

Horticulture 2014 Newsletter No. 8 February 25, 2014

Video of the Week: [Hotbeds and Coldframes](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Water Smart Landscape Series

Homeowners, Landscape Professionals, Master Gardeners and Community Members Plan to attend this free series which includes supper.

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

KSU Ag Research Center (1232 240th Ave., Hays, KS)

Soil testing, xeriscaping, plant location and species, household water conservation, efficient watering in the landscape, stormwater runoff, private well maintenance, and lawn care will be discussed.

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| March 25 | Raising Your Water IQ |
| April 1 | Soil Testing, Soil Health & Fertilizer Management |
| April 8 | Xeriscaping & Drought Tolerant Species |
| April 22 | Healthy Lawn Management in Drought Conditions |

Please RSVP at (785) 628-9430 for meal count by March 21.

Sponsored by K-State Research & Extension - Ellis County, City of Hays, Ellis County Extension Master Gardeners, and KSU Big Creek Middle Smoky Hill River Watersheds.



FRUIT

Growing Blueberries

Blueberries are not native to Kansas but will grow in the eastern half of the state with good preparation. They are related to azaleas and rhododendrons and require an acid pH, preferably 4.8 to 5.2. Blueberries do not have root hairs, so watering and mulching are important. It is best to

start planting preparations a year ahead of time to allow for pH adjustment, weed control, and the addition of organic matter. The first step is a soil test to determine how much the pH needs to be reduced. For a pH up to 5.5, the addition of sphagnum peat moss at the rate of 2 cubic feet per 100 square feet will be adequate. For a pH 5.5 to 6.0, add 1 pound of sulfur per 100 square feet of bed in addition to the peat moss. For a pH 6.0 to 6.5, add 1.5 pounds of sulfur per 100 square feet of bed. For pH levels above 6.5, use 2 pounds of sulfur per 100 square feet of bed and double the amount of sphagnum peat moss suggested earlier. Do not use aluminum sulfate to correct a high pH because excessive levels of aluminum can be toxic to blueberries. For each 0.5 movement up the pH scale from 6.5, add an additional pound of sulfur. Sulfur can be applied as a dust, but pelletized sulfur is much easier to spread.

Treat only the row. Row width should be 8 feet. Blueberries are normally spaced about 5 feet within the row. Sulfur takes time to react, so allow as much time as possible between sulfur application and planting. Blueberries will bear more if you plant more than one variety.

Recommended varieties vary, but you may want to try Bluecrop because it is adaptable. Patriot also seems to do well. You may want to try some other varieties.

Blueberries should be mulched. Sawdust is the traditional material, but straw and wood chips will work as well. Mulch to a depth of about 3 inches.

Blueberries must be irrigated. Soils should be kept moist but never waterlogged. Adding peat moss to the planting row will elevate the planting bed enough that standing water should not be an issue. An elevated bed will dry out more quickly, so there must be a way to add water. Trickle irrigation works well. Watering twice a week during the summer with enough water to wet the soil 8 inches deep should be sufficient except under extreme heat. Watering once a week may be enough during the cooler spring and fall weather. As you might guess, there is more to growing blueberries than can be included in a short article. Dr. Art Gaus from the University of Missouri shared this instruction sheet on how to grow blueberries more than 25 years ago. It is still excellent information on blueberry culture. You can access it by going to:

<http://www.hfr.ksu.edu/doc3091.ashx> Blueberries require commitment. Anything less than excellent preparation and care will result in failure. (Ward Upham)

Blueberries in Containers



Growing blueberries in containers is becoming more popular. Chosen varieties are usually half-high plants that are a cross between highbush and lowbush blueberry species. Plants can be as small as 18 inches tall and wide (Top Hat), but typically are larger. Here are several tips for producing container grown blueberries:

Acid soil pH: Blueberries need an acid pH between 4.8 and 5.2. Sphagnum peat moss is very acid and often used in large quantities in soil mixes for acid-loving plants. In fact, blueberries can be grown in peat moss alone if nutrients are provided

but that is an involved process. A 50/50 mix of peat moss and potting soil is recommended. This will provide nutrients and weight so the plant is less likely to blow over in wind.

Container size: Though containers as small as 2 gallons can be used for half-high blueberries, a larger container will be more stable in the wind and provide a larger moisture reserve during hot, dry weather.

