Something to Grow On

August 2007

Volume 3, Issue 4

Inquiring Minds Want to Know…

What does Tomato Spotted Wilt look like?
I have had several calls this summer on Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus. So here is some information so you can better understand TSWV. For starters, TSWV is a viral disease. So just like a virus in humans it can be spread from one plant to another very easily. In many cases the disease is spread by thrips. Thrips are those tiny insects that you see often in the blooms of your tomato plants. This insect is a sucking insect, so when they move from one plant to another they can transmit the virus. Now that we have that out of the way…what are the visible symptoms? In many cases the first symptom is small yellow flecks on the older leaves. Later the leaves develop small, dark spots, which give a bronzed appearance. Next the tips of the leaves start dying back, and in severely infected plants there will be a stunting effect with yellowish drooping foliage, which gives the plant a wilted appearance. Fruit may also be infected; in many cases it will have white rings or even deformed fruit.

If this is a description of your tomato plants then you probably want to know what you can do for them. Unfortunately, for homeowners and hobby growers there is no “cure all” chemical to control this disease. If you notice that you have a plant that portrays characteristics of TSWV then the best practice is to remove this plant from the garden as quick as possible. This will hopefully keep thrips from spreading this virus to other tomato plants. It is always better to lose only one plant than all of your plants! Next Spring when you get ready to buy your plants be sure to buy plants that are TSW resistant!

Mushrooms appearing overnight …what does it mean? What should you do?
Mushrooms can occur at any time of the year, although they are prevalent in the warm months whenever sufficient moisture is present. Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of certain fungi. Their presence is an indication that some type of decaying matter is either on the soil or underground, and is the source of food for the mushrooms. “Fairy rings,” which are circular patterns of mushrooms, may occur when spores from mushrooms are spread by the wind, and fall in a suitable place with optimum temperature and humidity to reproduce. When these conditions are no longer present, the mushrooms will disappear. For many, the idea that applications of lime would deter mushrooms is a gardener’s myth. And the use of lime is another story. Mushrooms should be considered hazardous for human consumption. There is no sure-fire rule of thumb to determine poisonous versus non-poisonous species. Field guidebooks are available for identification of mushrooms, but even trusting these would be risky.

Exactly what is a whitefly?
If you have been working with vegetable or greenhouse crops for any length of time then you probably have already encountered whiteflies. These creatures love to feed on vegetable crops (beans, eggplant, cucumbers, and the one I get the most calls on is tomatoes). Whiteflies are small sucking insects with two pairs of broadly rounded wings. The wings and body are covered with a snow white, waxy powder. The insects look like tiny moths and may fly
up in a cloud when disturbed. Whitefly eggs are almost always microscopic, and laid on the underside of leaves. In some cases leaves may become discolored and fall from the plant on which whiteflies are feeding. Plants may also become stunted from whitefly infestations. Whiteflies secret honeydew on plants (this is the sticky residue that mysteriously appears on the leaves), which causes an unsightly black sooty mold to grow.

Unfortunately these pest are DIFFICULT to control, for home gardeners Malathion normally works relatively well. Malathion is labeled on tomatoes, and has a 1-day harvest interval. Pyrellin is another insecticide for whiteflies that has a tomato, eggplant, and bean label. I would recommend homeowners not rely on just one insecticide for control. But rather rotate different chemicals and spray on frequent intervals according to the label.

*Why is my Bell Pepper plant aborting fruit?*
I have had several reports this summer of Bell Pepper dropping buds. Most folks are telling me that their hot pepper does not have this problem. After doing some investigating I found out that Bell Pepper fruit set can be affected by many factors including drought, to low or to high temperatures, and too much nitrogen. Also some varieties are more susceptible than others to bud drop caused by high temperatures. *Temperatures over 90-95 degrees are almost sure to cause bud drop.* Also planting date can have an effect because of the timing of fruit set relative to when the hot weather hits.

*What is a ‘springtail?’*
Springtails are among the smallest insects in the home landscape. They are flea like and barely visible. Springtails possess a forked structure folded under the body that when flicked, allows it to catapult around quite well. Springtails may differ in size, shape and color. They are slightly smaller than a flea and do not bite. Springtails prefer moist environments and feed on decaying plant material, fungi, etc. and are most often seen in mulch. Sometimes they may annoy people if they occur by the millions in a yard and show up on the foundation, the driveway or in the bark mulch. Control is not effective. If desired, they can be hosed off of hard outdoor surfaces with or without a little soap added. Infestations are short lived and rarely justify the expense of control. Determined homeowners may use one of the available lawn products containing a pyrethroid insecticide such as a permethrin, bifenthrin or cypermethrin.

