

Redbud Leaf Folder

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I really love this time of year. Homeowners start getting busy out in the yard and find all sorts of things that cause them to panic. Most of these things really aren't a problem and as I reassure them that their plant is not dying, I then become a hero. It's good for the ego! So I was out mowing the other evening and as I mowed past one of the redbuds I noticed that the leaf was folded over and looking kind of tough and the first thing through my head was, hmm, I'm surprised nobody has called me about this yet! This is the work of a little insect called the redbud leaf folder. A rather descriptive name given its feeding habit! The redbud leaf folder is a small moth that likely has two generations per year, maybe three. It overwinters as a pupae attached to a fallen leaf. In May the moth emerges, mates and lays eggs. The little caterpillar will fold part of the leaf over on itself and secure it with silk, thereby allowing it to feed in relative safety under the folded leaf. As the caterpillar becomes full size it develops distinctive black and white banding and if you pull the leaf open it often skidaddles away very quickly. The first generation usually goes unnoticed but the population increase with the second and third generation becomes quite noticeable in August and September. This is yet another classic case that while it looks bad, the actual damage to the tree is rather nominal. Since the insect overwinters in a folded leaf, raking up the leaves and burning, or sending them off site can help reduce the number. But since the adult has wings you'll have a few every year. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Not All Thistles Are Bad

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every year in late August and September, I get phone calls from anxious homeowners or concerned passerbys about all those thistles that are blooming hither, thither, and yon. So on the one hand, 40 years of efforts to make people aware of the need to control that noxious weed musk thistle HAS done some good. Unfortunately though, it appears that we didn't fill you in on enough of the details. Thistle is a word we use to describe a huge global family of plants. Artichokes, like what some people eat, are considered a thistle. Most have beautiful composite flowers that are very popular with butterflies and pollinators. We have native thistles throughout Kansas. They have been here forever and they aren't a problem, unless someone is mismanaging the land. But man, in their infinite wisdom has brought thistles that aren't native to North America to the US and is often the case when a plant is moved out of it's native location, they become a problem. Of all noxious thistles we have in the US we are fortunate that only one has been a problem locally and that is Musk Thistle. But the thing to keep in mind about musk thistle is that it blooms early in the year and the bloom is on a stem devoid of leaves at the top and the bloom bends over (hence the nickname Nodding Thistle). The thistles that are blooming now don't have those characteristics. Most of what we are seeing are Tall Thistles and Wavyleaf thistles, rarely Bull Thistles. None of these concern me and we don't need to control them. So don't panic over blooming thistles now, just enjoy them!

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Ash Leaf Diseases

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I went out to look at an ash tree recently because the homeowner was concerned that it didn't look very well and was afraid that it had emerald ash borer. Once I got on site I immediately knew that it wasn't emerald ash borer and for the record, with emerald ash borer you will see branches dying back and new shoots trying to get started along main trunks. No, in this case leaves on the trees were simply turning brown and drying up, and it got worse the lower on the tree that the leaves were. This is a very common leaf spot called mycosphaerella leaf spot. We see it every year on our native green ashes but generally not on the white ash cultivars like Rose Hill Ash and others. It starts off as small brown spots on the leaves that as the season goes on develops into larger spots that eventually enlarge into blotches that causes the leaf to dry up and fall off. As I've been saying since early August, defoliation this late in the season is not an issue and there's no damage. Now, the leaves are infected much earlier in the year, as in when they were coming out in the spring. You need an extended period of rainy weather during April and May for this disease to get started. If it's a dry spring you will see very little of this disease. IF you wanted to do something, fungicides would need to be sprayed starting with initial leaf emergence and continuing on until the end of May. We generally consider this to be a sporadically occurring disease. If you are seeing it every year it would help to rake up all the leaves each year and burn them or get in the trash and then treat in April and May with fungicides. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Lace Bugs and Psyllids

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was visiting a yard in Junction City on one of those beautiful days last week. It was late afternoon and the sun was starting to get a little low, shining through the trees and there was a fog of tiny little insects. As we walked around the yard some started landing on me and I saw that they were lace bugs. Lace bugs are small insects that have sort of lacey looking wings. They have a piercing sucking mouthpart and are very commonly found on the undersides of tree leaves especially late in the summer. They are one of the main reasons why leaves of oaks, sycamores, redbuds, hackberries and other species can develop a bleached, worn or dusky look late in the season. They suck sap out of the leaves and kill small parts of the leaf. I'm not sure if we were witnessing an emergence of adults that were then going to mate and lay eggs, but I wouldn't be surprised. Adults do overwinter under the bark of trees. While it may have been unsettling to folks, the adults are harmless to humans and the damage they do to trees is not problem. I was half expecting them to be hackberry psyllids when I first saw them. These are the insects that will soon be emerging from the bumps on hackberry leaves and look like little dark gnats. They love to swarm onto screens of your house trying to get inside to overwinter. These don't bite either, although they have sharp little legs when they land on you. If you have a lot of these on your screens you can spray them with any aerosol insecticide designed for flying insect control. Again, these are an annoyance to us but don't really damage trees. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Time to Apply Little Barley Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the challenges of my job is to help you understand that the time to deal with a problem is before it becomes a problem. At the time that it becomes a problem it's often too late to do anything about it. We need to intercept it well before it becomes an issue. That's today's program. Little barley is a grass that no one notices until it has mature seed in late spring and those point little seeds are in your socks or your pet's paws. By that time of year the plant is already dying. Treatment is superfluous. No, to deal with that particular issue we need to start NOW, just before the seeds start germinating and the plant gets established. Little Barley is a cool season winter annual. It grows like wheat sprouting in the fall, overwintering as a small plant and then growing rapidly in the spring and developing a seed head. If you are overseeding this fall there isn't much you can do as the products that will stop little barley will also stop your grass seed from germinating. While most of the crabgrass preventers will stop little barley from growing, only a few of them are technically labeled for little barley. Surflan, sold as Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden is one that has Little Barley on the label. Dimension, active ingredient dithiopyr, does have "barley" on the label and specifically *Hordeum* spp. Little barley is a *Hordeum* species *Hordeum pusillum* to be precise so in essence Dimension is also labeled for little barley. Whichever product you use it needs to be applied now and then watered in to activate it. Rain would activate it but that may be a ways off at this rate! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.