MONITORING FOR SPOTTED WING DROSOPHILA

Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) is a small vinegar or fruit fly that is about 2-3 mm in length, so very tiny. The Spotted Wing Drosophila has caused economic damage to berries, grapes, and soft-fleshed fruits such as peaches and cherries. It can even get in cracked tomatoes. For the past two years, it has been a problem in several areas of the United States, including the Midwest.

It is important that growers and gardeners learn how to monitor for this pest. A simple trap can help you determine whether SWD is present. The most effective and economical trap can be prepared using a clear plastic cup with a fitted lid. You can also use a peanut butter or mayonnaise jar. Make holes in the trap at the top just under the lip of the jar. You can do this by using a nail or something sharp to puncture the jar. Or melt 3/16” diameter holes in the side of the cup using a soldering iron. Make the holes all the way around the container spaced about an inch apart. Bait the trap with a mixture of water, dry active yeast and sugar. The recipe is ½ tablespoon dry active yeast, 2 tablespoons of sugar, and six ounces of water. A small, yellow sticky card can be placed inside the cup. The flies that are attracted to the bait will enter the trap and be retained by the card. This allows for easier fly identification which is the purpose of the trap. Buy yellow sticky traps from a garden center, garden supply company, or make your own using yellow foam board or poster board by cutting it into index card size pieces. Place it into a snack size Ziploc bag. Coat the outside of the bag with petroleum jelly. The flies will stick to it. Change the bait mixture weekly.

If you have mulberry trees on your property, you should hang a trap in one of those trees. The fruit of mulberry trees usually starts ripening in late May to early June. The Spotted Wing Drosophila may attack your mulberry fruit, so by hanging a trap in a tree, you can monitor for this pest. As your other fruits start to ripen, place traps near them to detect if any flies are present. You do not need to monitor for this pest in apple and pear trees. These fruits have tougher skins and are not likely to be affected by SWD. There is a lot of information available online. If you google “spotted wing drosophil-ia.edu” many links to websites will come up as well as several good You tube videos. You can read more and learn more about it this way. If you do not have internet access and want more information, call your county extension center and information will be mailed to you.
CARING FOR HYDRANGEAS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

I get calls every year about growing and pruning hydrangeas. Commonly asked questions are how to care for them, how to prune them, and how to make them turn either pink or blue. Hydrangeas grow and bloom well when grown in morning sun and afternoon shade. This is especially true of the most commonly grown hydrangeas, the macrophyllas. These are the blue and pink mopheads and lacecaps. Hydrangeas do not do well in heavy shade or under a tree. The blooms will not develop or they will be sparse. This is because tree roots are very aggressive and are drawn to the rich, moist soil usually provided for hydrangeas.

The leaves on the Oakleaf hydrangeas will "color up" best in the fall if they receive some sun. Give your hydrangea space, about 4 feet by 4 feet. Plant it in well-drained soil. Do not over-water hydrangeas, especially if you have clay soil. This can lead to root rot. Do not plant it too deep. You should plant all of your plants at the same depth as they are in the container. The exception might be tomatoes, which grow roots on their stems. Hydrangeas can be planted in summer or in the fall. Hydrangeas grow best if they are fertilized once or twice during the summer. You can add organic amendments to the soil, such as decomposed manure, compost, or fertilizers.

Pruning hydrangeas can also improve a shrub’s vigor and increase the size of its flowers. Those that bloom on old growth should only be pruned after flowering. Others bloom on new growth and should be pruned before they come out of dormancy in the spring or as they are going dormant in fall. Hydrangea macrophylla is sometimes easy to recognize because its’ flowers change color with the soil pH: blue in acid soil, pink in alkaline. There are a few varieties that simply stay white, making it much harder to categorize from the flowers. The leaves are coarsely serrated and glossy, dark green. H. macrophylla also include the Lacecap hydrangeas, whose flowers look like a circle of unopened buds surrounded by open petals. In reality, the unopened buds are the fertile flowers with pollen and the outer flashy petals are sterile and are just there to attract bees. This is true of most hydrangeas, so don’t become frustrated waiting for all the buds to open. Hydrangea macrophylla (Bigleaf, Mophead, or Lacecap Hydrangeas) set their flower buds at the ends of the upright or lateral branches, during late summer to early fall. Pruning Bigleaf hydrangea in the spring or even late fall, after the buds have been set, will remove the flower buds and any chance of getting flowers that season. These Hydrangeas begin blooming in early to midsummer and can continue until summer’s end.

