Common Lawn and Garden Problems

Summer is here and our winter dreams of lush gardens, bountiful vegetables and warm weather have arrived. Along with the fun in the sun come plant problems that upset the applecart of even the most avid gardener. There are many ways to prevent, treat or control problems. These problems can be a pathogen, an insect or a weather related issue. Healthy plants keep problems at bay. Proper care of the soil, fertilization and weed control can keep many problems from occurring. Stressed plants invite problems. Some plants also have specific pest or disease problems. Know your plant.

Green Kyllinga is a weedy sedge found in lawns. This weed loves water. Weeds need to be removed root and all before they go to seed.

Dollar spot is a fungus and is found in lawns. Compaction or insufficient air flow can cause dollar spot. Low nitrogen in soil and drought stress are also factors. Fungicide may be used for control as a preventative measure. Fungicide is not a cure but may stop the disease from spreading.

Anthracnose is a fungal disease that can affect a number of plants including shade trees and vegetables. It overwinters in dead leaves and twigs and attacks plants in the spring during cool, rainy weather. The best way to treat fungus is to remove the plant and keep leaf litter away from healthy plants.

Drought stress from the previous year can affect trees and shrubs the following year. Reduced growth and even death can occur. Maintain plants with proper watering and avoid over-fertilization.

Insects can be controlled through Integrated Pest Management. This way you can control pests and keep beneficial insects safe. For more information see Rutgers FS31 “IPM in the Home Landscape.”

The first line of defense against problems is good cultural practices. Keep plants appropriately watered, use compost, build healthy soil, do not crowd, remove leaf litter, give nutrients to plants and keep gardens tidy. You will find fewer disease and pest problems once you learn how to keep your plants healthy. Every year it will become easier to control problems without using chemicals. Pesticides and fungicides, even organic ones, should always be a last resort.

Checklist for August

**Flower and Vegetable Garden**
- Harvest vegetables regularly to encourage production. [FS988](#)
- Start plants for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and onions in a half-shaded area for setting out in September.
- Avoid letting squashes, zucchini, etc., become too large as they will be bitter.
- Trim plants that may become leggy or unkempt such as petunias and verbenas.

**Trees and Shrubs**
- Check for gypsy moth egg masses; remove and destroy. [FS004](#)
- Deadhead butterfly bushes and Rose-of-Sharon to prevent seed production.
- Fertilize roses early in the month for the last time this year. Control fungal diseases with appropriate sprays.

**Lawn**
- Ideal turf seeding time is August 20th to October 10th. See Rutgers Fact Sheet FS584 “Seeding Your Lawn” for more information. [FS584](#)
- Start lawn renovation. “Renovating Your Lawn” [FS108](#)
- Test soil and amend, if needed