

KEEPING YOU UP TO
DATE WITH THE
SEASONS!

McKENZIE NEWS— SUMMER 2009

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SUMMER 2009

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

Identify troublesome weeds in your lawn and let us help you manage them.

Adjust your water to compensate for higher temperatures in the summer.

Watch for early warning signs of aphids and billbugs in early summer.

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Hot Weather Adjustments

Summer weather is hot, and lawns and gardens, and shrubs need lots of water. Hot weather means your lawns need a lot more water than usual. Check it daily to make sure it is getting enough.

Sprinkler Adjustments: Watch for dry spots in your lawn. Even if you water regularly, a sprinkler can malfunction or become blocked by shrubs or groundcover. A brown lawn takes a long time to recover.

Put measuring cups in various places around your lawn and run the sprinklers for 15 minutes. This will give you an idea of how much water the grass is getting and where. You're looking for about one to two inches—depending on the soil—evenly distributed. If adjustments need to be made, please let us know

and we will be happy to take care of it for you.

Lawn Mowing: As the temperature goes up, so should the cutting blade of your lawnmower. Raise cutting height for your grass to a minimum height of 3 inches to protect your lawn

from the hot sun.

Newly-planted plants: These get highly stressed in hot weather. Keep them well watered. Provide them with some shade if they don't seem to be doing well.



Billbugs: What are they and how to keep them away

It's billbug season! Your grass can look wonderful, then after a day or two of hot weather develop yellow and brown mottled areas. These look like dry spots, even with moist soil underneath. To see if these are billbug spots, tug on the brown grass. If it comes up easily and you have a

handful of grass with no roots, you have billbugs! The billbug eats the roots just below the surface, leaving your grass with no means to get water from the soil.

A billbug is the larva of a specific beetle that has a long "bill". The larva looks like a bloated maggot

with a brown head.

What do you do? Water it daily to keep the tops from completely dying, and deep water to keep the roots alive so they can rejuvenate. Yes, keep it wet. We also offer special treatments in the summer to control the population of billbugs.

Spider Mites: Recognition and Control



Example of Spider Mite Damage



Spider Mite

“A plant stressed by drought is a perfect host for spider mites”

Recognizing Spider Mites. They are hot-weather creatures, most active at the hottest part of the summer. Because they are so tiny (1/50th of an inch), their presence is detected by their damage to plants.

Mites damage plants by sucking their juices. Typical damage varies from flecking, yellowing or bronzing, of leaves or needles, to dead, dry leaves or dead plants. Symptoms begin with a fine mottling of leaves. A large number of mites will cause the infected area to become yellow or bronzed. Fine webbing may be found on evergreen trees and shrubs such as juniper, pine, hemlock, spruce, Douglas fir, and arborvitae. This indicates a spruce mite. Inspect the webbing with a magnifying glass to see the mites. Spider mites attack the older parts of the plants, so check the lower leaves and branches. (Webbing is also produced by spiders, so check carefully to see if mites are present.)

To detect spider mites, shake or tap a leaf or stem over a piece of plain white paper and look at it with a magnifying

glass (5x or more). They look like tiny spiders and their colors range from red and brown to yellow and green. Some have two spots on their backs, and are known as two-spotted spider mites. Two-spotted mites attack a wide variety of plants. Many spider mites produce webbing, which gives them their name. Webbing indicates a high population of mites.

Control. Keep your plants well watered. A plant stressed by drought is a perfect host for spider mites. A well watered plant is less likely to be severely affected by mites.

Begin with the least toxic control. A strong jet of water can remove and kill many of the mites. This includes the undersides of the leaves, because the mites live and feed there. The spider mite life cycle is 7-10 days, so treatment is necessary once a week to remove new hatches as they occur. At least three treatments are necessary to end an infestation.

If the water spray doesn't work, you can try an insecticidal soap designed for

mites. However, test it on small parts of your plants first, because some products may damage your plants. Besides, many really don't work, and they may increase the problem by killing the mites' natural enemies. Also, spider mites may become resistant to pesticides.

A badly infected plant may have to be pruned and the infected portions sealed in a plastic bag or burned, or the entire plant should be removed, bagged, or burned. (Burn safely, please!)

If you have a yearly problem with spider mites, be sure to remove plant debris from around the infected areas and apply a spring drench to the soil in the area to kill overwintering eggs.



Spruce Spider Mite Damage

Removing spent blooms will increase the productivity of your flowering plant.



Extend Blooming Season By Deadheading

Deadheading serves two purposes: it keeps plants looking attractive, and it stops seed production. (Once a plant produces mature seeds, flowering declines.) Different plants respond to different methods, but the general rule is to remove spent blossoms, making

sure you also remove the developing seed pod, often located at the center or just behind the flower. In other words, don't just pull off the petals.

A flowering plant's goal is to set seed. If you repeatedly deadhead - trim off the spent flowers - the plant goes into

overdrive, putting out more and more flowers in an effort to reproduce.

