

# Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
University Extension

Mills County Extension  
415 Main St., Suite 2, P.O. Box 430  
Malvern, IA 51551  
712-624-8616  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills>

Prepared by Denise Fikes, Mills County Horticulture Assistant

June 2010

## Summer Lilac Care



*Well-adapted to Iowa, lilacs thrive in sunny sites with good air circulation.*

By James Romer

A springtime favorite of many Iowans is the lilac. Though they offer mainly one season of interest, their spring flower displays and fragrance are greatly appreciated after a long, hard winter. If you have lilacs or if you are interested in purchasing one, consider several factors prior to planting.

Lilacs are adapted to USDA Hardiness Map zones 3 to 7 and milder areas of zone 2. They thrive in sunny sites with good air circulation. Lilacs need at least four to six hours of sunlight a day for best flower production. Plants should be spaced between 10 and 15 feet apart for specimen displays and five to eight feet apart for a hedge effect. Since many lilacs have bloomed, now is the best time to remove the spent flower heads. This will help the plant to produce more flowers for next season's display. More severe or renewal pruning to control or shape growth can be done in late winter or early spring. However, pruning during the dormant period will reduce flower production the following spring.

Since lilacs are chiefly grown for their attractive, fragrant flowers, many gardeners are disappointed when plants don't bloom quickly. Lack of flowering may be due to several factors. Many lilacs won't bloom for four, five or more years after planting. Lilacs and most woody plants must grow and mature before they are capable of blooming. Exposure to light could also be a factor.

Lilacs need at least six hours of direct sun to bloom well. Improper pruning techniques, such as topping the lilac, are another reason they fail to bloom. Many lilacs bloom on the previous season's growth. Since the flower buds form during the summer months, pruning lilacs in fall or late winter could remove much of the blooming wood. Heavy fertilization should be avoided as this encourages vegetative growth, often at the expense of flowers.

Powdery mildew is a disease that affects lilacs, infesting the leaves and leaving a gray film on the leaf surface. Because the disease normally appears at the end of summer or early fall, it seldom does permanent damage to the plants. Lilacs should be planted in full sun and in areas with good air movement to discourage this disease. Humid, overcast weather when days are warm and nights are cool favor powdery mildew development.

Planting varieties resistant to powdery mildew is the easiest, least expensive and preferred method of disease management. Unfortunately, variety descriptions are often ambiguous and don't identify resistance to specific diseases. Selections of various lilacs differ in their mildew susceptibility, so ask about disease resistance to powdery mildew when buying them. Dwarf Korean lilac, Manchurian lilac and Preston lilac cultivars are resistant to powdery mildew.

**"What is one to say about June, the time of perfect young summer, the fulfillment of the promise of the earlier months, and with as yet no sign to remind one that its fresh young beauty will ever fade."**

- Gertrude Jekyll, *On Gardening*



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
University Extension

## Emerald Ash Borer Found In Iowa Along Banks of the Mississippi River in Allamakee County

---



*Invasive Pest Kills Ash Trees, Iowans Asked to Not Move Firewood*

DES MOINES, Iowa — The Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Team confirmed today (May 14, 2010) that the emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive pest that kills ash trees, has been found in Iowa along the Mississippi River two miles south of the Minnesota border in Allamakee County. The land is owned and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This is the first confirmed EAB infestation in Iowa.

Four EAB larvae were found in one ash tree by members of Iowa's EAB team during a survey of the area following the recent announcement that the beetle had been found just across the Minnesota border. An infestation in nearby Victory, Wis., was discovered in 2009.

A quarantine prohibiting the movement of firewood, ash nursery stock, ash timber or any other article that could further spread EAB is pending from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. A federal quarantine would follow the state quarantine.

An Iowa State University Extension news article released today provides EAB management recommendations for homeowners.

This detection of EAB in Iowa was the result of collaborative effort that has been looking for this pest since 2003. Detection efforts have included visual surveys, sentinel trees, trap surveys, nursery stock inspections, sawmill/wood processing site visits and hundreds of educational programs.

