



Acreage Living

April-May 2005

www.extension.iastate.edu/acreage/

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Acreage Living is published bimonthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.

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Protect your acreage from erosion

By Kapil Arora, ISU Extension Agricultural Engineering Specialist

Spring rains can contribute to soil erosion, especially in areas with minimum or no ground cover or where water flow concentrates. Rain can cause unprotected soil to dislodge; once detached, soil particles are carried away with excess water.

This excess water combines and forms concentrated flow. On slopes, the water's energy can lead to gullies, visible flow paths that can vary from a few inches to several feet deep.

What can an acreage owner do?

There are several ways to limit erosion. Make sure that every part of the acreage is protected by grass, plants, shrubs, trees, etc. Use mulch to cover newly seeded or unprotected areas. It will help to absorb the impact of rain, reducing soil detachment.

Make your acreage more absorbent so water runs less freely on the surface. Pave only where necessary; vegetated ground encourages water to soak in and recharge soil moisture. Properly installed vegetated swales – trough-like depressions that stop or slow erosion – also help.

Do not allow concentrated water to run freely over long slopes. If these slopes are steep, erosion can be severe. Vegetated depressions with barriers or terraces may help. If the slopes are extremely severe, properly constructed erosion control structures that safely drop water to a lower elevation may be needed.

Finally, look closely at your land during and after spring rains to see where erosion is occurring and how preventive measures are performing. This will help you better understand the conditions when making future decisions. Also contact your local Extension office for helpful resources.

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Tornadoes strike fear in the hearts of lowans

by Joy Rouse, Warren County Extension Education Director

You're watching your favorite program and a weather map pops into the corner of the screen. Your county is in a "tornado watch." Do you know what to do?

A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for a tornado to develop. You need to listen for changes, particularly an upgrade to "tornado warning" status. A tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar. If you are in the path of the storm, you should take immediate action.

Protect yourself indoors

Before spring and summer storms hit, designate an area in your home where family members should take shelter during a tornado warning. A basement is a good place, but stay away from windows and

chimneys. If you can, get under sturdy furniture or a stairwell. Protect yourself from flying debris with blankets, quilts, or an unused mattress stored in the shelter area.

If you don't have a basement or if you live in a multifamily dwelling, go to the lowest and most central part of the building. Avoid exterior walls and windows. Look for a small room, closet, or hallway. Ask if there is a designated area for the multifamily building.

If you live in a mobile home, evacuation is a must. Find shelter in a nearby permanent structure. Mobile home parks often have a designated area for residents.

Protect yourself outdoors

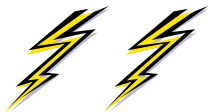
If you are caught outside, lie flat in a nearby ditch or low-lying area



where wind and debris can blow above you. Cover your head and neck with your arms and hands. Rain can accompany a tornado, so be aware of potential flooding.

Have an action plan

Develop a tornado plan for your family and prepare for weather situations now. Practice what to do frequently so it becomes second nature to your family members. Have a weather radio and a map to take with you in the shelter so you can track the storm.



Lightning kills – know the danger and how to avoid it

By Joy Rouse, Warren County Extension Education Director

Lightning has killed an average of 67 people per year in the United States in the past 30 years. This is more than the average number of deaths from tornadoes and hurricanes.

Injuries can occur from a main lightning strike or as the current moves in and along the ground. People may take action to protect themselves during a storm, but are still vulnerable to being struck as thunderstorms approach, depart, or remain nearby.

Lightning can strike as far away as 10 miles from a thunderstorm. If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. If the time between the lightning flash and when you hear thunder is 30 seconds or less, the storm is six miles away. Find shelter and wait at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before leaving.

If caught outdoors, avoid water, high ground, and open spaces. Unsafe places are underneath canopies, park shelters, and

nearby trees. Look for shelter in a substantial building or fully enclosed metal vehicle with the windows completely closed.

If you are outside and there is a strike nearby, crouch down with your feet together and cover your ears with your hands to reduce the potential for hearing damage. Be a minimum of 15 feet from others.

For more information

www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/
www.lightningsafety.com/

Colorful flowers, sweet nectar attract hummingbirds

by Steve Lekwa, Story County Conservation Director



Eastern North America and Iowa are home to the ruby-throated hummingbird. Attracting them to your feeder during the summer and early fall is easy if you have appropriate habitat nearby.

As woodland birds, ruby throats like trees or shrubs, but not open country. Having the right flowers and feeders nearby will encourage them to stay.

Attracting hummingbirds

Hummingbirds like nectar-bearing flowers that bloom throughout the summer in colors ranging from orange to red to violet. They prefer flowers with long, trumpetlike tubes and nectar reservoirs at the base.