When pruning mopheads, you have two options, and will probably end up doing a combination of both:

⇒ Cut back the flowering shoots to the next bud, thus giving the branches a trim that removes the spent blooms without damaging the buds that will bloom next year. Do this right after flowering, but before midsummer.

⇒ On older shrubs that have lost flowering vigor, cut up to a third of entire stems at the base in late winter to improve flowering vigor. Ideally, you should cut the oldest stems, leaving younger mature stems that are loaded with buds for next year, but sometimes you have a lopsided or crowded Hydrangea that must be pruned to maintain a pleasing shape.

Hydrangea arborescens (Smooth Hydrangea) is one of the easiest Hydrangeas to prune. Because it blooms only on new wood, you can just cut it back to the ground in late winter, before any new buds appear. If you experience some flopping of flowering branches, then leave a framework of old growth to help support the branches by only cutting stems back to 2 feet from the ground.

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf Hydrangea) can get away without pruning at all, but if you want to keep them well-shaped, cut dead stems back at the base in late winter or early spring.

Source: some information from http://www.waysidegardens.com/wg-hydrangea-guide/a/324/

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VEGETABLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why are the stems of my rhubarb leaves green rather than red? There is a difference between varieties in stem color. However, lack of color development in plants that once had red stems may be the result of too much shade.

Why don't my carrot seeds germinate? It takes about 3 weeks for carrot seed to germinate and emerge from the soil. Do not plant carrot seeds deeper than 1/4 inch.

Source: http://www.waysidegardens.com/wg-hydrangea-guide/a/324/
The calls and reports about winter damage are still coming in. Many trees, shrubs and ornamentals suffered damage this winter. Knockout roses have been knocked out. I had so much dead growth on my knockouts I had to cut them back to about 8 inches. I’ve had a great crop of cool-season vegetables. I cut back the dead ferns on my asparagus on April 6 and made my first harvest on April 13. I also harvested spinach at that time. I planted the spinach in a raised bed in February and had it covered with an 8 X 4 greenhouse structure and covering. This allowed for an early harvest.

I found a creamed spinach recipe on the Pioneer Women’s website. If you like spinach, you should like this dish. Here is her recipe:

1 stick butter
8 Tablespoons flour
1/2 whole medium onion, finely diced
3 cloves garlic, finely minced
2 cups milk
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 pinch ground nutmeg
3 Tablespoons butter
24 ounces, weight Baby Spinach

Preparation Instructions: Melt 1 stick of butter in a pot. Sprinkle in flour and whisk together. Cook over medium heat for five minutes or until light golden brown. Throw in onion and garlic and stir together, cooking for another minute. Pour in milk, whisking constantly, and cook for another five minutes while you cook the spinach. To cook spinach, melt 3 tablespoons butter in a separate pot. Add spinach in increments until all incorporated, and cook until wilted but not soggy, about 4 to 5 minutes.

Season the cream sauce with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Add spinach to the cream sauce, stirring gently to combine. Serve immediately.

I did not follow the recipe exactly. I nearly cut it in half. I only used a half a stick of butter or less and reduced the flour to 4-5 tablespoons. I used garlic salt instead of garlic cloves and I did not use nutmeg. Also, I did not cook the spinach in butter. I don’t cook any vegetables in butter! I steamed the spinach until it was wilted. You could also boil it for 2-3 minutes.