This year, EAB team members are in the process of placing 1,800 purple traps at high-risk areas in the state, including in a 1.5-mile grid along the Mississippi River. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources also has 412 trap trees in the state this year, 12 of which are in Allamakee County.

The emerald ash borer is native to eastern Asia and was detected in the United States near Detroit, Mich., in 2002. EAB kills all ash (*Fraxinus*) species by larval burrowing under the bark and eating the actively growing layers.

The metallic-green adult beetles are 1/2-inch long and are active from late May to early August in Iowa. Signs of EAB infestation include 1/8-inch D-shaped exit holes in ash tree bark and serpentine tunnels packed with sawdust under the bark. Tree symptoms of an infestation include crown thinning and dieback when first noticed, epicormic sprouting as insect damage progresses, and woodpecker feeding.

EAB has killed ash trees of various sizes in neighborhoods and woodlands throughout the Midwest. Ash is one of the most abundant native tree species in North America, and has been heavily planted as a landscape tree in yards and other urban areas. According to recent sources, Iowa has an estimated 58 million rural ash trees and approximately 30 million more ash trees in urban areas.

The Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Team includes officials from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the USDA Forest Service.

The movement of firewood throughout Iowa and to other states poses the greatest threat to quickly spread EAB even further. Areas currently infested are under federal and state quarantines, but unknowing campers or others who transport firewood can spark an outbreak. As a result, officials are asking Iowans to not move firewood and instead buy wood where they are staying and burn it completely.

To learn more about EAB, please visit the following websites:

- [www.IowaTreePests.com](http://www.IowaTreePests.com)
- [www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/eab/index.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/eab/index.html)
- [www.extension.iastate.edu/PME/EmeraldAshBorer.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/PME/EmeraldAshBorer.html)

## ISU Extension Entomologists Offer Recommendations on Protecting Ash Trees

---

AMES, Iowa -- The recent discovery of the emerald ash borer (EAB) in northeastern Iowa (Allamakee County) has increased interest in this exotic, invasive insect and what Iowans can do to protect ash trees (*Fraxinus* species) on their property. Iowa State University Extension is collaborating with Iowa state regulatory agencies and local officials to limit the spread of EAB into other areas of Iowa. For a full list of EAB detection and education activities, please visit [www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html).



Treatment options to protect ash trees from this destructive pest are available, but careful and thoughtful analysis is needed to circumvent spread of false information and excessive and needless use of insecticides. Forest, horticulture and insect specialists with ISU Extension have developed a guide that outlines your management options against EAB.

The first step for many is confirming that you do have an ash tree. Only ash trees are susceptible to EAB attack; all species and varieties of ash trees are at risk. Second is determining if the ash tree is in vigorous health. Trees must be healthy and growing for treatments to be effective.

Compromised trees that have mechanical injuries, loose bark or thin canopy or are struggling to grow in poor sites with limited rooting area, compacted soil or other stresses are not worth treating. If the tree is apparently healthy and is valuable in your landscape, then preventive treatment options may be considered.

Insecticide control measures against EAB should not be used unless you live within 15 miles of the confirmed EAB infestation. Based on today's announcement, the upper portion of Allamakee County is within this risk zone. However, due to the isolated incidence and associated remote terrain of the infested site, treatment in Iowa is still not recommended at this time.

Protecting ash trees with insecticides is a long-term commitment. Most treatments will need to be reapplied annually or twice per year for an interminable number of years to protect the tree. With that in mind, many would be ahead to remove and replace susceptible trees.

ISU Extension has a publication on the topic, PM 2084, "Emerald Ash Borer Management Options," released June 2009. The publication can be downloaded from the ISU Extension Online Store at [www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store). The North Central Region IPM Center's "Insecticide Options for Protecting Ash Trees from EAB" was issued May 2009 and is available on the ISU emerald ash borer website [www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pme/EmeraldAshBorer.html).

## Taking Care of Grass in the Summertime

By Richard Jauron  
Horticulturist  
Iowa State University Extension



Kentucky bluegrass and other cool-season turfgrasses thrive in the cool temperatures and frequent rains of

spring. However, the growing conditions for cool-season turfgrasses are usually much more difficult during the summer months. Hot, dry summer weather is stressful to cool-season turfgrasses. Fortunately, good cultural practices can help bluegrass lawns survive the stressful summer weather.

