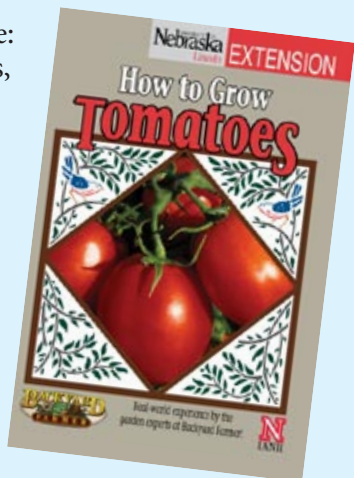


Backyard Farmer' Offers How-to Video on Tomatoes

Tomatoes may just be the most popular plant grown in Nebraska gardens and patios. To help growers, Backyard Farmer now offers a "How to Grow Tomatoes" DVD. The DVD includes video features from last season's Backyard Farmer series. It offers helpful, practical information on tomato cultivars, diseases, troubleshooting and more. Segments include: Getting Started, Transplants, Planting, Staking, Disease Pests, Special Problems, Harvesting and a Summary. Also included is UNL Extension NebGuide G1650, "Tomatoes in the Home Garden." For more information or to order the DVD, visit the Backyard Farmer Web site at <http://byf.unl.edu> or call (800) 755-7765.



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Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH
By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Many plants are easily propagated by layering. Verbenas, euonymus, English ivy and climbing roses are a few plants that will root if the stems are fastened down and covered with soil.

Cutting flowers is best done with sharp shears or a knife which will help avoid injury to the growing plant. A slanting cut will expose a larger absorbing surface to water and will prevent the base of the stem from resting on the bottom of the vase. It is best to carry a bucket of water to the garden for collecting flowers, rather than a cutting basket.

Divide and transplant bearded iris using the vigorous ends of the rhizomes. Discard the old center portion. Cut the leaves back to about six inches.

Tall flowers should be staked to prevent damage by wind. Use stakes which are large enough to support the plant but are not too conspicuous. Use soft twine or twist ties to secure.

Snapdragons should be pinched back after blooming to promote a second flush of growth.

Cut back and fertilize delphinium and phlox to encourage a second flowering.

A brown or grayish cast over a lawn can be caused by a dull or improperly adjusted mower blades that shred grass rather than cut it.

Store pesticides in a safe place in their original containers, away from children and pets. Use pesticides carefully in your garden. Read the labels and follow the directions. The warnings and precautions are for your protection.

Certain pesticides have a waiting period of several days between the time of the last spray and harvest. Read and follow directions on all labels before applying to your vegetable crops. Wash all produce thoroughly before use.

Control mosquitoes by eliminating all sources of stagnant water.

A garden needs one-inch of rain or water each week. Early morning is the best time to water. Evening watering is less desirable because plant leaves that remain wet through the night are more susceptible to fungus diseases. Mulch plants to reduce water losses and improve yields.

For fall harvest of lettuce, radish, carrots, beets, turnips, kale and spinach, sow seeds in late July to early August.

Continue to make successive plantings of crops like beans and sweet corn to provide a continuous harvest until fall. A small garden will produce a large quantity of vegetables if replanting is done throughout the summer.

Check the soil moisture of container grown vegetables and flowers daily. As the temperature rises, some plants may need water twice a day.

Continue attracting insect-eating birds to the garden area by providing them with a fresh water source.

What is that Bump on the Tree Leaves?



Maple bladder galls



Large oak-apple gall



Hackberry nipple gall

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

When you look at leaves on your trees and shrubs, do not panic if bumps or distorted growth is noticed. These are usually leaf galls.

Leaf galls are fairly common on trees and shrubs. A gall is actually plant tissue that has developed as the result of feeding or other activity by insects or mites. Plant hormones are involved when the pest interferes with leaf development in the spring. There are also galls caused by fungi, bacteria and other organisms.

Once the gall appears on the leaf, there is no way to control it. Preventing most leaf galls is extremely difficult.

However, other than being unsightly, most leaf galls are not harming the tree or shrub.

