



## *Ag & Hort* *Update*

**September 2009**

Fair season is over, the crops are going strong (although maybe a bit chilly...) and the promise of harvest is right around the corner. Driving around Shelby County, the fields look full of potential. As it has been throughout this growing season, timing will be key to getting a good, and maybe great, crop out of the field this year. As we get back into the routines of fall, with school, sports, harvest, etc, I hope you enjoy the updates, ideas and information in this latest newsletter. Remember to stop in or give us a call if you have questions while out and about in your yard, field or garden this fall. We're always happy to help you find an answer!

-Kate Olson

### **Ask the ISU Garden Expert**

#### **Can I reduce next year's Japanese beetle population by applying an insecticide to my lawn?**

Adult Japanese beetles feed on the flowers, foliage and fruits of more than 300 different kinds of plants. Adults lay eggs in July and August in grassy areas. These eggs hatch into white grubs that feed on plant roots and organic matter in the soil. The grubs remain in the soil until the following June when they transform to new adults and emerge from the soil to start the cycle over.

Female Japanese beetles lay their eggs in grassy areas over a large area (not just your lawn). Treating your lawn with an insecticide will not reduce the Japanese beetle population next year as adults will emerge from numerous places surrounding your property.

#### **My magnolia is infested with magnolia scale. What are my control options?**

Magnolia scale is the largest scale insect in Iowa. Sap feeding by the scales causes stress to heavily infested plants and can result in stunted growth, yellowish foliage, branch dieback or death of the plant. Magnolia scales produce large quantities of honeydew (sugary excretion) that accumulate on the tree's leaves and twigs. Sooty mold, a black fungus that grows on honeydew, turns the honeydew-covered leaves and twigs black.

To control magnolia scale, remove and destroy heavily-infested branches. Treat with a contact insecticide (horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, other ornamental synthetic insecticide) or a systemic insecticide (imidacloprid) in late August or early September. Dormant horticultural oil also can be used in late fall or early spring.

### **When is the best time to sow grass seed?**

Late summer (mid-August to mid-September) is the best time to establish a lawn from seed in Iowa. Late summer seeding has several advantages over spring seeding. The seeds of cool-season grasses germinate quickly in the warm soil of late summer. Once the seeds germinate, the warm days and cool nights of early fall promote rapid turfgrass growth. The growing grass also has less competition from weeds as few weed seeds germinate in fall.

### **When should I harvest gourds?**

Harvest gourds when the stem attached to the fruit begins to dry and turn brown. Since the rind or skin is susceptible to bruising or scratching, handle the gourds carefully. Cut the gourds from the vines with a hand shears, leaving a few inches of the stem attached to the fruit. After harvesting, gently wash the gourds in warm, soapy water to remove any dirt. Then wipe the gourds with a soft cloth dampened in a household disinfectant. The disinfectant should destroy decay organisms which could lead to fruit rot. Finally, dry each gourd with a soft cloth.

Dry or cure the gourds by placing them in a warm, dry, well-ventilated location, such as a garage or shed. Place the gourds in a single layer on clean newspapers or shelves. Space them so they don't touch one another. Turn the gourds frequently and promptly remove any which show signs of decay. Large gourds can also be dried by hanging them from beams or rafters. Drying or curing will take several weeks. Approximately one to two weeks will be required for the outer skin to dry and harden. Internal drying will take several additional weeks. The gourds have been adequately dried when the seeds rattle inside.

### **When should I harvest my bell peppers?**

Bell peppers are usually harvested when large, firm and dark green (immature stage). They may also be allowed to fully ripen to red, yellow, orange, or other colors. Fully mature bell peppers are slightly sweeter and contain higher amounts of vitamins than immature green fruit.

### **There are large, green caterpillars on my tomato plants. What should I do?**

The large, green caterpillars are probably tomato hornworms. Tomato hornworms are bright green, up to four to five inches long and have red or black, horn-like projections on their rear ends. After feeding, hornworms move to the soil where they pupate and spend the winter. The following summer the pupae transform into five-spotted hawk moths and start the cycle over.

Tomato hornworms feed on the leaves and fruit of tomatoes and other vegetables including eggplant, potatoes and peppers. They can quickly defoliate portions of the plant and heavily damage the fruit.

Often the best control option for home gardeners is to simply pick the caterpillars off by hand and destroy them. Another control option is to use a biological insecticide, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), or a synthetic home garden insecticide. As always, carefully read and follow label directions when using pesticides.