### Mowing

Sound mowing practices are important during the summer months. Kentucky bluegrass lawns should be mowed at a height of 3 to 3.5 inches during the summer months. (During cool weather in spring and fall, bluegrass lawns should be mowed at a height of 2.5 to 3 inches.) The additional leaf area during summer shades and cools the crowns of the turfgrass plants. Extremely high temperatures at crown level can kill the turfgrass.

When mowing the lawn, never remove more than one-third of the total leaf area at any one time. Accordingly, a lawn being mowed at a height of 3 inches should be cut when it reaches a height of 4.5 inches. Removing more than one-third of the leaf area weakens the turfgrass and reduces its ability to withstand additional environmental stresses. Weakened turf is also more likely to be invaded by weeds.

If possible, mow in the cool of the morning or evening. Mowing at midday may place additional stress on the turf. Also, make sure the mower blade is sharp. Dull blades tear and bruise the leaf tips.

Dormant lawns (those that have turned brown) should not be mowed. Pedestrian and mower traffic could damage the turf.

### Watering

Gardeners have two basic options on lawn care when confronted with hot, dry weather. One option is to simply allow the turf to turn brown and go dormant. The alternative is to water the turfgrass to maintain a green, actively growing lawn.

Kentucky bluegrass lawns survive extended periods of drought by turning brown and going dormant. While the foliage is dead, the turfgrass crowns and roots remain alive. Most healthy lawns can survive in a dormant state for four to six weeks without rainfall or irrigation. Healthy lawns that have been allowed to go dormant will green up again when the turf receives sufficient water.

While dormancy is a natural survival mechanism for cool-season turfgrasses, Kentucky bluegrass will not remain dormant indefinitely. Bluegrass lawns are at risk of dying if dormant for more than four to six weeks. To prevent serious damage, apply 1 to 1.5 inches of water in a single application to bluegrass lawns that have been dormant for four to six weeks. Water again seven days later. The grass should begin to green up after the second application of water.

Gardeners who want a green lawn throughout the summer should begin to water the lawn when symptoms of moisture stress begin to develop, but before the grass becomes dormant. A good indication of water stress in turfgrass is leaf color. Bluegrass that has access to adequate supplies of moisture is normally dark green in color. The foliage turns bluish green when water-stressed. Water-stressed turfgrass is also less resilient. Footprints remain in the turf after walking across it.

Turfgrass requires approximately 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week. When watering the lawn, apply this amount in a single application or possibly two applications three or four days apart. Avoid frequent, light applications of water, which promote shallow rooting and lush growth. Lush, shallow-rooted turfgrass is less drought-tolerant. It is also more susceptible to pest problems.

Sprinklers are the best way to water lawns. The amount of water applied may be determined by placing two or three rain gauges within the spray pattern.

The best time to water a lawn is early morning (5 to 9 a.m.). Morning applications allow the water to soak into the soil with little water lost to evaporation. When watering is completed, the turfgrass foliage dries quickly. Watering at midday is more wasteful because of the high rate of evaporation. Also, strong midday winds may carry the water onto driveways or streets and waste considerable amounts of water. Watering the lawn in the evening or at night may increase disease problems.

Hot, dry summer weather can be extremely stressful for cool-season turfgrasses. Proper care of the lawn during this period should help to maintain a healthy, good quality turf.

## Upcoming Horticulture Events of Interest:

### **Glenwood Lake Park Farmers Market**

Wednesdays, June 2 to Sept. 8 4:00PM – 7:00PM

Vendors offering locally-grown garden and orchard produce, baked goods, eggs, & crafts.

ISU Mills County Master Gardeners will again have a question/answer table to help you solve your garden problems.

### **Silver City Farmers Market**

Saturdays throughout the summer beginning on June 5 8:00AM – 11:30AM

ISU Mills County Master Gardeners on hand to answer all your gardening questions!