*What causes dieback of Spider Plant?*
Have you noticed that your Spider Plant has black blotches on the leaves and even dieback? This in most cases is actually a nutritional problem and is a common problem with this plant. The problem is probably excess fertilizer, low pH or a buildup of fluoride. The easiest solution in many cases is to repot the plant in high quality potting soil that doesn’t come with any extra fertilizer (if you can find it). Then when you fertilize use only ¼ the strength recommended on the package and use fertilizer less often. Also if maybe beneficial to water using rain water or distilled water (the cheap kind in gallon jugs). Also a quick note, the varieties of spider plants that have more green in the leaves or solid green seem to be less susceptible to this problem.

---

**Early Fall - A Great Time to Take Soil Samples**

Early fall is a wonderful time to take soil samples on your lawn or garden. This time of year NCDA Agronomic laboratory typically has a quick turnaround time (normally 1-2 weeks) however, late fall and winter this may double. This time of year is an excellent time to do liming application. Since lime is only slightly water-soluble it normally takes 8-12 months to get the full effect. If applied in the fall, a large percent of lime will be capable for utilization in spring.
Controlling Annual Bluegrass in Fescue Lawns

Many of you like myself have probably been experiencing annual bluegrass (Poa annua) in your fescue lawns. Some folks like the appearance of bluegrass, others despise it. Personally, I am not a big fan. In early spring - April and May - it looks wonderful. It has a beautiful deep green almost blue appearance, however, it does not take hot weather well, so in most cases by June it has already died off for the growing season. When this happens it will leave a ugly brown patch where the plant once was. This is very unsightly in a fescue lawn. As many of you have already experienced, trying to control an unwanted grass in a desired grass can be a difficult task. Unfortunately there are few post emergent sprays that can be used to control unwanted grasses without damaging your desired grass. So with that in mind the only other option is pre-emergent herbicides. Pre-emergent herbicides for those not familiar with them... are applied to disturb the germination of a particular plant and keep it from ever emerging from the soil. It has no activity once the plant is already actively growing. With this being said there are several products when applied in late summer (end of August-early September) that work well. Product selection should be based on whether you are planning on a fall reseeding. Many of the pre-emergents have overseeding restrictions so please read the chemical labels carefully!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chemical</th>
<th>Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEAM 2G (Benefin &amp; Trifluralin)</td>
<td>“For annual bluegrass control, apply in late summer or early fall before germination. Do not overseed grasses for 12-16 weeks after application.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension (Dithiopyr)</td>
<td>“Do not apply within three (3) months of seeding, overseeding or sprigging.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendulum (Pendimethalin)</td>
<td>“Do not overseed with grasses for 8-12 weeks.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barricade (Prodiamine)</td>
<td>“Do not overseed for 4-10 months depending on the rate used. May thin turf grass under stressed conditions, heavy, wet soils or shaded area where growth is slow.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local Farmers’ Market Thriving

The hours of operation are each Wednesday and Saturday from 7am -1pm. The Stanly County Farmers’ Market is located at Market Station on East Main Street near its intersection with NC 52 HWY in Albemarle. If your are planning to sell produce at the market this year, you must have a certified farm visit from either an extension agent or the market manager. This is a requirement in order to sell. This rule was adopted to ensure locally grown produce is being sold at this market. Call the Extension office to arrange for your farm certification visit if you decide to sell at the market.

Stanly County Fair - August 30 - September 3

Fair books are available in the Extension office. Fair entries will be accepted on Tuesday, August 28 from 12 Noon until 8 p.m., and on Wednesday, August 29 from 9 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. For other information about the fair, you can call the fairground - 704.983.2913

Shannon L. Braswell
Extension Agent
Agriculture - Horticulture

The Cooperative Extension Service, a national educational network established through legislation, is a partnership of the US Department of Agriculture, state land grant universities, and county governments. Programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, disability, political beliefs, marital or family status, religion, age or national origin. Mention or display of a trademark, proprietary product, or firm in text or figures does not constitute an endorsement or imply approval to the exclusion of other suitable products or firms. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate homeowners and those interested in all aspects of horticulture.
August through September is normally the time we see Fall Armyworms. These creatures are known for their destructive nature. As their name implies, they attack plants in “armies”, consuming all green above ground plant parts. The fall armyworm has a wide host range but prefers plants in the grass family. Most grasses including bluegrass, fescue, and Bermuda are all subject to infestation. They feed anytime during the day or night but are most active early in morning or late in the evening. Pyrethroids will do a reasonable job as will Sevin (carbaryl) and even Orthene (acephate) against small worms.

NC Cooperative Extension delivers reliable research based information to citizens to stimulate economic prosperity, build environmental stewardship and improve the quality of life by providing programs addressing local high-priority needs in the following areas:

- Enhancing agriculture, forest and food systems
- Conserving and improving the environment and natural resources
- Building quality communities
- Strengthening and sustaining families
- Developing responsible youth

Inside This Issue

- Inquiring Minds Want to Know...
- Early Fall - A great time to take soil samples
- Controlling Annual Bluegrass in Fescue Lawns
- Farmers’ Market
- Stanly County Fair - August 30-September 3