

Assessing Moisture Stress

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The first half of June was hot and dry. Many gardeners go out to their gardens in the afternoon or evening and panic because they see plants with leaves rolled up or wilting. They just assume that the plants need water and turn on the sprinklers at the worst time of the day. Leaf rolling and even a little wilting are two common techniques for a plant to reduce water usage. Many plants will do it with hot temperatures yet plenty of soil moisture. The best time to assess moisture stress is first thing in the morning. If plants are showing stress symptoms at that time then yes, turn on the water. Sprinklers are my least favorite way to water gardens because you have the highest moisture loss and wet leaves lead to leaf diseases. Using drip hoses or a slow running open hose or watering down the row are far superior methods. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Hornworms

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The most common insect pest on tomatoes is the tomato hornworm. This is the caterpillar of what will become a Carolina sphinx moth, or hummingbird moth. They start out small but can grow to be as big or bigger than your index finger. As they get big they will eat a lot of leaves, leave a lot of little green pellets (droppings) and hide extremely well as they are virtually the same color as the tomato plant stems. If you can find them the best control is to pick them off and dispose of them. They dig into the ground to pupate and there are two generations per year. However, if you find one with strange little white projections out of its body, leave it alone. Those are the pupae of a parasitic wasp and that hornworm is about to die. The adult wasps will hatch out of those pupae to control other hornworms! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bagworms

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Bagworms are really cranking up so you need to be spraying evergreens like junipers, arborvitae and spruces, or things like roses and fruit trees. The bags are still small, most are only 1/8 to 3/8 inches long yet so you may overlook them. Look for holes in leaves of deciduous trees and then flip the leaf over to see the little bags. A lot of times on cedars and arborvitae I will see a color change in the plant more quickly than I'll see the small bags and I'm starting to see that color change in cedars along the highway. Remember to use about any lawn and garden insecticide, including spinosad. Use a hose end sprayer so you can apply a lot of carrier. Apply to the point where the foliage is well wetted and starting to almost drip off. You've got to get those little bags soaked up. Spray now, again in two weeks and then monitor. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Insecticidal Soaps

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the common insect control measures that we recommend for gardeners who want an organic approach is insecticidal soap. Insecticidal soap basically contains a potassium salt of a fatty acid. Exactly how they work we honestly don't know but they seem to work well on soft bodied insects, like aphids, thrips and some mites but not so well on hard bodied insects like squash bugs or beetles. Some gardeners use liquid dish soap with varying degrees of success, but these may not always be highly effective and are more likely to cause burn on the foliage of some plants. You are better off to purchase a specific insecticidal soap available at garden centers. Once again, insecticidal soaps are great for soft bodied insects but need to be applied daily as they are only effective when still wet. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Grub Control

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. A lot more homeowners apply grub control than have ever had a grub problem in their yard. It may be one of the most over applied and under needed chemical treatments we do on our lawns. Grubs are the fat white things we dig up in our gardens or lawns. This is the larval form of what will eventually be one of several different scarabs known as June bugs. The grubs feed on the roots of plants. If you have enough, as in 8 or 10 per square foot of yard, they can kill the turf. I've rarely seen it happen in all honesty. Every yard has a few grubs, but most don't need to be treated. If you want to apply grub preventers it's about time. Newer grub products contain the insecticide Merit are best applied in early July. Older products using Dylox or carbaryl are best applied in late July. All treatments must be watered in. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.