

Lake County CES Website

www.extension.purdue.edu/counties/lake/

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Agriculture & Natural Resources/Horticulture Educator

Upcoming Programs

Porter County Garden Show

January 27, 2018 8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m

LCMGA Plant Sale

May 5, 2018

Keep Mowing at the SAME Height

Writer: Zac Reicher

Turfgrass Extension Specialist, Purdue University

Many people ask how long to continue mowing into the fall. The answer is to keep mowing as long as the grass continues to grow which is normally into late October or early November. Frequency of mowing can decrease but continue to mow into the fall. Also avoid the urge to set the mower down and scalp your lawn for the final mowing. In years past, publications have recommended mowing low late in the fall and again in the spring. About the only advantage to this is that the leaves will blow into your neighbor's yard. Agronomically, this should be avoided because photosynthesis is very high during the fall even with cool temperatures. The higher the photosynthesis, the more energy a grass plant will store for winter and next spring, and the healthier a grass plant. Mowing off leaves reduces photosynthetic capacity of a plant, reducing energy storage, and decreasing turf performance next summer. Be sure to continue mowing until the grass stops growing in the late fall. Unmowed grass encourages snow mold which is a damaging turfgrass disease.



The Wire Basket Conundrum

Writer: Kyle Daniel,

Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

It has been discussed (sometimes passionately) as long as they have been used: Should I leave the wire basket and burlap or remove it at transplanting? You can ask ten people in the green industry and you will probably end up with ten different answers in regards to wire baskets. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that people use in their answers, but there aren't many long-term replicated research trials that address this issue. One of the most recent studies, which was a short-term trial, indicated no differences in growth between wire basket removal, partial removal, or wire basket complete (Koeser, et.al., 2015). This study followed the plants two and three years after transplanting.

The point of contention between the 'leave it vs. remove it' groups is the effect of the wire basket and burlap on root growth. Typically, in the Midwest's climate, natural burlap will degrade relatively quick, along with the welds on the wire baskets. Treated, or artificial, burlap will not break down, so this type of material should be completely removed, though most nurseries use natural burlap.

Based on available data, the correct method of the wire basket and burlap issue is to completely remove the twine and remove the burlap and basket 1/2 to 1/3 of the way down the root ball. This will allow the majority of anchorage roots and root hairs to not be impeded by any foreign objects. By leaving a portion of the basket, root ball disturbance will be minimized and staking the tree should not be needed.



Figure 1: When planting a tree or shrub in a wire basket, remove the wire and burlap 1/3 to 1/2 way down the root ball. Removing the entire wire basket and burlap will cause the root ball to fracture.



Figure 2: Always be sure to remove twine from the top of the root ball. This will prevent girdling of the trunk.

Worrying about falling leaves may be 'mulch' ado about nothing

Writer: Susan A. Steeves,

If trees dot your yard, every fall you may face the exhausting chore of leaf disposal. Purdue University researchers advise using a lawnmower or shredder to turn the foliage into mulch.

A mulching mower or a mulching attachment will break up the leaves so they can just be left on the lawn. But whether leaves are raked or mulched, thick layers of the colorful foliage must be removed from grass, said Zachary Reicher, associate professor of agronomy and Purdue Extension turfgrass specialist.

"If you don't get the whole leaves off the top of the grass, you will smother it by preventing photosynthesis," Reicher said. Photosynthesis is the process by which plants convert sunlight to energy for growth and reproduction.

A heavy layer of foliage on the grass not only can kill the grass by blocking sunlight, but it also creates and fosters high humidity that leads to snow mold, Reicher said. "Tree leaves create a perfect environment for this."

Snow mold is characterized by large round or irregular shaped, matted patches in the turf that sometimes have a pinkish color. In severe cases, grass will have to be replaced where the snow mold develops.

"At best, it will thin the turf. At worst, it will kill the turf right down to the ground," Reicher said.

In addition to aiding the lawn's health, mulching leaves improves soil condition and may provide some added nutrients, although Reicher said this benefit is probably minimal. In Purdue studies of shredding leaves into grass, Reicher and his team found that mulching the foliage didn't affect the color or quality of grass or have any other negative consequences. Nor did it deplete important turf-sustaining nitrogen.

Mulching is a good alternative to labor-intensive raking, blowing, vacuuming and bagging of leaves, especially since most landfill sites now ban the dumping of lawn clipping and leaves, Reicher said. It is important not to mulch in thick layers of leaves all at once, but instead shred them a little at a time.

"If you try to mulch in six to eight inches of leaves all at once, it's just not going to work," Reicher said. "And make sure they are dry when you do it; you won't break them up or get the mower through them if they're wet." Aside from saving time and money in removing foliage from the grass, mulching also saves time and money in the spring by keeping grass healthy.

