

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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I hope you had a chance to go to the Grundy county fair last week! The livestock shows went well and were well attended. The quality of animals shown and skill of showing was excellent. The non livestock projects were of high quality and several exhibitors will have their projects go on to state fair. 4-H and FFA members used their creative skills to turn large hay bales into “works of art”. Other fair decorating displays were scattered about as well. The county council movie night was well attended and was preceded by the fairboard’s sweet corn feed and the Grundy Center chamber’s farmer’s market and live entertainment.

Have you noticed small brown spots on the lower leaves of your tomatoes? These spots are often surrounded by bright yellow halos. These spots may eventually grow together and the entire leaf will die. These are symptoms of Septoria leaf spot. This disease is favored by wet leaf conditions. To minimize the development of Septoria leaf spot, use cultural practices that minimize leaf wetness and aids good air flow through the leaves such as proper spacing and staking of the plants. Fungicides are available to protect plants from infection but must be applied before the disease develops or at the earliest symptoms. Be sure to follow label directions.

Another common tomato problem is blossom end rot. It appears as a brownish black spot on the blossom end of fruit. The affected area is then invaded by other organisms that cause the fruit to rot. It is caused by a deficiency of calcium in the developing fruit that can occur when the uptake of calcium is impaired; often due to dry soils. Excess nitrogen may contribute to the problem as well. To reduce the incidence of blossom end rot, water the plants weekly during dry weather and remove affected fruit. Mulching around the plants will help to conserve moisture.

Have you seen digger wasps this summer? Digger wasps are generally considered beneficial. However, if they happen to have a nest in a highly traveled area such as near a deck or doorway they may need to be removed. The female is the only one capable of stinging and typically will not unless threatened. The sting is generally not severe but people’s reaction to a sting varies. Ground nests can be destroyed by using an outdoor insecticide dust in the nest entrance at night. The dust particles will stick to the wasps as they enter and leave their nest. After all activity has stopped, cover the opening with a shovelful of dirt.

If you are interested in more information about any of the above topics or have other questions, please contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.