

The Green Thumb

Lawn and Garden News You Can Use

June 2009

June is Ideal Time for Perennials

Martha Smith, horticulture educator

By the time June rolls around, we can take a more leisurely approach to gardening. Spring is always a mad rush of garden cleanup, dividing, locating and purchasing all our 'dream' plants, planting, mulching, fertilizing, and so on. How do we survive?

When June arrives, we can study our gardens. We can observe peak areas and analyze those that need improvement.

June is the perfect time to purchase and plant perennials. In June, garden centers feature larger, more mature, flowering plants than those available in the spring.

Warm-season ornamental grasses don't look great in containers during May. You have to have a lot of faith that they are really in there and will look like the picture later in the season.

Miscanthus, Panicum, Pennisetum, and Saccharum species all need some heat to get growing. June is when they start to fill in their container and look like something.

The heat of the summer hasn't hit yet, so June is a great month to initiate, rejuvenate, or re-do a perennial garden area.

Visit a botanic garden or travel to an old favorite or a yet-unseen garden center to check out new perennials you can add to your gardens.

Attend a garden walk in your community for new ideas on how to place perennials and new plant combinations. When offered, attend lectures at local gardens or retail outlets or Extension offices. Check out resources on the internet for new ideas. The SI Gardening website, <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regions/hort> is a great place to start. There are many ways you can learn and experience gardening this month.

Above all, set aside time in June to enjoy your own gardens and landscape. Revel in the success of all your work and dedication. Bring flowers indoors for fresh bouquets to share with your family or take some to work and share with others.



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Wet Weather Brings Anthracnose

David Robson, horticulture educator



The wet spring, coupled with cool temperatures, has been ideal for several tree foliar diseases. The most common of these is anthracnose, a leaf spot disease that affects a wide variety of plants.

Anthracnose is the primary disease problem of sycamores. Ashes, oaks, maples, dogwoods, lindens, poplars, walnuts, and tulip trees are also affected.

Anthracnose is not a specific organism that infects all susceptible plants. The fungus that causes damage to sycamores will not affect maples, and vice versa. Dark brown, black, or tan spots develop on stems, leaves, flowers, and fruits of the trees. Entire trees may lose their leaves and appear unsightly in late May and June.

Most of the lesions start as small, irregular-shaped spots that slowly enlarge and turn color. As the disease progresses, leaves turn brown and fall off. Newly developed leaves may appear distorted and abnormal.

The anthracnose disease may cause some stem and twig cankers. These sunken areas will enlarge and girdle the limb. Most of the damage is associated with the smaller limbs. It is not uncommon for smaller limbs to fall off oak and sycamore trees, littering the area beneath the tree.

Early stages of anthracnose can be confused with frost or wind injury. However, anthracnose usually continues to affect developing leaves, while frost and wind damage are limited to the initial flush of new growth.

Cool, moist spring weather is needed for disease development. Temperatures in the 50s and 60s are ideal.

Fungal spores overwinter on the ground where splashing rain spreads the disease.

Few trees die outright from an anthracnose infection and defoliation. Most trees have the ability to produce a second or third flush of growth, though the amount and size of leaves decrease each time.

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Sanitation is the key to disease prevention. Rake and remove infected leaves and branches as they fall. Compost or properly dispose of the debris. Increase the air circulation around and in trees by pruning.

You may need to contact a professional arborist for assistance with proper pruning.

Fungicide applications usually are not warranted, plus they are difficult to time. Applications need to be made before infection occurs. Since the disease organisms can continue to infect the trees, repeat applications would be necessary.

Question Corner

Answer provided by Martha Smith, horticulture educator

Q. Every year, I have bagworms on the cedar and spruce trees that make up the windbreak for our home. Is there any way to permanently get rid of them?

A. Bagworm—the name is so descriptive. A bag of plant material covers a voracious plant-eating caterpillar. Once you have experienced an infestation of bagworms, you always remember what they look like.

Many people describe them as ‘cone-like’ structures hanging from plants—and they move! Most often, we find bagworms on arborvitae, juniper, spruce, and deciduous trees such as maple and sycamore.

Large sections of the plant are stripped bare of foliage or needles. Then, all that remains are hanging bags of silken threads and plant material that protects the caterpillar. These bags overwinter and are the source of next season’s pests. Each bag holds a mummified female and 500 to 1,000 eggs.

June is when the overwintering eggs hatch. As larvae emerge, they immediately start to feed and form their own protective case.

As the larva grows, the bag enlarges and more severe feeding damage is noticed. Everywhere the worm goes, the bag goes.

When the larva is fully-grown, it pupates into an adult, a process that requires seven to ten days. Mating takes place, and the female lays her eggs and dies. The egg-containing bag overwinters, and the eggs usually hatch sometime in June.

Early management of bagworms is essential for effective control. Merely picking off overwintering bags and destroying them eliminates the problem. But, this needs to be done **before** the eggs hatch. If spraying is preferred, spray while the worms are small, soon after all the eggs have hatched. The larger, more mature the worms, the harder it is to control them with chemical sprays.

Young bagworms can be controlled with *Bacillus thuringiensis* ‘Kurstaki,’ commonly sold under the names of Dipel or Thuricide. This microbial extract affects only young caterpillars. Spray only the affected plants and avoid blanket-treating an entire area.

Be sure to follow all label instructions.



Send your lawn and garden questions to

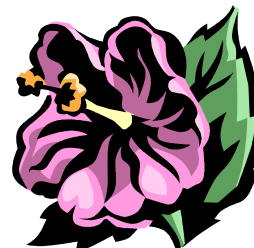
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Want Flowers to Attract Hummingbirds?

The hummingbird has a long, hollow, pointed bill that is perfect for pollinating trumpet-shaped flowers. Tubular flowers in shades of red and orange are ideal.

Try annuals such as Nicotiana, (*Nicotiana alata grandiflora*), Red Salvia, Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*), or Fuchsia. You will also have success with perennials such as Columbine (*Aquilegia species*), Bee Balm, Coral Bells (*Heuchera sanguinea*), Hibiscus, Lupine, and Tall Garden Phlox. Two all-time favorite woody plants for hummingbirds are Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*) and Weigelia.



Storm Causes Major Damage to Trees

Ed Billingsley, guest columnist



The big storm that hit southern Illinois in early May caused major damage to trees.

Some trees had root failure where saturated soil, along with high winds, allowed trees to fall over. For large trees, these exposed root systems are sure death. But, young trees might survive if staking can secure the tree to allow it to re-grow roots. Be careful not to damage the bark of the young tree while staking. An old piece of garden hose with the wire run through it should provide protection.

Trees that have lost several limbs should be monitored. Trees with 30 percent or less damage might be pruned and salvaged. But, if the trunk is damaged, the tree will be a safety hazard and should be removed.

Generally, trees with more than 50 percent damage should be replaced. The reasoning

is they likely pose a safety hazard and will have a misshaped growth habit. Pine trees should be replaced when damage exceeds 30 percent.

Many trees were also girdled. The term “girdling” refers to the bark being removed all the way around a tree’s circumference. Girdled trees should be removed because nutrient flow has been shut down.

Trees with less than 30 percent bark damage around the circumference can be pruned and monitored while recovery progresses. Trees with bark damage over 50 percent should be removed.

As you evaluate damage to the trees in your landscape, be careful around the many hanging branches that could easily be dislodged by the wind.



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