"If you do the right thing in the fall, then you avoid input (of money and time) in the spring," Reicher said.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug In Homes

Writer: Timothy J. Gibb, Insect Diagnostician, Department of Entomology

The brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) is an invasive pest from China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan that was first introduced into eastern Pennsylvania sometime prior to 1998. The brown marmorated stink bug is known to be an agricultural pest in its native lands but has become a serious pest of fruits, vegetables and farm crops as well as a nuisance pest inside homes as it has spread across the United States.

The name 'stink bug' refers to an obnoxious and pungent odor emitted by the scent glands when this insect is disturbed. This odor is characteristic of the family but is especially strong in the brown marmorated stink bug. Adult bugs measure about 17 mm in length, are almost as wide and are 'shield-shaped,' typical of the Pentatomidae family. Brown marmorated stink bugs have shades of mottled, brown on both the upper and lower body surfaces. These descriptions also fit other stink bugs in the U.S. including the native brown stink bug *Euschistus servus* but can be distinguished by the alternating dark and light bands on the last two antennal segments and exposed lateral margins of the abdomen, as well as a comparatively smooth shoulder when viewed under magnification.

Brown marmorated stink bugs also become a nuisance pest when they are attracted to and congregate on homes on warm fall days in search of protected, overwintering sites.

Mechanical exclusion is the best method to keep stink bugs from entering homes and buildings. Be certain that window and doors fit tightly and are closed when possible. Screens should be in proper shape and must also fit tightly if they are to keep BMSB out.

Exterior surface applications of insecticides may offer some protection if they are applied such that the chemicals are active when and where the stink bugs appear. Professional pest managers offer this as a service.

Inside homes, stink bugs can be removed manually and dropped into a container of soapy water. This not only kills them but also offers some relief from the disagreeable odor. Both live and dead stink bugs also can be removed from interior areas by using a broom and dustpan or with the aid of a vacuum cleaner. Either way, they should be killed rather than released outside so that they do not simply reappear back inside the home.



How to Easily Remove Fruit Flies from Your House-For Good!

Writer: Timothy Gibb
Insect Diagnostician, Purdue University

I thought that might get your attention. While I wish there was an easy, permanent answer to this problem, the reality is that there is not. These tiny flies have been a pest every year at this time as long as I can remember and I suspect that they will continue to appear in kitchens and pantries long after I am gone. These flies are commonly known as 'Fruit flies' or 'Vinegar flies' (*Drosophila melanogaster*). They are especially common during the fall time because fruits and vegetables that have ripened outside have allowed their populations to soar. The flies either enter homes through open windows or doors or are actually brought into homes and buildings by people. Fruit fly eggs or larvae are common on all produce from gardens or orchards. People unwittingly carry their eggs and larvae into homes on the fruits and vegetables that are brought in. Suddenly, as if overnight, they become pesky flies and homeowners cannot figure out where they came from.

Fruit flies are known for their small size, red eyes and for their association with the kitchen area. It seems that they can be swatted and squashed and sucked up in a vacuum cleaner every day – and yet they come back the next. This occurs because fruit flies have a life-cycle of about 10 days, so they can appear and repopulate seemingly overnight.

Control is difficult. Pesticides, if used at all must be done sparingly and cautiously as these nuisance flies generally occur near food. Most fly traps are ineffective. We have found that sanitation is the only long-term resolution as this will remove the food source as well as the breeding areas.

The following list contains steps that will help to resolve most fruit fly issues in homes.

- ◆ Seal organic food garbage before placing in receptacle.
 - ◆ Clean opened containers of fruit juice, fermented or vinegar products, including ketchup and cooking wine. Seal them and keep these in the refrigerator.
 - ◆ Wipe up crumbs and spills from your cabinets, counter and floor.
 - ◆ Take out all trash often -- do not re-use the plastic liner garbage bags.
 - ◆ Clean the seals of your refrigerator door, the top and under the fridge, especially clean the evaporation pan if it has one.
 - ◆ Clean under and around your dishwasher and stove.
 - ◆ Dump mop water, clean the pail, launder the mop rag.
 - ◆ Remove damp lint from the laundry room.
 - ◆ Take out your compost and keep your collection bin covered and food additions to your pile buried beneath yard waste.
 - ◆ Use screens on doors and windows well into the fall.
 - ◆ Record what methods seem to work the best and save them for next year – because they certainly will be back.
- ◆ Cover fruit bowls or store fresh fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator. (Also remember that, raisins, dates and prunes are favorite attractants. Monitor stored potatoes and onions. If they go bad they attract flies).
 - ◆ Discard all overripe fruit.
 - ◆ Wash all dishes.
 - ◆ Clear the drains and especially the garbage disposal regularly.
 - ◆ Launder the dishrags, or at least wash them thoroughly with soap, rinse them well and wring them dry before hanging them up (don't leave them in the sink).
 - ◆ Store trash in a covered bin.



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