Currituck Garden News

NC State University
A&T State University
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Empowering People · Providing Solutions

December 2013

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER

The Garden News is published to provide you with educational information, upcoming programs and opportunities on gardening issues. Feel free to share with others.

Leaf Scorch and Winter Drying

Leaf scorch is a familiar sight for most gardeners. When water needed for growth and maintenance of foliage is inadequate leaf tissue dies, dries out and turns brown. Premature defoliation may also occur and branches may die. Leaf scorch happens when water is lost from the leaves faster than it can be replaced. Anything that interferes with either uptake of water by the roots or movement of water throughout the plant can cause leaf scorch. The obvious causes are environmental but many other things can cause it as well. Fungal diseases can clog up the vascular system of trees and cause root rot. Fungal and bacterial cankers growing on branches can also restrict the flow of water. Injury from lawn mowers and string trimmers can interfere with water uptake and distribution. Digging in the root zone for construction purposes can also cause root damage and lead to scorching. Drought during any season of the year can leave the soil too dry for plants, but hot drying winds on a sunny day can also cause leaf scorch even when soil moisture is sufficient. In the winter when the ground is frozen, plants are unable to take up the water they need and the leaves become scorched. When roots become twisted around tree trunks and either partially or fully girdle them, water movement to the leaves is restricted. Failing to provide enough water after transplanting plants will usually lead to leaf scorch and plant death. If soils are poorly drained or compacted they may not have enough oxygen to maintain a healthy root system. Light sandy soils that drain rapidly will not retain enough moisture for plants to maintain a healthy leaf canopy.

To prevent or correct leaf scorch, first determine the underlying cause. Applying a 3" layer of mulch around trees and shrubs will help conserve soil moisture. Trees and shrubs should have 1 inch of rainfall per week and supplemental water should be provided during periods of drought. Newly planted trees and shrubs will need supplemental water for the first 2 or 3 years while they establish a new root system. Established plants can withstand short periods of drought but they should not be allowed to dry out completely. Continue to water plants as needed during dry periods and when the soil isn't frozen. Only water plants when air temperatures are above 40 degrees. Trees obtain water best when it is allowed to soak into the soil to a depth of 12 inches.

For more information on leaf scorch and winter drying see http://go.ncsu.edu/leaf_scorch

Leaf scorch of Dogwood leaves.

Lawn Care

A soil test should be made at least every two to three years to determine the amounts of lime, phosphorus, and potassium needed for an established lawn. Most soils in North Carolina are acidic and often require the application of lime. For most turf grasses, except centipedegrass, soil pH should be between 6.5 and 7. Centipedegrass requires more acidic soil with a pH close to 5.5. Lime may be put on any time during the year but winter is usually best. Do not fertilize warm season lawns at this time. Water occasionally if a drought occurs. Atrazine or simazine can be applied in December to control annual bluegrass and winter annual weeds in Bermuda, St Augustine and Centipede lawns. For Zoysiagrass, apply a non-selective herbicide in December or January to control annual bluegrass and various broadleaf weeds. Mow Fescue lawns to 3" and remove excess leaves. Tall Fescue needs 1 inch of rain per week so water when needed. Apply broadleaf herbicides as necessary for control of chickweed and henbit..

For more information about lawn care see: http://go.ncsu.edu/nc_lawns

Pruning Calendar

During the month of December continue to prune Abelia, Beautyberry, Boxwood, Butterfly Bush, Summersweet, Cotoneaster, Euonymus, Gardenia, Rose-of-Sharon, Photinia, Pittosporum, Privet, and Yew if you have not already done so. For a more comprehensive list of plants and the best time to prune them, see: http://go.ncsu.edu/pruning_calendar

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer program is currently accepting applications for 2014. Classes start on January 14th and run for 13 weeks. Classes will be held every Tuesday from 1:00pm to 4:00 pm. Participants will learn about horticulture topics including Botany, Soils and Fertilizers, Houseplants, Lawns, Plant Insects and Diseases, Weeds, Integrated Pest Management and Pesticides, Vegetables, Tree and Small Fruits, Landscape Design, Plant Materials, Wildlife, and Volunteering. Classes are designed to prepare Master Gardeners for service as a volunteer for North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The fee for this program is $95 and no prior gardening experience is necessary.

Classes will be held at the NC Cooperative Extension, Currituck County Center , located at 120 Community Way in Barco. For more information call or email Deborah Kelso at 252-232-2262 deborah_kelso@ncsu.edu.

Extension Master Gardener
NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bothered by Mice ?