If you have a lot of greens, be creative in your dishes. Greens such as spinach or Swiss chard are good stir fried with fresh mushrooms, garlic or onion, strips of cooked bacon cut into pieces and drizzled with olive oil. It’s almost time to pick broccoli. The plants are big and beautiful this year. I should make a first harvest the last week of May or first part of June. Strawberry plants look pretty good, and I expect a decent harvest. I can’t say the same for the fruit tree crops. Some fruit trees, particularly peaches, lost their buds during the long, cold winter. Apple and plum trees may have a decent harvest though. I haven’t seen any fruit disease yet, but usually by the first part of June we start to see some. In a cool, rainy spring, Peach Leaf Curl will be a problem on peaches and fireblight will be a problem on apples and pears. By mid-summer we can see brown rot on peaches and black rot on grapes. If you are not familiar with these problems and you want to learn more, contact your county extension center, or google on the internet the disease name followed by .edu, for example “fireblight.edu”. By putting “edu” at the end of your search word, you will pull up websites from universities with reliable, research based information. Other diseases to be aware of are anthracnose of shade trees, tar spot on maples and cedar-apple rust on crabapple and apple trees.

WOLF SPIDERS

Every year about this time I get calls or photos from homeowners wanting a certain type of spider identified that has wandered into their home. I am no expert on spiders, but over the years, I’ve learned that the spider in question is the wolf spider. My training is in horticulture crop and ornamental insects, and spiders are not insects. They are arachnids. In most cases, wolf spiders benefit humans by feeding on all sorts of insects, including crop pests. Wolf spiders are rarely pests, but they sometimes wander into houses, where their large size often frightens homeowners. Wolf spiders can bite, but their bites are extremely rare and no more dangerous or painful than bee stings. In fact, bees and wasps are more dangerous than wolf spiders because a wolf spider will never "attack" a person, unlike bees or wasps that will attack to defend a hive. Wolf spiders will only bite if they are handled. Wolf spiders that are found indoors have wandered in by mistake and should be collected and released outdoors. If you ever need to collect a wolf spider, "herd" the spider into a container with a stick or a pencil.
GARDEN TIPS FOR JUNE

ORNAMENTALS
- Watch for bagworms feeding on many garden plants, but especially juniper and arborvitae.
- Deadhead bulbs and spring flowering perennials as blossoms fade.
- Apply organic mulches as the soil warms. These will conserve moisture, discourage weeds, and enrich the soil as they decay.
- Apply a balanced rose fertilizer after the first show of blooms is past.
- When night temperatures stay above 50 degrees, bring houseplants outdoors for the summer. Most houseplants brought outside prefer a bright spot shaded from afternoon sun. Check soil moisture daily.
- Apply a second spray for borer control on hardwood trees.
- Trees and shrubs may still be fertilized before July 4th.
- Softwood cuttings can be taken from trees and shrubs as the spring flush of growth is beginning to mature.
- Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after flowering.
- Continue spraying roses with a fungicide to prevent black spot.

VEGETABLES
- Repeat plantings of corn and beans to extend the harvest season.
- As soon as cucumber and squash vines start to “run,” begin spray treatments to control cucumber beetles and squash vine borers.
- Plant pumpkins now to have Jack-O-Lanterns for Halloween.
- Early detection is essential for good control of vegetable pests. Learn to identify and distinguish between pests and beneficial predators.
- Stop harvesting asparagus when the spears become thin. To maximize top growth on asparagus, apply 2 pounds of 12-12-12 fertilizer per 100 sq. feet, water well and renew mulches to conserve moisture.
- Softwood cuttings can be taken from trees and shrubs as the spring flush of growth is beginning to mature.
- Prune spring flowering trees and shrubs after flowering.
- Continue spraying roses with a fungicide to prevent black spot.

FRUITS
- Oriental fruit moths emerge. Most serious on peaches where first generation attacks growing tips. These should be pruned out.
- Thinning overloaded fruit trees will result in larger and healthier fruits at harvest time. Thinned fruits should be a hands width apart.
- Enjoy the strawberry harvest. Renovate strawberries after harvest. Mow the rows; thin out excess plants; remove weeds; fertilize, and apply mulch for weed control.
- Spray trunks of peach trees & other stone fruits for peach tree borers.
- Prune and train young fruit trees to eliminate poorly positioned branches and establish proper crotch angles.

TURFGRASS
- Water turf as needed to prevent drought stress.
- Mow lawns frequently enough to remove no more than one-third total height per mowing. There is no need to remove clippings unless excessive.
- Mow bluegrass at 2 to 3.5 inch height. Turfgrasses growing in shaded conditions should be mowed at the higher recommendations.

- Missouri Botanical Garden-