



Acreage Answers

What's Bugging Your Garden?

by Viola Koster, Linn County Master Gardener

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If you think an Iowa garden produces a lot of fruits and vegetables without much care, you should see what it does **with** care! The wise gardener will be alert for possible disaster. Insects, disease, and animals all can be destructive.

Insects come in many shapes and sizes. Baby insects are hungry worms.  Usually you can wait until damage from their feeding is seen before spraying or dusting. However, when you see pale butterflies hanging around anything in the cabbage family, begin spraying weekly. Another exception is the squash vine borer, which must be prevented because once you realize something is wrong, your vines may be dead already.

Grasshoppers eat everything. If baby hoppers are abundant, kill them with a gentle insecticide. Mature hoppers are hard to kill and may require strong chemicals applied by a licensed applicator wearing protective clothing. 

Country gardens near a farm field have regular periodic invasions of corn rootworm adults or soy bean beetles. Apply chemical controls weekly or as often as fresh damage is seen. Remember that today's chemicals are safer for the environment, and us but most won't kill insects for more than a day or two. Harvest edibles and then treat. With all pesticides be sure to read the label carefully.

Match plant damage to mouth size. Look for an insect if there are small holes eaten in the center of a leaf. Suspect adult grasshoppers, rabbits, deer, or even mice or birds if chunks are eaten on the edge of a leaf, or if the entire plant is gone.

If a hole in a leaf has a brown border it's probably a fungal disease. Insect bites have nice green edges. Treat with an insecticide for insects, and a fungicide for fungal disease.

Tomatoes especially need treatment for fungal diseases. **No variety is immune or even resistant to Septoria leaf spot, which is the most common tomato foliage disease in Iowa.** Prevent it since you can't revive dead leaves. It is worse in rainy weather.

For details in controlling these and other garden problems call your local county Extension office. Some counties have horticulture "hotlines" staffed by well-trained Master Gardener volunteers. Your local extension office can also help you send in samples of diseased plants or have your soil analyzed for a small fee.



IOWA STATE
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Weed Commissioners

by Steve DeHoogh, Iowa County Extension Education Director

Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

Central Iowa Extension offices

Boone Co.	515-432-3882
Clarke Co	641-342-3316
Dallas Co.	515-993-4281
Green Co.	515-386-2138
Guthrie Co.	641-747-2276
Jasper Co.	641-792-6433
Madison Co.	515-462-1001
Marshall Co.	641-752-1551
Polk Co.	515-261-4202
Story Co.	515-382-6551
Warren Co.	515-961-6237

Web Version of the Newsletter

www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag/newsletters

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

The telephone rings, beeps, or buzzes. You answer and hear, "This is John Doe, your county weed commissioner. I need to talk to you about noxious weeds on your property."

Weed commissioner, noxious weeds, what is this all about? Is someone trying to pull a fast one on you?

No, actually Chapter 317 of the Code of Iowa (www.legis.state.ia.us/Code.html) sets out the Iowa Weed Law. Section 1A lists the primary and secondary noxious weeds. These weeds are difficult to control and cause economic damage to farmers.

Under the Iowa Weed Law, all landowners or tenants are required to control these weeds. The weed commissioner is a person appointed by the county supervisors who has the authority and responsibility to see that these weeds are controlled. The Iowa Weed Law gives the weed commissioner the authority to enter any land in the county at any time for the performance of the commissioner's duties. The weed commissioner is responsible for the "destruction of noxious weeds in the county, including those growing within the limits of cities, within the confines of abandoned cemeteries, and along streets and highways unless otherwise provided."

If you receive a visit or letter from the weed commissioner telling you to

control your noxious weeds and you don't control them the Iowa Weed Law allows the weed commissioner to come in and control the weeds. The charge is then added as a lien on your land to be paid the next time you pay your property tax.

For information about your local county weed commissioner contact your county engineer's office.

Noxious Weeds

Primary noxious weeds include the following: (common names) quack grass, perennial sow thistle, Canada Thistle, bull thistle, European morning glory or field bindweed, horse nettle, leafy spurge, perennial pepper-grass, Russian knapweed, buckthorn, musk thistle, and tall thistle.

Secondary noxious weeds include: butterprint (annual), cocklebur (annual), wild mustard (annual), wild carrot (biennial), buckhorn plantain, poison hemlock, multiflora rose, wild sunflower (annual), puncture vine (annual), teasel (biennial), and shattercane (*Sorghum bicolor*).