Red salvias are a favorite, as are red bee balm and other members of the mint family. Trumpet vines and trumpet creepers also get their attention. Favorite native wildflowers include red woodland columbines.

Hummers arrive in Iowa in mid-May, about the time columbines bloom. Yellow and orange touch-me-nots (jewelweeds) are a late summer favorite.

Feeding hummingbirds

Hummingbirds burn an amazing 6,000 calories per day. They need sugar to fuel their calorie needs. Flower nectar, which makes up

most of their food, tends to have 20-25 percent sugar content.

Commercial hummingbird food typically duplicates that sugar ratio. These mixes are usually nothing more than table sugar, sucrose, and occasionally red dye. You can make inexpensive nectar by dissolving one part table sugar with four to five parts water. Never use honey.

Maintaining feeders

To attract hummingbirds, put out several feeders. Although nest mates may feed together in late summer, adult hummers are intolerant and often spend more time chasing each other than feeding. Placing feeders apart discourages this.

Keep the nectar fresh. Clean the feeders and add fresh nectar at least weekly or at the first sign of any cloudiness or fowling by insects. Hummingbirds will visit feeders through early fall as they feed heavily to prepare for their long migration. You can bring feeders in after the first frost.

For more information

For a list of plants to use in Iowa to attract hummingbirds, see *Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Garden* at www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2000/6-9-2000/hummingbirds.html.

Use phosphorus responsibly on lawns

by Eldon Everhart, ISU Extension Horticulture Specialist

Independent research shows that phosphorus from properly applied lawn fertilizers is rapidly immobilized and will not runoff the lawn or leach into groundwater. Healthy, dense grass actually reduces the phosphorus in storm-water runoff by binding the soil and preventing erosion.

How does phosphorus get into storm sewers? Natural sources such as leaf litter, soil particles, flowers, seeds, and pollen fall onto hard surfaces and rainwater washes them into lakes and streams through urban storm water systems.

Improperly applied fertilizer can cause problems. Apply fertilizer according to label directions and use only the kind and amount your lawn needs. Avoid spreading fertilizer on hard surfaces; sweep up immediately any fertilizer that lands there.

Know your lawn's fertilizer needs

The best way to determine the fertilizer needs of your lawn is to take a soil test. Sample bags and instructions are available from your local Extension office. You will receive a report by mail indicating what mineral elements your lawn needs. There is a nominal fee for this service.

Phosphorus continues on page 4

Select and plant perennials and annuals that enhance your landscape

by Cynthia Haynes, ISU Extension Horticulturist



Gardening season is almost here. Selecting healthy plants suitable for your site and planting them carefully are the first steps in establishing a successful landscape. When you wander the endless rows at your local garden center, consider the following before making any purchases.

Recognize healthy plants

Healthy plants have full leaves, stocky stems, and an extensive root system. Look for new growth at the stem tips and ends of the branches.

Select plants that have tightly closed flower buds instead of fully opened flowers. This way you can enjoy the flowers in *your* garden.

Pick the right plants

Before visiting the garden center, tour your landscape. Look at the sites that need additional plants and answer these questions:

- Is the soil typically moist, average, or dry?
- How much direct sun does the site receive each day?
- How much room (height and width) is available?
- What type or color of foliage, flowers, habitat, etc., would you like in the landscape?

There are thousands of perennials and annuals. A few are suited for almost any site or situation. Read the labels carefully. Make sure they match your site requirements.

For more information on possible plants, ask your local Extension office for *Perennials for Sun*

(PM 1914), *Perennials for Shade* (PM 1913), or *Annuals* (PM 1942).

Plant with care

Most annuals and perennials are ready to plant in mid to late May after the last threat of frost has passed. Be sure to plant them carefully, usually at the same level they were planted in the container. After planting, water them well and add mulch to prevent weed competition.

Garden Tips: Guidelines to Seasonal Chores and *Growing Annuals in Containers* are two recently updated brochures from Reiman Gardens. You can find these and other Reiman Gardens brochures online at www.extension.iastate.edu. Click on “publications.” Under “Go to” click on “RGxx.”

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Some lawns in Iowa need extra phosphorus. However, many have enough and adding more is unnecessary. Soil testing can identify the existing levels of phosphorus in your soil. Don't add phosphorus unless the soil test indicates there is a need to do so.

Soil testing is an essential tool for managing your lawn and protecting the environment. A sample taken once every three years is ideal. This periodic

sampling is necessary because of changing soil conditions.

For more information

Contact your local Extension office or order the publications listed below online at www.extension.iastate.edu/store/.