Get answers to all your yard and garden questions at [www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu](http://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

## **Farm Safety Focus: Handling Large Round Bales**

By Charles Schwab, ISU professor of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering

Large round bales accent Iowa's landscape and add a unique hazard to those harvesting and transporting forage. Large round bales are bulky as well as heavy, weighing typically 1,500 to 2,000 pounds. Bales are compact and dense, and usually reach a diameter of five to six feet. They are designed to repel rain and prevent spoilage; however, they also easily roll down hills or off equipment causing serious injuries or sometimes death.

### **Monster Momentum**

The first important rule is to never try to stop a rolling bale, even with a tractor. A bale will pick up speed and gain momentum as it moves down any hill or slope. Never put yourself in front of a bale heading down a hill. You wouldn't jump in front of a truck free-wheeling down a hill; likewise, don't try to stop a large round bale. You don't have enough mass to stop that bale from reaching the bottom of the slope, so don't try.



### **Steady as She Goes**

The large size and weight of round bales affect the stability of equipment used to handle them. A second important rule is to check the owner's manual for recommendations about the size of the tractor and loader required to safely lift and transport large round bales. Improper matching of equipment and load creates a potential for serious injuries.

Once matched, adjust the tractor wheels to the suggested setting and add the proper ballast to assure that the tractor can maintain balance and avoid rollover. Always use a tractor that has a rollover protective structure (ROPS) when moving bales. A tractor without ROPS is a fatality waiting to happen.

### **Heavy End Up**

When moving bales with a tractor, keep the bale on the up-slope side of the tractor. This will provide the best stability for the tractor to prevent an overturn. To accomplish this, put the transmission in reverse to back up a hill when using a rear-mounted spike. Back down a hill when using a front-end loader. Avoid driving across any slope while transporting a large round bale. Cross-slope travel creates the highest potential for a tractor rollover.

### **Low and Slow**

Go low and slow when moving large round bales. Drive slowly to avoid sudden movements and turns, which are exaggerated by a heavy load and can cause the tractor to roll over. Keep the bale low to maintain balance. The weight of the bale, if not kept low, will raise the center of gravity of your equipment and increase your chances of an overturn. Traveling over rough ground, stumps or ruts can also cause a tractor carrying a large round bale to overturn.

### **Grapple With It**

Lastly, always use a grapple hook with a front-end loader to transport large round bales. A grapple hook will prevent the bale from rolling back onto the loader arms and crushing the operator. Using a tractor with a cab or a four-post rollover protective structure will provide additional security. A rear-mounted loading spike might be a better choice because it eliminates the danger of rollback associated with a front-end loader. A rear spike also does not block the operator's forward vision and places the load on the large back tires of the tractor. Make the choices right for your operation. Remember the important rules and the key operational steps to remain safe with large round bales.

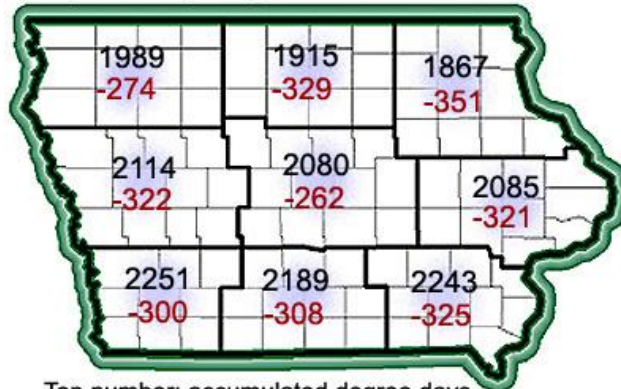
## Degree Days- Crops in the Cooler Again