If you need help identifying your weed, bring a sample to your local Extension office.

Nest Box Maintenance

by Steve Lekwa, Director, Story County Conservation

Nesting season is already well along for our bird friends, but those bird houses around the acreage still need your attention. Bluebirds, in particular, need help until at least mid-August in order to successfully raise their normal two to three broods of young ones. These gentle birds do not compete for or defend their nests very well from the many predators and nest competitors that think bluebird boxes are an easy source for a meal or an ideal place for their own nests.



Weekly or even more frequent checking of nest boxes and the condition of young can help avoid problems with invading house wrens, English sparrows, and parasites. Birds will not abandon nests because you open the box to check them. Learn to recognize a wren's piles of twigs and a house sparrow's messy pile

of grass and trash and remove them when they appear. Wrens can use boxes just for them with one-inch holes well away from the bluebird box. Also learn to recognize and welcome nests of desirable "renters" like tree swallows and chickadees.

Nests should be removed once the young leave to prevent the build-up of parasites and allow new nest establishment. Your county conservation board or local ISU Extension office can provide you with additional information.

Resources available at your local Extension office include:

- Iowa Nesting Birds* -- \$1.00 (IAN 603)
- Iowa Winter Birds* -- \$1.00 (IAN 602)
- Shelves, Houses, and Feeders for Birds and Mammals* -- \$1.50 (NCR 338)
- Landscape Plants that Attract Birds* -- \$2.00 (G 1609)
- Attracting Birds to your Yard* -- \$.75 (PM 1351D)

How to Find Us

Phone numbers for your local Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service can be found in the phone book.

Look under *United States Government Agriculture Department* of in the white pages for your county seat community. Departments of the USDA are listed there with individual phone numbers.

What is a Wetland and What Can I Do With It?

by Beth Grabau, Dallas County Farm Service Agency

Wetlands are an area where water covers the soil for at least two to three weeks during the growing season. Hydric soil types in a wetland act like a sponge and are responsible for keeping the soil saturated. These soils usually accumulate more water than they allow to drain away from them. Wetlands do not require standing water to grow successfully.

Wetlands filter excess pesticides and nutrients. There are also a number of plants and animals, such as butterflies, frogs, and birds, which make their homes in wetland areas.

USDA can provide guidelines and information about how to install wetland or shallow water areas on your land. Even if you don't have a natural wet area, you can establish an area to grow plants associated with wetlands. There are also programs for qualifying land. These programs range from cost sharing to establishing wetland areas to 10-year programs with annual payments.

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service for a copy of their *Wetland – Backyard Conservation* pamphlet and more information about establishing these areas, and other available programs contact your local Farm Service Agency for more information about the Wetland Reserve Pilot Program.

Summer Pest Care for Pets

By Dr. Ken Henrichsen, DVM

With the start of warmer weather, our pets are anticipating the looser reins of freedom that follows. The outdoor opportunities will have some possible consequences that need your attention. Specifically, spring and summer are when the tick and flea populations begin to swell.

By now your dog(s) could be bringing the little bloodthirsty ticks home. There are a couple of good approaches to this predicament. The first would be the application of a good tick (only) collar. The drug of choice here is amitraz. Don't pull the attached ticks off—simply let the collar do its thing. The ticks will fall off. The second approach suggested is to use an excellent insecticide, which will not only kill the tick, but will also deter them for three to four weeks. The active drugs we recommend (fipronil and IGR) not only do a number on ticks, but also are very hard on fleas. Timely applications given over the shoulder every 3-4 weeks for the duration of the flea and tick season will give excellent results.

There are many products available over the counter. Many of them are relatively harmless to fleas and ticks. It may be in your best interest to visit with your veterinarian and get his/her advice. Other seasonal subject matters to explore might include heartworm control, lyme disease, and summer intestinal parasite control.

Digger Wasps

by Don Lewis, ISU Extension Entomologist

There are three species of wasps that construct nests in the ground in Iowa. The Cicada Killer is the most common "digger wasp," making up about 90 percent of the wasps reported to Extension Entomology at Iowa State University. Cicada killer wasps may be up to two inches long. They are black with yellow markings on the thorax and abdomen and have rusty colored wings. Two other seldom reported ground wasps are the golden and great black digger wasps.