Responsible phosphorus management practices for lawns (PM 1447d)

Establishing a lawn from seed (PM 1072)

Maintenance, fertilization of turfgrass (PM 1057)

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homes. Instead, hire a reputable local pest control firm.

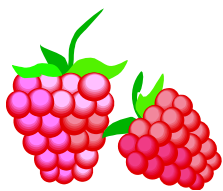
For more information

To learn more about selecting a pest control professional, visit your local Extension office or see pamphlet PM 1496, *Selecting a termite control service*, online at www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1496.pdf.

To learn more about termites, go to www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/iin/termites/default.html.

Grow delectable raspberries in your home garden this year

by Mary Ann deVries, Polk County Extension horticulturist



The sweet taste of homegrown raspberries makes them a favorite in any garden. They are easy to grow and are well suited to most areas of Iowa.

Raspberries come in four basic types: black, purple, summer-bearing red and fall-bearing red. Traditional raspberry flavors typically are associated with the summer and fall-bearing red varieties.

Selecting the right plants is an important first step. Plants are best purchased from a reputable garden center to ensure they are virus free.

Raspberries do well in most full-sun locations, but avoid heavy clay or poorly drained soils. Place new plants 1 ½ to 3 feet apart in rows spaced 6 to 8 feet apart. Late March and April are ideal times to plant raspberries. Harden off plants outside in a protected area for a few days prior to planting.

Pruning is the primary challenge for raspberry growers. Because summer-bearing raspberries are biennial, first year canes produce only leaves. In the second summer these canes produce fruit.

At the end of the second season, the old fruiting canes, which are then among other first-year canes, must be pruned out. Thorns make this a tricky task.

Fall-bearing raspberries are a good alternative. Because they bear fruit in late summer, leaves and fruit develop on the same cane in the same summer. After frost, these canes can be mowed rather than removed individually by hand.

Suggested summer-bearing red raspberry varieties for Iowa include Boyne, Liberty, and Latham. Excellent fall-bearing red raspberries include Heritage, Red Wing, and Autumn Bliss.

For more information

ISU Extension offers a four-color brochure, *Growing Raspberries in the Home Garden* (PM 1706). The cost is \$2 and any county Extension office can provide it.

Effective termite control is both a science and an art

by Donald Lewis, ISU Extension Entomologist



Questions about termites and termite control are common in Iowa although termites here are widely scattered. Termites in Iowa, called subterranean, live underground in a loose collection of tunnels and chambers.

There are three types of termites. Worker termites build and maintain the nest, care for the young, and forage for food. Soldier termites guard the colony. Swarmer termites are male and female adults that emerge from well-established colonies and fly off in an attempt to start new ones.

Identifying a home infestation

A home termite infestation is usually not obvious because most activity is concealed. Warning signs include the presence of pencil-wide mud foraging tubes on foundation walls, floor joists, etc.; the presence of hollowed spaces inside structural wood, drywall, paneling, molding, paper or cardboard; and emergence of swarmers.

Controlling termites

There are two methods of termite treatment. The first is injecting liquid insecticide into the soil to

provide a long-lasting chemical barrier that protects the structure by repelling or reducing the termite population. The second control method is baiting. Devices in the ground or inside the house deliver a slow-acting toxicant to the termite colony. No one treatment method is always the best.

Because of the complexities and the importance of a thorough and effective job, we do not advise homeowners to treat their own

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Acreage Living – Iowa State University Extension Newsletter for Acreage Owners

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April 7, 2005

This last rain was truly a spring rain. Gentle in nature, less than an inch for most places with no bad wind or hail, it was an April shower. But heavy rains can bring more than wind and hail. The opening article concerns erosion. Small acreages owners may feel that erosion does not affect them because of the smallness of their property. But erosion is more about the percent of slope and its length, rather than total acres.

Storms that bring erosive conditions can also bring tornadoes and lightning. I found the fact that lightning causes more deaths per year (on the average) in the U.S. than tornadoes quite interesting.

It is also time to prepare for hummingbirds and watch for termites.

Termites or even just the thought of termites can make one's heart sink fast. If you think you have termites, capture some in a bottle and bring them for a positive ID. Many people confuse flying termite with flying ants. It is very easy to tell the difference. If you are on the web just visit: <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/Insects/g1062.htm>. This Nebraska Extension publication illustrates the difference.

Due to limited usage of the Acreage Living newsletter across Iowa, it will be suspended for 6 months. The need will be re-assessed in October. If you enjoy the publication and wish to see it continue, give us a call at 641-342-3316 or send an email to gweaster@iastate.edu. I will pass the information on to the committee that publishes the newsletter.

Have a great summer!!

Glen Easter
Clarke County Extension Education Director