Learning for Life

The Garden Bench July / August 2009

Gardening and home landscape information from UGA Cooperative Extension in Houston County.
Our newsletter provides research-based horticulture information to help middle Georgia gardeners.

Tips & Tricks
Avoid the Itch

Poison Ivy Shown in Spring

Poison Ivy Shown in Summer

Poison Ivy Shown in Fall

Poison ivy can be encountered in residential, commercial, or recreational areas in Georgia.

The best defense is to recognize and avoid it! If you do come in contact with it, quickly wash skin with cool water and plenty of soap to remove any poison ivy oily residue. Handle clothing carefully and wash in hot, soapy water.

Herbicides for control include Glyphosate (Roundup, etc.) and Triclopyr (Brush B Gon, etc.). Repeat treatments are usually necessary. Glyphosate has no soil activity but triclopyr does. Read & follow all label directions carefully!

Home Garden and Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

We could use more rain! June was very dry. Temperatures have increased and the soil is drying out.

A rule of thumb for the home landscape is that the lawn, shrubs, and trees need a deep drink of water every seven to 10 days depending on the weather. This means that if there has been no rain fall in that period of time, give your lawn, shrubs and trees approximately one inch of water. Water vegetables and annual flowers with one-half to three quarter inch of water twice a week. Water again when the plant begins to show drought stress.

Governor Sonny Purdue announced the state is officially out of the drought. However, wise water use is still needed!

Outdoor Water Use Schedule during Non-Drought Periods

Outdoor water use other than exempted activities shall occur only as follows:

(a) Odd-numbered addresses: outdoor water use is allowed on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays.

(b) Even-numbered addresses: outdoor water use is allowed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

What does this mean specifically for landscapes?

You are allowed to water three days a week based on your home or business address with no hourly restrictions. However, you are strongly encouraged not to water during the heat of the day (10am - 4 pm) since much water is lost to evaporation during this time.

Food gardens are exempt from day/hour restrictions.

Newly installed landscapes, turf and plants are exempt from day/hour restrictions for the first 30 days.

Lawn Tips

* **Do not fertilize Centipede lawns after Sept 1 or other lawns after Sept. 15.**
* **Mole crickets** are hatching and are from very small to about three- quarter of an inch long. Now would be a good time to treat for this new crop of mole crickets.
* The same is true for **white grubs.** Treat them now before they get large.

Flowers

* Prune or **"dead-head" old flowers** off perennials and annuals. Fertilize annuals and perennials. **Plant or move irises and daylilies** beginning in late August.
* **Renew mulch** in flower beds for a fresh look.
* **Start seeds** of favorite biennials and other fall flowers in pots. Seedlings should be ready for transplanting in the fall.

Vegetables & Herbs

* **Keep vegetables picked**, well watered and fertilized to continue production. Water twice a week with 3/4 inch of water.
* **Plant vegetables early** to allow time for them to mature before frost. Before Aug 1, plant southern peas and winter squash. Plant tomatoes by Aug 10 and summer squash and snap beans by Aug 20. Plant cucumbers before Sept 1. Plant carrots Aug 20 – Sept 15.
* **Start plants** for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, and kale in a half-shaded area or in pots. Till, fertilize, and **prepare planting beds for September and October planting**.

Shrubs & Trees

* Remove faded flowers from crape myrtles. Fertilize and water to **encourage a second bloom.** Be careful not to cut off newly emerging flowers.
* **Do not prune or fertilize spring flowering shrubs** like azalea, camellia, and viburnum after mid-July. It may interfere with next year's flowers.

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SHADE TREE DECLINE

Kim D. Coder

Many trees in Georgia are showing dieback and decline symptoms. Twig or branch dieback is initiated in the tree as a response to poor growth conditions and/or pest attack. Usually a combination of physical, climatic and pest problems lead to the tree shutting off some of its outside portions.

Tree decline is a general loss of vitality throughout the entire tree caused by a systemic disease or by a sequence of stressing events that cause the tree to burn too much food energy. Many cultural factors as well as past tree abuse predispose a tree to decline. Several factors contributing to this decline include drought, mechanical injury, chemical injury and pests.

Drought is a main contributing factor to shade tree decline. Extended drought can influence the health of shade trees by the loss of absorbing roots which are found primarily in the top 8 to 12 inches of soil. Once this soil area dries, many of the tree's absorbing roots dry out and die.

Some types of trees will be inherently more susceptible to drought damage that occurs in mid-spring as compared with a summer drought. A season-long drought period with high temperatures can adversely affect all trees even if supplemental water is added. Trees may not readily show initial symptoms because of stored carbohydrates and essential elements in the woody tissues. As soon as these stored foods are near depletion, the trees begin to prematurely defoliate. Other drought symptoms can be delayed two or more years, making it hard for many to believe that drought was actually the problem.

Although irrigating trees during periods of drought is recommended, frequent and shallow watering contributes to shallow root development. This increases the chances for drought injury as well as the potential for winter injury during periods of extremely cold weather. When watering, be sure the moisture reaches depths of at least 5 to 7 inches. Water once every three to four days during periods of severe drought. Watering everyday may contribute to the decline of the tree because the activity of many parasitic and pathogenic organisms, like root rot, is stimulated by too much water. The amount of water to apply depends upon soil texture and potential size of the tree rooting area. Clay soils can be easily overwatered which destroys tree roots.

Some of the worst things you can do to a tree are: add fill around the trunk, cultivate or remove soil from around the trunk, compact the soil, especially when the soil is wet, or damage the bark on the trunk.

Chemical injury can be much more severe when trees are already weakened by other factors. The "spray and pray" concept (spraying a chemical and hoping it will control whatever the problem is) should be avoided. Chemicals are not always the answer and may actually create more problems. Good tree management should be practiced first. Use chemicals only as helpers after other management practices have been performed.

What can be done to prevent shade tree decline? Provide a site that is suitable for the species involved. Pick a strong species of tree. Provide construction protection for roots and trunks of trees to reduce accidental injury, soil compaction and to allow adequate room for tree growth. If twig dieback is observed, proper pruning will reduce disease susceptibility and improve the tree's appearance. Remove dead or dying branches. When roots are damaged or lost, continue to water and wait one growing season and then thin the crown. This helps the remaining roots sustain the health of the existing foliage. Water, fertilize and care for the tree only when needed. Do not "kill" your tree with kindness. Give your tree a chance to live a full, healthy life by helping when it has a bad year.

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Web Page Links

Houston County Cooperative Extension
http://www.ugaextension.com/houston

Cooperative Extension Home Page
http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/
Gardening & Landscape Information

UGA Center for Urban Ag Web site:
www.gaurbanag.org

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Extension Agent at
(800) ASK-UGA1