

Horticulture 2014 Newsletter No. 5 February 4, 2014

Video of the Week: [Tips for Growing Blueberries](#)

FRUIT

Approaching Time for Peach Leaf Curl Control



If you have ever seen emerging peach leaves that are puckered, swollen, distorted and reddish-green color, you have seen peach leaf curl. Uncontrolled, this disease can severely weaken trees due to untimely leaf drop when leaves unfurl in the spring. Fortunately, peach leaf curl is not that difficult to control if the spray is applied early enough. However, by the time you see symptoms, it is much too late. As a matter of fact, fungicides are ineffective if applied after buds begin to swell. Don't spray when temperatures are below 40

degrees or will fall below freezing before the spray dries. Usually we can wait until March to spray but an extended warm period in February that encourages early bud swell may require spraying in late February.

Though peach leaf curl can be controlled by a single fungicide application either in the fall after leaf drop, it is more commonly controlled in the spring. There are several fungicides labeled for this disease including Bordeaux, liquid lime sulfur, and chlorothalonil (Ortho Garden Disease Control, Fertilome Broad Spectrum Fungicide, GardenTech Fungicide Disease Control, Gordon's Multipurpose Fungicide, and Daconil). Thoroughly cover the entire tree during application. Note that it is much easier to achieve good spray coverage if the tree is pruned before spraying. (Ward Upham)

Some Fruit Trees Need Pollinators

Fruit and nut trees must be pollinated before fruit will develop. Nut trees are pollinated by the wind, but bees pollinate most fruit trees. If you are planning a fruit planting, be sure to check to see if the cultivars (varieties) you are buying require a second cultivar as a source of



pollen. It is important to understand that the different source of pollen is from a different cultivar, not a second plant or tree of the same cultivar. For example, Jonathan apple cannot be pollinated by another Jonathan, but rather another cultivar such as Golden Delicious. Cultivars of apples, sweet cherries, pears, Japanese plums, blueberries, and elderberries generally need a second cultivar for a pollen source. There are some exceptions such as Golden Delicious apple and Stella sweet cherry that are self-pollinating, and one tree is sufficient. Apricots, tart or pie cherry, European plum, peach, nectarine, blackberry, raspberry, currant, gooseberry, grape, and strawberry plants are all self pollinating, and only one tree or plant is adequate for pollination and fruit development. There are exceptions to this rule as J.H. Hale peach and Perfection, Riland and Rival apricots do require pollination by another variety of the same species.

If you have only one fruit tree that requires a pollinator, you can fool Mother Nature by using a bouquet of blossoms from another cultivar of the same species. Place the bouquet in a container of water, and hang it on the sunny side of the tree that needs to be pollinated. The bees will move from the flowers in the bouquet to the flowers in the tree and pollinate them. The trees must be blooming at the same time, and the bouquet should be replaced every two or three days to keep the flowers fresh and the pollen viable. (Ward Upham)

Dormant Oil Sprays for Fruit Trees



There are a number of dormant sprays used on fruit to control various diseases and insects, but a dormant oil spray is designed to control scale insects. If you have a problem with scale, now is the time to start looking for an opportunity to spray. Normally spray should be applied by March 1, especially with peaches and nectarines.

Apples are tougher, and application may be delayed up to the green tip stage. Temperatures need to be at least 40 degrees so spray has a chance to dry before freezing. If the spray does freeze before it dries, plant injury can occur.

Applying the spray during the morning will help insure that it dries properly. Thorough coverage of limbs, branches, and twigs is vital for good control. Note that it is much easier to achieve good spray coverage if the tree is pruned before spraying. (Ward Upham)

PESTS

Fungus Gnats

Fungus gnats are small insects (1/8 to 1/10 inch long) that are common in high-organic-matter houseplant soils that are kept moist. Though adults are mosquito-like in appearance, they do not bother humans or pets. It is actually the larvae or maggots that can injure plants by feeding on the roots. Symptoms include



sudden wilting, loss of vigor, poor growth or yellowing leaves. Use of sterile media and avoiding overwatering can help prevent infestations. Existing infestations can be controlled *Bacillus thuringiensis v. israelensis* (Gnatrol). (Ward Upham)

Check Plants for Scale Insects



Obscure Scale

The dormant season is a good time to check woody plants for scale insect infestations. This time of year, deciduous plants do not have leaves, so scale are more easily seen. If an infestation is detected, make plans to apply a dormant oil for control by March 1. Be sure temperature is 40 degrees or above before spraying. Scale insects are easily overlooked because they are small and immobile most of their lives, and they do not resemble most other insects. Many of them resemble small shells that are oval or circular, but some have more

unusual shapes like oyster shells. Coloring varies, but can include white, tan, and brown. Plants that should be inspected for scales include apples, pears, other fruit trees, bush fruits, lilac, crabapple, oak, ash, elm, lilac, maple, linden, arborvitae, juniper, pine, spruce and yew.

Manhattan euonymus, a broadleaf evergreen, is especially noted for having scale problems. Plants are not harmed if only a few scales are present. But scale population can increase dramatically during the growing season. Heavy scale infestations can damage fruit crops, destroy branches and kill entire plants. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Leaching Houseplants



Everyone knows that someone stranded in the ocean should not drink the water. The salt content of that water will make a bad situation worse. What many people don't realize is that this same principle can harm plants.

Fertilizers are salts. They must be salts in order for the plant roots to take them up. However, salt levels can build up over time and eventually may harm plant roots leading to scorched leaves and unhealthy plants. Though this can happen under

field conditions, especially in low rainfall areas, it is particularly critical with houseplants.

Houseplants have a certain soil volume that doesn't change until a plant is repotted. Salt build-up can be a crucial concern especially if plants are fertilized heavily. Leaching an overabundance of salts can be an important practice to insure the health of our houseplants. Leaching is not a

complicated or difficult process. It consists of adding enough water to wash out excess salts. How much water is enough? Add the amount of water that would equal twice the volume of the pot. This, of course, would need to be done outside or in a bathtub or sink. Water must be added slowly so that it doesn't overflow the rim of the pot.

If salt has formed a crust on the surface of the soil, remove it but don't take more than 1/4 inch of the underlying media. This may also be a good time to repot the plant. (Ward Upham)

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