Watering: Blueberries do not have root hairs, so they are not efficient in picking up water. Potting soil should be kept moist. This will likely be the most challenging aspect of growing blueberries in containers. A large container will not need to be watered as frequently as a small one.

Winter care: Though plants are winter hardy, the roots are not. Move pots into an unheated, attached garage or bury them in the soil or mulch enough to bury the pot in early November. Water them periodically during the winter. Use your finger to determine if the soil is moist one inch deep. If not, then water until some flows out the bottom of the pot.

Varieties: Though blueberries will produce some fruit if only a single variety is grown, two varieties will increase the potential fruit crop. Suggested varieties include Top Hat and Northsky. Each should reach about 18 inches high, though Northsky will likely grow wider than Top Hat. Northblue is another choice that should produce more fruit than either Top Hat or Northsky but should reach 2 to 3 feet high. North Country is intermediate in size at 18 to 24 inches high and should produce a moderate amount of fruit.

Wind protection: Wind protection will decrease the amount of water these plants need and reduce the chances of leaf scorch.

Exposure: Blueberries do best with a minimum of 6 to 8 hours of sunlight a day. Try a northern or eastern exposure. (Ward Upham)

Late Blooming and Frost Resistant Peach Trees

Late spring frosts often eliminate potential peach crops in Kansas. Since hardiness of fruit buds drops dramatically as flower buds open, even a delay in bloom time of a few days can dramatically affect the size of fruit crop. A study done in southwestern Idaho investigated the average bloom times of a number of peach cultivars from 2003 - 2007. The later the bloom date, the more likely the peach blossoms will escape a late frost.

<u>Cultivar</u>	<u>Date of full bloom</u>
'Snow Giant'	April 5
'Jupiter'	April 7
'Yukon King'	April 7
'Burpeach Six'	April 7
'Fairtime'	April 7
'Coral Star'	April 7
'July Sun'	April 7
'Zee Lady'	April 7

'May Sun'	April 8
'Crimson Lady'	April 8
'Summer Flame'	April 8
'Elegant Lady'	April 8
'Sugar Giant'	April 8
'July Flame'	April 8
'Sweet Dream'	April 8
'August Flame'	April 8
'September Snow'	April 8
'Snow King'	April 8
'Star Fire'	April 8
'Saturn'	April 8
'August Lady'	April 9
'Ryan Sun'	April 9
'Brenda Sun'	April 9
'All Star'	April 9
'Autumn Red'	April 9
'O'Henry'	April 9
'Opal Moncav'	April 9
'Rich Lady'	April 9
'Vista'	April 9
'Glow Star'	April 9
'Summer Lady'	April 10
'Red Star'	April 11
'Fancy Lady'	April 12
'Sierra Gem'	April 12

Intrepid, though not included in the above study, is a cultivar not only known for its late bloom time but also its frost-resistant blooms. A study done in North Carolina noted that exposure to 6 consecutive sub-freezing nights at 50% bloom did not eliminate the fruit crop. All flower buds on all check cultivars were killed. (Ward Upham)

TURFGRASS

Lawn Calendar for Warm-Season Grasses



Following is a lawn calendar for Zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass. Buffalograss, also a warm-season grass, will be covered next week.

March

Spot treat broadleaf weeds if necessary. Treat on a day that is 50 degrees F or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness.

April

Apply crabgrass preventer between April 1 and April 15, or apply preventer when the eastern redbud is in full bloom. If using a product with Barricade, apply two weeks earlier. Crabgrass preventers must be watered in before they will start to work.

May – August 15

Fertilize with 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per application. More applications will give a deeper green color, but will increase mowing and lead to thatch buildup with bermudagrass and zoysiagrass.

Bermudagrass – Use two to four applications.

Zoysiagrass – Use one to two applications. Too much nitrogen leads to thatch buildup.

One Application: Apply in June.

Two Applications: Apply May and July.

Three Applications: Apply May, June, and early August.

Four Applications: Apply May, June, July, and early August.

June

If grubs have been a problem in the past, apply a product containing imidacloprid by mid July. Imidacloprid can be applied as early as mid May if there are problems with billbugs or May beetle grubs. These products kill the grubs before they cause damage. They are effective and safe but must be watered in before they become active. June is a good time to core aerate a warm-season lawn. Core aeration will help alleviate compaction, increase the rate of water infiltration, improve soil air exchange and help control thatch.

Late-July through August

If you see grub damage, apply a grub killer. If Imidacloprid has been applied, this should not be necessary. Grub killers must be watered in immediately.

