

At your Service
Sarah Denkler
Horticulture Specialist
8-11-2013

Vegetable Health

For those of you who may have questions about the garden this time of year and the health of the plants in it, here are some basic thoughts to think about.

Blooms have really provided a challenge this year. Some are finding that they have male blooms but very few female flowers. On other plants the blooms are dropping before they set fruit. Cool weather at planting can cause issues with fruit set. Hard rains, wind and heat can cause a quick drop of blooms. Plants are designed to reproduce. They will create more blooms if they have not produced seed. Be patient and hope for some consistent weather.

Powdery Mildew loves the cooler, wet summer we have been blessed with. Even when we don't have rain the high humidity helps the powdery mildew live on. Open up the air movement for squash, watermelon and pumpkin. This helps leaves to dry out. Use a fungicide on plant leaves to reduce the possibility of infection. Remove any leaves that have mildew to help prevent the spread. If one plant is severely infected, remove that plant to help prevent the spread to other plants.

Purple leaves have been reported on tomato and beans. Normally this is a sign of deficiency or abundance in phosphorus. When conditions are right this discoloration can be caused by cool, wet springs. These conditions can have an effect on root growth and cause growth issues later in the year such as purple, rolled leaves. Do not fertilize now to correct a possible deficiency unless a soil test has determined that the soil is deficient. While the roots may have been shocked by the initial planting environment, if the plant has grown then they are healthy enough to produce vegetables.

Watch out for stink bugs on squash and tomato; squash bugs on watermelon, squash, zucchini and pumpkin; cucumber beetle on cucumber, watermelon and cantaloupe; hornworm on tomato; flea beetle on beans and Japanese beetle on okra. These are some of the common

insects found this time of year in the garden. There are more insects that attack plants so keep your eyes open and work quickly to remove any that are causing damage on fruit. Aphids will attack any plant but if the plants are being provided water through rain or irrigation at regular intervals you may find the aphids are not causing much damage.

Work continuously to control weeds. Keep them pulled, tilled or covered with mulch. Weeds harbor insects and prevent good air circulation. They also compete with the root system of desired plants and make it harder to reach plants when they are ready to be harvested. Weeds can be the hardest thing to keep under control. By working diligently to do so, vegetables will be the reward.

Disease is the final and often crippling health concern for plants. When disease attacks leaves, remove the leaf to cripple the spread of the disease. Fungicide can be used as a preventative measure for disease. Once the disease is present it is on the plant but sprays can prevent it from spreading further. If it is a blight or wilt the plant will die quickly and there isn't anything that can be done to prevent this. Any time a disease overcomes a plant that plant should be removed and disposed of.

With the fine weather we continue to have vegetables may show some health issues but by staying resolute and forging ahead, the payoff should be vegetables for the table.

The Extension office is open Monday - Friday, located in Kennett, Missouri at 233 North Main Street. For horticulture questions contact the horticulture specialist at 573-686-8064. MU is an equal opportunity/ADA institution.