or measles. Typical symptoms include glossy purple to brown spots or blotches on the upper surfaces of the leaves. The disease may cause slight distortion of the leaves as they continue growth. Leaf symptoms are sometimes most apparent on the edges of older leaves. On stems, symptoms appear as long, reddish-brown streaks.

Peony leaf blotch is best managed through sanitation. The fungus survives the winter in infected plant debris. Diseased plant material should be removed in fall or early spring (before new shoots emerge). Cut off the stems at ground level. Remove the plant debris from the area and destroy it. Proper spacing and watering can help to minimize the severity of the disease. Space peonies three to four feet apart. When watering is necessary, avoid wetting the peony foliage. Fungicides can be used as a supplement to sanitation and good cultural practices.

When should I harvest my herbs?

Most herbs are ready to be harvested when flower buds appear on the plants, but before the buds open. The leaves contain the maximum amount of volatile oils at this stage of growth, giving the greatest flavor and fragrance to the finished product. Harvest herbs in the morning as soon as the dew evaporates from the foliage.

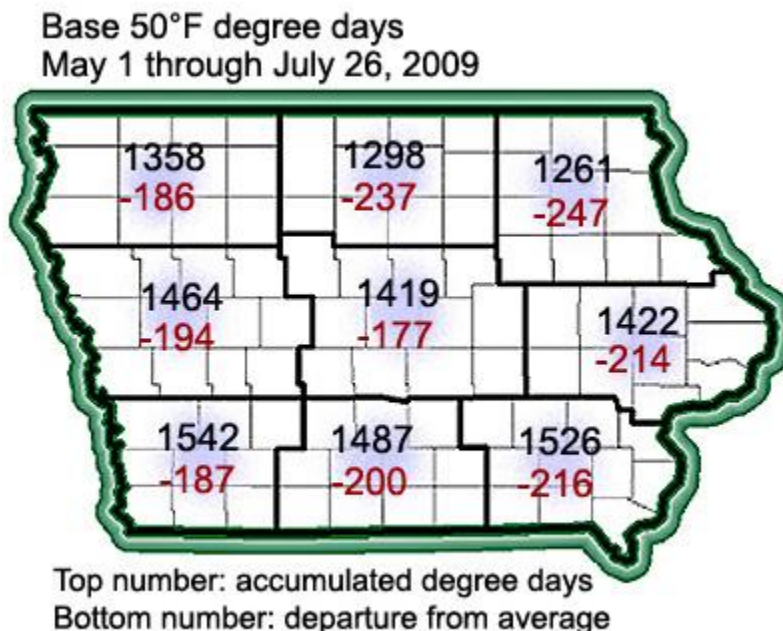
Leafy annual herbs can be cut back severely when harvested. Using a sharp knife or pruning shears, cut just above a leaf or pair of leaves. Leave approximately four to six inches of the stem for later growth. Do not cut back leafy perennial herbs as heavily as annual herbs. On perennials, remove the top one-third of growth.

Get answers to all your yard and garden questions at www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu. For specific questions, call the Hortline at (515) 294-3108, Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4:30

Degree Days- Cool July with Good Crop Conditions

By Rich Pope, Department of Plant Pathology

Iowa corn is tasselling and silking this week. We think of the silk date as a marker for the final 60 to 65 days in which the corn reaches physiological maturity. That means we might expect dry down to extend into October across the state. Soybeans are setting pods, and with timely August rainfall, pods should fill nicely. Last week we lost approximately 50 degree days to average across Iowa, making July 2009 as one of the ten coolest in history.



Scouting for pests now has the potential to influence yield profits. Soybean aphids are present in many areas, particularly central and northern Iowa, but most populations are below the economic threshold. Corn diseases like eyespot (especially in north central and central Iowa) and gray leaf spot (especially in southwest and south central Iowa) should be monitored. For soybean, we are seeing a few fields with sudden death syndrome symptoms being expressed.

Home Demonstration Garden Field Day

Tuesday, August 11, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m. - Armstrong Research Farm, Lewis, Iowa
(Approximately 13 miles southwest of Atlantic on Highway 6, south on 525th Street, east on Hitchcock Avenue)

Southwest Iowa Master Gardeners, as well as Cindy Haynes, ISU horticulturist; Eldon Everhart, ISU Extension horticulturist; Bernie Havlovic, ISU Armstrong Research Farm superintendent; and, Leah Riesselman, ISU Research Farm ag specialist will host the Home Demonstration Garden Field Day at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm on Tuesday, August 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Field day will also include information about storing/preserving garden produce.