Late October

Spray for broadleaf weeds if they are a problem. Treat on a day that is at least 50 degrees F. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours reduces effectiveness.

Use the rates listed on the label for all products mentioned. (Ward Upham)

FLOWERS



Iris Leaf Spot Control Starts Now

Now is a good time to begin control measures for iris leaf spot by removing old, dead leaves. Iris leaf spot is a fungus disease that attacks the leaves and occasionally the flower stalks and buds of iris. Infection is favored by wet periods during the spring, and emerging leaves eventually show small (1/8- to 1/4-inch diameter) spots. The borders of these spots are reddish, and surrounding tissue first appears water-soaked, and then yellows. Spots enlarge after flowering and may coalesce. The disease tends to be worse in wet weather and may kill individual leaves. Though the disease will not kill the plant directly, repeated attacks can reduce

plant vigor so that the iris may die from other stresses. Spores are passed to nearby plants by wind or splashing water.

Because this disease overwinters in old leaves, removal and destruction of dead leaves will help with control. For plants that had little infection the previous year, this may be all that is needed. Plants that were heavily infected last year should be sprayed with chlorothalonil (Bravado Fungicide, Fertilome Broad Spectrum Landscape & Garden Fungicide, Ortho Garden Disease Control, GardenTech Daconil, Bonide Fungonil, Bravo Flowable Fungicide) or myclobutanil (Immunox, Immunox Plus) starting when leaves appear in the spring. Repeat sprays every seven to 10 days for four to six sprays. Iris leaves are waxy, so be sure to include a spreader-sticker in your spray to ensure good coverage. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Repotting Houseplants

As outdoor plants break dormancy and start to grow in response to the longer days and warmer spring temperatures, houseplants usually put on a spurt of growth as well. Eventually, these indoor plants out-grow their containers and need to be repotted. To check if your plants are becoming root bound and need a larger pot, inspect the root system. First, knock the plant out of its pot.



Watering several hours before this operation will allow the plant to be removed more easily. On pots that are 8 inches in diameter or less, place one hand over the top of the pot with the stem of the plant passing between two fingers, and turn the plant upside down. Then rap the edge of the pot against a table. The root ball should come away from the pot. On pots that are more than 8 inches in diameter, a bit more encouragement may be needed. Place the pot on its side and rap the top edge of the pot with a rubber mallet. Turn the plant a few degrees, and repeat the procedure until the root ball releases.

Once the plant is free, take a look at the root ball. If you see a clear network of roots, the plant needs to be moved to a larger pot. If the original pot is less than 10 inches, move up an inch in size; if 10 inches or larger, increase the size 2 inches. If the pot has one or several large holes in the bottom for drainage, cover the holes with pot shards (pieces of a broken clay pot) or gravel so that the potting mix is not washed out during watering.

It is essential that the plant sit at the same level it was in the old pot. Add enough potting mix to the bottom of the pot to ensure this. This mix will need to be firmed before the plant is placed on top of it so it doesn't settle over time. After the plant is placed, fill in around the original root ball with potting soil. Again, firm this soil with a slender stick, or tap the bottom of the pot on the table. If this firming is not done, new soil will be so light and airy that water will tend to move through it rather than through the whole root ball.

Water the plant thoroughly after repotting, but be especially careful not to overwater for about

two weeks. The new soil tends to stay wet until roots penetrate. Overwatering can lead to rot. Most plants need to be repotted annually though vigorous growers may need to move up sooner.

Slow-growing plants may stay in the same pot for more than a year. (Ward Upham)

Don't Work Too Wet Soil



We have gone from very dry conditions earlier in the winter to many areas being quite moist due to winter storms. Resist the temptation to work any soil if it is wet. Doing so destroys the structure of the soil resulting in clods that may not break down all summer. To determine if a soil is too wet to work, grab a handful and squeeze. If water comes out, it is much too wet. Even if no water drips out, it still may not be dry enough to work. Push a finger into the soil you squeezed. If it crumbles, it is dry enough, but if your finger just leaves an

indentation, more time is needed. Be sure to take your handfuls of soil from the depth you plan to work the soil because deeper soils may contain more moisture than the surface.

If tree planting is in your future, you may want to work the soil as soon as it is dry enough to work. You may then protect that area from becoming too wet by covering with a tarp if rain is forecast near the planting date. (Ward Upham)

Contributors: Ward Upham, Extension Associate

To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe_

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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