The following flowers should be deadheaded regularly: Petunias, Geraniums, Azalea, Rhododendron, Zinnia, Marigolds, Hydrangea, Tulips, Hyacinth.

SUMMER WEED GALLERY

Why should we care? Basically a weed is any plant growing where you don't want it. Weeds compete with grass and flowers for sunlight, water, and soil nutrients. In addition, some weeds are just ugly. A few have burrs or rough foliage that can cause problems. (Think puncture vine.) This page includes pictures of common weeds that cause trouble to residents of Boise and the Treasure Valley. Under each picture is a link that will take you to information about that specific weed.

Weed control. It is impossible to completely eradicate weed populations, but you can keep them under control. Many are prolific seed producers, so it is essential to pull, cut, or spray them before they go to seed. Some weeds produce hundreds of seeds per plant! Hand pulling and hoeing are the recommended methods. Chemicals should be used sparingly.



COMMON MALLOW

It shows up in flower gardens and on the margins of lawns and curbs. It is not a particularly harmful weed, except that it tends to crowd out desirable plants, and may look unsightly in an otherwise well-maintained area. Common mallow leaves look somewhat like small geranium leaves, but they grow from a central stem with a tap root. It does not creep like ground ivy, but spreads by seeds. The plant continues to bloom from May to October, with blossoms varying in color from white to lavender. Each blossom produces many seeds, so it can produce seeds all summer. Dense turf helps prevent the spread of common mallow in lawns, and low mowing will keep it in check. Thus good turf management controls this weed in lawns. However, they often pop up along the edges of lawns, in flower gardens, and along street curbs. (Yes, even in sidewalk cracks.) Common mallow is actually easy to kill using mechanical means, so there is no need to use chemicals. It is easy to pull by hand if the soil is wet and soft. Otherwise, use a hoe or hand trowel to cut them off below the surface of the ground. If your lawn is too dry for pulling the weed up by the roots, soak the area to soften the ground.



PRICKLY LETTUCE

Prickly lettuce is a common annual weed in our area. It is essentially harmless, except that it takes water and nutrients needed by other plants, and can totally take over an area if blossoms and seeding are not controlled. The flowers are yellow and about 1/3 inch in diameter, and it blooms from late spring to mid-summer. The plant has a tap root and develops a tall stalk about two feet tall or taller, depending on the amount of moisture. All parts of the the plant have a milky sap that is sticky to the touch. It gets its name prickly lettuce from small spines on the upright stems and the underside of the leaves. This weed is easy to control in the yard or garden. Simply pull it to cut it off below the ground before it blooms. (Hoeing is good.) It pulls easily when the soil is moist. If you only mow it, the remaining stalk will branch into several new stalks, and you are no farther ahead. Once you let the weed go to seed and launch the seeds into the wind, you are in for a new and larger crop next year---and so are your neighbors. It can be controlled by herbicides, but there is no need to use toxic chemicals when mechanical controls are effective.



SPOTTED SPURGE

A real scourge. Spotted spurge is a summer annual that sprouts quickly in hot weather, grows like crazy, and produces a gazillion seeds! It germinates and flowers from June to September. Though there are other plants known as spurge in other places, spotted spurge is one of our worst local weeds. By competing for light, food, and water, this pesky invader retards the growth of more desirable plants. Spotted spurge flowers are the same green as the leaves, and it can produce seeds while the plant is relatively small. It will appear in lawns and can quickly produce its own green carpet, and on relatively dry ground where it appears as a dull gray-green. It commonly appears in flower beds, border areas, and just about anywhere there is bare soil. Ragged and stressed lawns are especially vulnerable. As pesky as spotted spurge is, it is easy to pull by hand because the roots are fairly straight and small. Their leaves and stems contain a sticky, milky juice, so be prepared to have sticky hands! Herbicides sometimes (but not always) kill the growing plants, but prevention is best---by applying a pre-emergent treatment in the early spring.



CRAB GRASS

You can't miss its unique shape---the stems are thick and angular like the legs of a crab. Beginning with seeds in the soil, crab grass grows rapidly throughout the summer, spreading into a large course-looking mat of grass. Crab grass is an annual grass that germinates from seed in April and May. While *Roundup* and similar complete herbicides will kill it, that is not what you want to do to your lawn and flower bed. After crab grass plants appear, hand weeding is the only effective treatment. And they are impossible to pull, because they have a spreading root system. The only ones you can pull are the very young plants in soft, wet soil. Otherwise, you will just pull off the tops of the plants, and they will grow back. What to do? You need a sturdy weeding tool or sharp knife. Dig them out by the roots or cut them off below the crown of the plant. The crown is the point where the roots and stems join. In garden and border areas, you can chop them out with a sharp hoe. You can protect your lawn from crab grass with a timely application of a pre-emergent herbicide. The same pre-emergent treatment will also protect you from foxtail grass, spotted spurge, and other annual weeds.

For more information about our preventative weed program, please call our office (208) 322-1600 and we would be happy to design a program that best fits the needs of your lawn.