House mice live in and around homes, farms, businesses, and in open fields. The onset of cold weather each fall may cause mice to move indoors in search of food and shelter. House mice eat many types of food but prefer seeds, grain and foods high in fat, protein, or sugar. Mice don't need much water to survive because they obtain their water from the food they eat. House mice are mainly nocturnal, but daytime activity may be seen. Nesting may occur in the ground or in any sheltered location indoors or out. Nests are usually constructed of shredded materials such as paper or cloth and look like a ball 4 to 6" in diameter. Litters of 5 or 6 young are born 3 weeks after mating and mice are sexually mature at 6 to 10 weeks of age. Indoors, mice may breed year-round and a female may have 5 to 10 litters per year. House mice have physical capabilities that enable them to gain entry to structures by gnawing, climbing, jumping, and swimming. In fact, mice can jump up more than 12 inches from a flat surface.

Effective prevention and control of mice involves three aspects: rodent-proof construction, sanitation, and population reduction by means of traps and toxicants. To exclude mice, seal all holes and openings larger than 1/4 inch across with concrete mortar, galvanized sheet metal, or heavy-gauge hardware cloth. Sanitation, which includes good housekeeping practices and proper storage of food, feed, and garbage, is often stressed as a method of rodent control. Unfortunately, even the best sanitation will not eliminate house mice. It will, however, aid in control by permitting easier detection of mouse activity, increasing effectiveness of traps and baits by reducing competition with food items, and by preventing mice from flourishing.

Anticoagulants rodenticides come in many formulations such as liquid, pellets, loose meal, wax and extruded bait blocks. All anticoagulants provide good to excellent mouse control when prepared in acceptable baits. If misused, rodenticides can be lethal to non-target animals such as dogs and cats. Additionally, residues of anticoagulants which are present in the bodies of dead or dying rodents can cause toxic effects to scavengers and predators. Controlling mice with baits may fail for several reasons:

— Too short a period of bait exposure.
— Insufficient bait or replenishment of bait (none remains from one baiting to the next).
— Too few bait stations and/or too far apart. Bait stations should be 6 feet apart in areas where mice are active.
— Too small a control area, permitting mice to move in from adjacent untreated areas.
— Other foods are more abundant, taste better or are more convenient for the mice.
— The bait has become moldy, rancid, insect-infested, or contaminated.

Baits should be placed in boxes or stations. Bait stations protect bait from moisture and dust, provide a protected place for rodents to feed, and keep other animals and children away from the bait. Bait stations should be large enough to allow several rodents to feed at once. They can be as simple as a flat board nailed at an angle to the bottom of a wall or a length of pipe into which bait can be placed. Bait boxes for mice should have at least two openings approximately 1 inch in diameter. Locate the two holes on opposite sides of the station so that mice can see an alternate escape route as they enter the station.

Trapping is recommended where poisons seem inadvisable. Traps also allow for disposal of mice, thereby eliminating odor problems from decomposing carcasses that may remain when poisoning is done within buildings. Traps should be baited with a small piece of nutmeat, chocolate candy, dried fruit, peanut butter, marshmallows or bacon tied securely to the trigger. Because mice are always in search of nesting materials, a small cotton ball will also work as a bait when attached securely to the trigger. Food baits that become stale lose their effectiveness. Set traps close to walls, behind objects, in dark places, and in locations where mouse activity is seen. Place the traps so that when mice follow their natural course of travel they will pass directly over the trigger. Mice seldom venture far from their shelter and food supply, so traps should be spaced no more than 6 feet apart in areas where mice are active. An alternative to traps are glue boards, which catch and hold mice attempting to cross them. Do not use glue boards where children, pets, or desirable wildlife may come in contact with them.

For more information about house mice see http://go.ncsu.edu/mice

For additional information on the articles in newsletter call or e-mail Debbie Kelso at 232-2262, **deborah_kelso@ncsu.edu**

Deborah E. Kelso

Agricultural Technician

MISSION, VISION AND GOALS

North Carolina Cooperative Extension partners with communities to deliver education and technology that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolina.

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the Currituck County Center at 252-232-2262 no later than five business days prior to the event.

Coastal NC Daylily Society

The next Coastal North Carolina Daylily Society meeting will be held on January 7, 2014 at 10:00 am. They will meet at the NC Cooperative Extension Currituck County Center located at 120 Community Way in Barco. After the meeting there will be a pot luck lunch so bring a dish to share. For more information contact Deborah Kelso at 252-232-2262.

NE NC Daffodil Society

The next NENC Daffodil Society meeting will be held on February 22, 2014 at 10:00 am. They will meet at the NC Cooperative Extension Currituck County Center located at 120 Community Way in Barco. The meeting will be followed by an Artistic Design Class. For more information contact Deborah Kelso at 252-232-2262.

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