Schedule for the field day is:

6:30 p.m. Opening and Introductions

6:40 p.m. Tours begin and will rotate at 20-minute intervals

- Home Demonstration Garden
- Home Demonstration Orchard
- Soil Amendments For Your Garden
- High Tunnel Fruit and Vegetable Production

8:00 p.m. Ice cream and strawberries



Harvesting and Storing Onions

By Richard Jauron- Extension Horticulturist, Iowa State University

Onions are a staple in the kitchen. They're also easy to grow. If properly harvested, cured, and stored, gardeners can enjoy homegrown onions through much of fall and winter. Onions should be harvested when most of the tops have fallen over and begun to dry. Carefully pull or dig the bulbs with the tops attached.

After harvesting, dry or cure the onions in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location, such as a shed or garage. Spread out the onions in a single layer on a clean, dry surface. Cure the onions for two to three weeks until the onion tops and necks are thoroughly dry and the outer bulb scales begin to rustle. After the onions are properly cured, cut off the tops about 1 inch above the bulbs. As the onions are topped, discard any that show signs of decay. Use the thick-necked bulbs as soon as possible as they don't store well. An alternate preparation method is to leave the onion tops untrimmed and braid the dry foliage together.

Place the cured onions in a mesh bag, old nylon stocking, wire basket, or crate. It's important that the storage container allow air to circulate through the onions. Store the onions in a cool, moderately dry location. Storage temperatures should be 32 to 40 degrees F. The relative humidity should be 65 to 70 percent. Possible storage locations include a basement, cellar, or garage. Hang the braided onions from a rafter or ceiling. Since the temperature in an unheated garage may fall well below 32 degrees F, an alternate storage site will be needed when bitterly cold weather arrives.

The storage life of onions is determined by the variety and storage conditions. When properly stored, good keepers, such as Copra and Sweet Sandwich, can be successfully stored for several months. Poor keepers, such as Walla Walla and Sweet Spanish, can only be stored for a few weeks. If the storage temperatures are too warm, the onions may sprout. Rotting may be a problem in damp locations. Inspect the stored onions on a regular basis in fall and winter. Discard any that are starting to rot.

On a cold, snowy day, it's nice to be able to go to the basement or cellar and grab an onion and prepare a pot of stew or chili. That and numerous other culinary delights are possible when onions are harvested and stored properly.

Horticulture at the Iowa State Fair

By James Romer, Department of Horticulture

The Iowa State Fair is almost here! With all of the exhibits, entertainment and food it's easy to overlook the beautiful horticultural displays throughout the grounds. However, there are many locations to sit back, relax and enjoy the natural beauty of the Iowa State Fair. A few are listed below with many other locations to explore as well. Don't miss your chance to celebrate the best Iowa has to offer. It's State Fair Time August 13 – 23, 2009!!

Discovery Garden

The Discovery Garden, located southwest of the Agriculture Building, is a cooperative effort between the Polk County Extension Master Gardeners and the Iowa State Fair. The garden features new, unusual and tried-and-true annuals, perennials, and other plant materials. (All plants in the garden are identified with both their common and botanical names.) Fair guests also have the opportunity to ask gardening questions and learn more about the Master Gardener program from Master Gardeners located in the garden. The Discovery Garden, open to visitors year round, blooms all summer with interesting and unusual plants.

Legacy Terrace

Located just south of the Grandstand, Legacy Terrace is a popular spot to take in the sights and sounds of the fair. This 2003 addition to the Fairgrounds features annual flower plantings, arching fountains, shade trees and benches. This is the perfect place to rest, relax and people watch as fairgoers, employees and others stream along the Grand Concourse.

Pella Plaza

Created in 1996 by a donation from the Pella Corporation, this 50,000 square foot park features benches, flowers, trees, a water fountain and flags representing each of Iowa's 99 counties. During hot weather, this is the ideal place for visitors to cool off. Children can dance (get wet!) in the fountains while adults rest nearby under shade trees.

Agriculture Building

Throughout the run of the fair, check out Iowa's best in flowers, vegetables and potted plants in the Agriculture Building. If you have visited the Agriculture Building once during the fair and thought you had seen it all, think again. Different flower, potted plant, vegetable and floral arrangement classes occur about every two days. Don't miss the roses, bonsai, gladiolus, dahlias, potted plants, floral arrangements and vegetable displays. Check the Agriculture Building schedule for dates of shows. Finally, no visit to the fair would be complete without viewing the famous butter cow!