By Rich Pope, Department of Plant Pathology

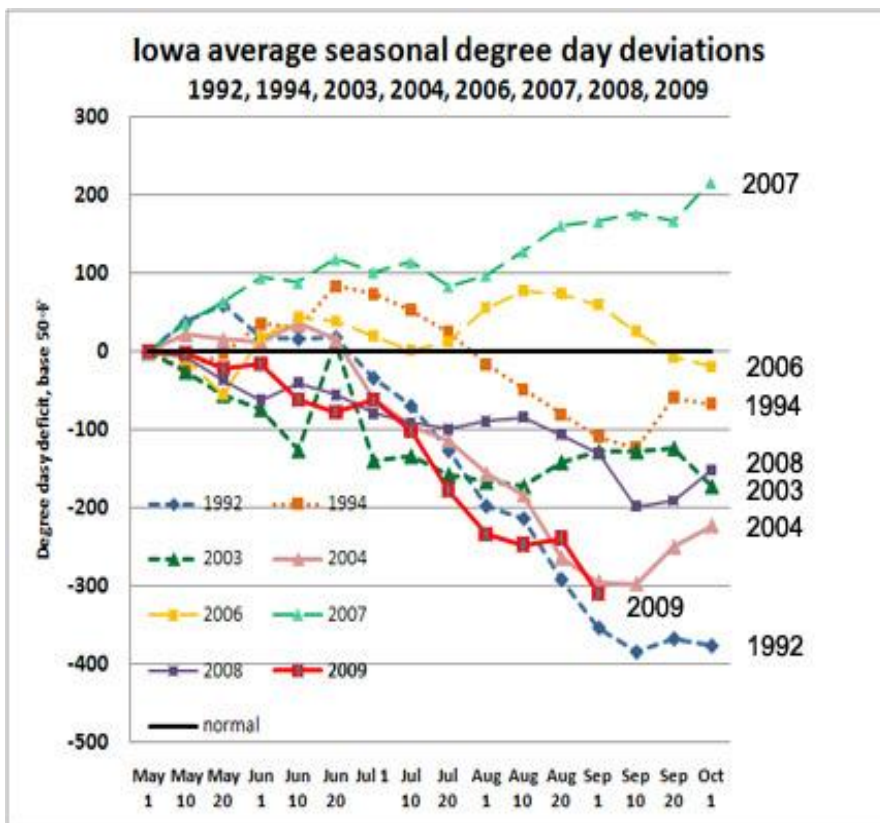
After three weeks of near-normal temperatures, Iowa weather wrapped up August with a return to colder-than-normal. For the week of Aug. 24 - 31, we gained on average 50 degree days fewer than normal. So where does that put us?

Crop producers who have expressed a small but growing concern about an early frost now have a bit more reason for concern. Corn silked rather late and many soybean fields had the onset of podset delayed. Even our most advanced corn still needs at least 3 weeks of open fall weather to reach maturity; many acres of soybeans have set fewer than typical numbers of pods. Both crops will need good September grain filling weather to transport dry matter into the seeds and produce reasonable yields.

Base 50°F degree days  
May 1 through August 30, 2009



Top number: accumulated degree days  
Bottom number: departure from average



Last week Elwynn Taylor and I posted an ICM article that compared degree day deficits (read it at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2009/082409pope2.htm>) from normal throughout several seasons with the 2009 season. I have updated the graph in that article to show the effects from the past week and posted it below. The last line segment for 2009 shows the noticeably cool weather the end of August.

The crops need clear, seasonally warm days filled with ample sunshine. And if frost holds off until well into October, we will all be grateful.

## **Money Talk: A Financial Guide for Women**

### *Upcoming Program Available by Web or by Mail*

Women often have unique financial needs, according to Mary Beth Kaufman, ISU Extension Program Specialist. "Eighty-five percent of women will be on their own financially at some time. Some never marry, some marry later in life, some divorce and some outlive their husbands. And of the elderly poor in America, more than 70 percent are women," Mary Beth says.

Pat Swanson and Cynthia Fletcher, Iowa State University instructor and professor, respectively, will be conducting a Web-based or by-mail course, Money Talk: A Financial Guide for Women, beginning October 5. "You will learn smart money skills and work through action steps to become a more informed manager of your money," Swanson says. The goal of the course is to educate and empower women to take control of their financial lives.

The five course modules will cover financial basics, insurance, investing, retirement planning, and planning for life events. ISU Extension education programs do not promote any product or company. These distance education courses will run from October 5 to November 6.

The cost of \$75 includes the 190-page Money Talk workbook. Call (515) 294-5247 or go online ([www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)) to register using a credit card before October 1 or send a check payable to Iowa State University, along with your name, address and email address, and preference to receive learning activities via the Web or by mail to Iowa State University, Extension Distribution Center, 119 Printing & Publications Building, Ames, Iowa 50011-3171.

## **Master Gardener Program Looking for New Recruits!**

Master Gardeners are individuals who have an interest in horticulture, have taken the Master Gardener training offered by the extension service, and share their time and expertise with other gardeners. It is the acquisition of knowledge, the skill in gardening, and giving back to the community that distinguishes a Master Gardener from other gardeners.

The purpose of the Iowa Master Gardener Program is to provide sound horticultural information to the citizens of Iowa through the volunteer effects of Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners are residents of a community who take an active interest in horticulture. They receive training in horticulture through the Iowa State University Extension Service. In return for their training, Master Gardeners volunteer in extension horticulture programs and projects which enhance the community.

Shelby County has an active Master Gardener group, with most members completing their first year of involvement this year. We have several more people interested in joining the group, and would love to get enough interest to hold another round of classes in early 2010. If this sounds like something that you would like to be involved in, please contact Kate at the Extension Office! A fee is charged for classwork, materials and group membership.