Maple bladder gall is a common example of leaf galls. Small green bumps appear on the tops of silver and red maple leaves, turning bright red. This is due to tiny mites feeding on newly developing leaves. While it may look bad, in reality the health of the tree is not threatened. Control is not practical or necessary.

Galls frequently appear on **oaks**. They may cause small bumps or larger, more visible growths. For example, the oak-apple gall appears as fairly large, round, apple-like growths. These are caused by a very small wasp. Some may affect twigs, such as the gouty oak gall and actually cause some dieback. Most leaf galls on oak are not

damaging.

Leaves of **hackberry** trees often have the hackberry nipple gall, caused by an insect called a psyllid. **Elms** often get galls such as the cockscomb gall, caused by an aphid. This irregular gall looks like rooster's combs on the leaves.

Other shade tree, shrub, fruit crop and even perennial flower foliage may have galls appearing. Treatment is rarely suggested and would have been needed prior to the gall forming. This usually is not practical. Once the gall had formed, even if the pest is killed, the gall remains since it is actually plant tissue. Many gall makers also have natural predators or parasites that help keep populations in check.

Black Knot on Plums

Black knot is a widespread fungal disease that affects plum and cherry, and occasionally infects apricots, peaches and other plants in the Prunus genus, like choke-cherry. Black knot is common throughout Nebraska in wild plum thickets. The disease is characterized by rough, hard, elongated, black swellings that persist on infected plants.

The knot fungus infects fruiting spurs, stems and branches of susceptible plants, and occasionally the main trunk is affected. Infection occurs through splashing or wind blown spores when new growth is about 1 inch long. Fungal spores are discharged in moderate to heavy amounts during the pink blossom stage of cherry or plum, and ends about the time elongation of the new growth stops.

On infected plant parts, abnormal growth of bark and wood tissues produce small, light-brown swellings that eventually rupture as they enlarge. In late spring, the rapidly growing young knots have a soft texture and become covered with a velvety, olive-green growth of the fungus. During summer, the young knots turn darker and elongate. By fall, they become hard, brittle, rough and black. The following growing season, the knots enlarge and gradually

encircle the twig or branch. The cylindrical or spindle-shaped knots may vary from one-half inch to a foot or more in length and up to 2 inches in diameter. Small knots may emerge from larger knots forming extensive galls. After the second year, the black knot fungus usually dies and the gall is invaded by secondary fungi that give old knots a white or pinkish color during the summer.

Smaller twigs usually die within a year after being infected. Larger branches may live for several years before being girdled and killed by the fungus. The entire tree may gradually weaken and die if the severity of the disease increases and effective control measures are not taken.

The two major plum varieties grown in Nebraska 'Stanley' and 'Damson', are susceptible to this disease, as well as 'Bluefire' and 'Shropshire'. 'Methley', 'Milton', 'Early Italian', 'Brodshaw' and 'Fellenburg' are moderately susceptible; and 'Shiro', 'Santa Rosa' and 'Formosa' are only slightly susceptible. 'President' is apparently resistant to black knot. Japanese varieties of plums are generally less susceptible than most American varieties.

When planting new plum or prune trees, avoid planting trees next to or downwind from an old or abandoned orchard

with a significant black knot problem. Similarly, remove all wild plum and cherry trees, which are a potential disease reservoir, from fence rows or woodlands within 600 feet of the orchard site.

Established orchards or backyard trees should be scouted or examined each year for the presence of black knot, and infected twigs should be pruned out and destroyed or removed before bud break. It is important to prune at least 2 to 4 inches below each knot because the fungus grows beyond the edge of the knot itself. If pruning is not possible because knots are present on major scaffold limbs or the trunk, they can be removed by cutting away the diseased tissue down to healthy wood and out at least 1/2 inch beyond the edge of the knot. Burn or bury the pruned branches before April 1.

Fungicides can offer significant protection against black knot, but are unlikely to be effective if pruning and sanitation are ignored. Fungicides are most necessary and will provide the greatest benefit if applied before rainy periods, particularly when temperatures are greater than 55 degrees Fahrenheit. In evaluating control programs, remember knots often do not become apparent until the year following infection.

Source: Sarah Browning, UNL Extension Educator