### **Ask a Master Gardener**

Wednesday Evenings, 6:00PM – 8:00PM

Located at the Mills County Extension office in Malvern. Call in or come to the office with your questions and/or samples during the extended office hours this summer! Master Gardeners will be able to help you identify weed, insect, or disease problems as well as answer questions about specific plants, planting recommendations, and more!

## Mills County Master Gardener GARDEN WALK



**Date: Wednesday, June 9**

**Time: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM**

**Location: 817 Hillway Dr., Glenwood  
And 1605 Timberline, Glenwood**

You are cordially invited to stroll through the beautiful gardens at the residences of

**Terry and Gloria Ross  
and  
Dieter and Ginnie Vance**

These two sites have adjoining backyards and include lovely water features and a large variety of perennials including low-maintenance plantings. The owners and Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer any questions about the gardens you may have.

**Admission: Free Will Donation**

### **Mills County Fair**

Saturday, July 17

Open Class Floriculture & Agriculture

Entries received at the Mills County Fairgrounds  
8:00AM – 12:00 Noon

**Enter your Flowers and Vegetables!**

Open Class fair books are available at area banks, libraries and the Extension Office.

Call 624-8616 for more information.

## SUMMER WEBINAR SERIES!

Iowa State University Extension presents

### Gardening Green 2010

Brought to you by the Iowa Master Gardener program

*This three part series will be presented on the last Tuesday of each month this summer:*



**Dates:** June 22, July 27, and August 24

**Time:** 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**Location:** Mills County Extension Office, Malvern

**Who:** All are welcome!

**Cost:** \$5.00 per session

*No pre-registration required*

#### **Growing Green Roofs in Iowa – June 22**

This session will describe green roofs and outline the benefits of installing vegetation on a roof. Examples from Iowa and around the world will be used to illustrate the beautiful possibilities of green roofing. The session will include “how-to” information to create your own green roof, which can be as simple as greening a birdhouse roof! Presented by Dr. Jennifer Bousset, Dept. of Horticulture, Iowa State University.

#### **Organic Gardening for Homeowners – July 27**

This session will outline the basics of how to manage your landscape organically. Pest control for vegetable gardening and ornamentals will be discussed. Dr. Kathleen Delate, Dept. of Horticulture and Agronomy, Iowa State University, will present this session.

#### **Rain Gardens in Iowa – August 24**

This session will illustrate the design and maintenance of rain gardens as a best management practice (BMP) for storm water management in your landscape. Soil preparation and appropriate plant species selection will be emphasized. This topic will be covered by Dr. Ann Marie VanDerZanden, Dept. of Horticulture, Iowa State University.

**Please join us this summer to learn more about these timely topics in gardening!**

## Ask the ISU Extension Gardening Expert

### **When should I spray for bagworms on my evergreens?**

Bagworms are caterpillars that live inside spindle-shaped bags. (The bags somewhat resemble small Christmas tree ornaments hanging from the tree.) Bagworms feed on the foliage of a wide variety of trees and shrubs. However, they are most commonly found on juniper, arborvitae, spruce and other evergreens. The spindle-shaped bags are made of silk and bits of foliage (needle) fragments. The bags protect the caterpillars from their natural enemies. Bagworms are most often found in the southern half of Iowa.

Bagworms over-winter in the egg stage inside female bags attached to plants. In Iowa, egg hatch typically occurs in late May to mid-June. Insecticides, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis*, spinosad, Sevin, permethrin or bifenthrin, should be applied shortly after egg hatch.

One way to determine the best time to treat is to frequently inspect trees and shrubs (beginning in late May) that were infested last year. This will take time and diligence as the newly emerged caterpillars and their bags are quite small. Also, newly constructed bags with fresh plant bits are effectively camouflaged amongst the needles and are hard to find. Mother Nature also provides some helpful clues. Bagworm egg hatch typically occurs when catalpas and Japanese tree lilacs are in bloom in the area.

### **I would like to move some of my spring-flowering bulbs. When can they be dug?**

If you would like to dig and move spring-flowering bulbs, such as tulips and daffodils, wait until the foliage has turned brown and died. Once dug, the bulbs can be separated and replanted immediately. If planting isn't possible, dry the bulbs for one or two weeks and then store them until fall. Place the dried bulbs in mesh bags and store them in a cool (50 to 60 F), dry location until fall planting. Periodically check the bulbs during summer and discard any that show signs of decay.