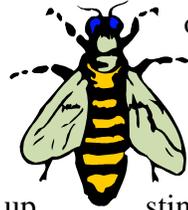
The cicada killer wasp and other digger wasps are solitary wasps. They live independently rather than in colonies and do not depend on other wasps to share in the raising of young or the maintaining of a nest. Other solitary wasps include the mud daubers and potter wasps. Solitary wasps put paralyzed insects or spiders inside the nest as food for their offspring.

Female cicada killer wasps capture annual cicadas in July and August and place them in cells located at the ends of tunnels they have dug in the ground. Each tunnel is about the size of a quarter and extends 24 inches or more into the ground. One or two paralyzed cicadas are placed in each cell and a single egg is deposited before the female closes the cell and flies away, never to return. The wasp

grubs feed on the cicadas and develop into wasps that emerge the following summer.

The cicada killer, like other solitary wasps, has the capability to sting, but won't unless handled or threatened. Only female wasps have the ability to sting. Stings inflicted by solitary wasps are not usually severe but reaction varies with each individual.

Wasps are generally beneficial. A nest in an out-of-the-way location where it is not likely to be disturbed should be left alone. If, however, a nest is located where problems could arise, such as under a deck or near an often-used door, removal is justified. Ground nests of cicada killers and other digger wasps can be destroyed by placing an insecticide dust (e.g., Sevin or permethrin) in and around the nest entrance during the night. The dust particles will adhere to the wasps as they come and go from the nest. Cover the nest opening with a shovelful of soil after all activity has stopped. If there are a large number of burrows in an area it might be more efficient to treat the area with a turfgrass insecticide (spray or granules) to discourage the wasps.



For more information ask for publication PM 167,1 Wasps and Bees, at your local Extension office.

Poison Ivy

by Bob Hartzler, Iowa State University Agronomy Professor

As a landowner, the adage 'Leaves of three – let it be' is poor advice. If you choose to ignore poison ivy on your property, it will likely spread and create even worse problems in the future. Poison ivy is a woody vine having compound leaves with three leaflets. The edges of the leaflets vary, having smooth, toothed, or lobed edges. Poison ivy can survive in a variety of habitats, but is most commonly found near perimeters of wooded areas. A large number of bird species use the seed as a food source, and thus spread seed to new areas. Virginia creeper has a similar growth habit and frequents the same habitats as poison ivy, but is easily distinguished by having five leaflets instead of three. Poison oak is not found in

Iowa, but rather is limited to the west coast.

Poison ivy is responsible for more than two million cases of skin poisoning each year. Most people do not respond to the toxin the first time they contact the plant, but become more sensitive with repeated exposures. Only humans and other primates are sensitive to poison ivy. The toxin is an oily compound present in all parts of the plant. The oil can be carried on clothing, tools, and pets, and in smoke. It retains its toxicity for long periods.

Poison ivy can be controlled either mechanically or with herbicides. Small plants can be removed physically by completely removing the root system. Mechanical removal may not be feasible with larger plants

or if you are highly sensitive to the plant. Poison ivy is fairly tolerant of most commonly available herbicides (2,4-D; dicamba; Roundup, etc.) that are sprayed on the foliage. However, these compounds are much more effective as cut surface treatments. For this application, the vine is cut near the soil surface and then herbicide is painted on the exposed stem. This method not only provides more effective control of poison ivy, but also minimizes the amount of herbicide used and reduces the impact of the herbicide on desirable vegetation in the infested area.

Ask your local Extension office for Publication PM 773, Poison Ivy, for more information.

Maintaining Your Septic Tank

by Greg Brenneman, ISU Extension Agricultural Engineering Specialist

The main purpose of the septic tank is to settle solids and to protect the absorption field from them. Although bacterial action in the tank helps break down solids, some will accumulate. That is why **all** septic tanks need to be pumped out occasionally. Failure to do this will lead to solids being discharged to the absorption field, eventually causing it to become plugged.

To keep your septic system operating properly, follow these suggestions. Be conservative in your water use, avoid heavy traffic on the septic field, be careful about what you dispose, and avoid the use of septic tank additives.

The single most important thing you can do to protect the septic system is to have the septic tank pumped out on a regular basis. Generally, septic tanks should be cleaned out every two to five years depending on the size of the tank and the amount of solids entering it. Remember, use of a garbage disposal increases solids loading by about 50 percent.

For more information on septic systems check with your county extension office for the fact sheet *Maintaining the Home Septic System* or check out the web site: www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/naturalresources/DD6583.html