### **How do I propagate garden mums?**

Chrysanthemums can be propagated by division and rooting cuttings.

Divide mums in early spring just as new growth begins to appear. Dig up the entire plant and divide each plant clump into sections with a sharp knife. Each division should contain several shoots and a portion of the root system. Immediately replant the divisions.

Collect cutting material in spring or early summer. When the new growth is several inches long, cut off the upper 3 to 4 inches of the shoots with a sharp knife. Pinch off

the leaves on the bottom portion of the cuttings. Dip the bottom of the cuttings in a rooting hormone. Then stick the cuttings in a rooting medium (coarse sand or perlite). Keep the rooting medium moist. The cuttings should root in four to five weeks. When the cuttings have good root systems, remove them from the rooting medium and transplant the rooted cuttings into pots or plant directly into the garden.

### When should I spray my apple trees?

The main objective in spraying apple trees is to prevent insect damage to the fruit. The most important period to spray apple trees is from petal drop until just prior to harvest. Several applications will need to be made during this period. A home-orchard-type spray (available at most garden centers) is the best product for home gardeners. Most home-orchard-type sprays contain two insecticides and one fungicide and can be applied to apple, pear and most other fruit trees. See the product label for specific directions.

### Why are my green ash trees dropping leaves?

The leaf drop is probably due to anthracnose. Anthracnose is a common fungal disease of trees in Iowa. Anthracnose may occur on ash, sycamore, maple, oak, walnut and other deciduous trees. Cool, rainy weather in spring favors anthracnose development. Symptoms of anthracnose vary with the tree species. On ash, brown or black blotches typically appear on the leaflets. Affected leaflets often become distorted (they tend to curl toward the blighted areas) and fall from the trees.

Fortunately, anthracnose does not cause serious harm to healthy, well established trees. The affected trees will continue to leaf out. Leaves that develop later in spring are usually not affected as weather conditions are less favorable for anthracnose development. There is no need to apply a fungicide to affected trees.

## JUNE GARDENING TO DO LIST



- Finish harvesting rhubarb and asparagus this month to allow the plants to start storing reserves for next year's crop.
- Cover broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and brussels sprouts to prevent cabbage worms from reaching and feeding on the plants. Use cheesecloth or a lightweight row cover to form the barrier.

- Rake and compost all immature apples that fall from the tree. This is a common phenomena called June drop. It occurs when trees produce more fruit than the plant can support. Eliminate June drop by hand thinning young fruit. After thinning, apples should be spaced 8 to 10 inches apart on the branches.
- Stake or cage indeterminate tomatoes to support vines and keep the fruit off the ground.
- Harvest herbs for drying before they flower.
- Continue deadheading plants to prolong bloom, prevent unwanted seedlings, and improve the overall appearance.
- Finish hardening off and transplanting annual vines into the garden. Anchor the trellis in place before or right after planting. Gently tie vines to the trellis to get them started climbing on their new support.
- Plant groundcovers in shady areas where grass doesn't grow.

### Resources for Horticulture information

ISU's Hortline at (515) 294-3108

(Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m)

ISU/Mills County Extension: 712-624-8616

[www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/yardgarden.htm](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills/yardgarden.htm)

### Iowa State University Publications

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| PM 820   | Garden Soil Management (free)                            |
| NCR 0025 | Lawn Weeds and Their Control (\$7.25)                    |
| RG 404   | Grasses for Special Uses                                 |
| PM 1591  | Community Tree Planting & Care Guide (\$1.00)            |
| PM 0819  | Planting a Home Vegetable Garden (\$.50)                 |
| PM 534   | Planting & Harvesting Times for Garden Vegetables (Free) |
| RG 206   | Questions about Composting (free)                        |
| RG 319   | When to Divide Perennials (free)                         |
| PM 1332  | Groundcovers (free)                                      |

### Horticulture Publications on-line

[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)

---

*Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or disability.*